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FINGAL CHLAINNE TANNTAIL: TEXT AND CONTEXT

R. J. Crampton, Wolfson College, 20th September, 2010

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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PREFACE

DECLARATIONS

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text.

This dissertation is not substantially the same as I have submitted for any degree, diploma or other qualification at any other University. No part of this dissertation has been, or is currently being, submitted for any degree, diploma or any other qualification.

This dissertation does not exceed the word limit for the Degree Committee of the Faculty of English.

FINGAL CHLAINNE TANNTAIL: TEXT AND CONTEXT by R.J. Crampton

SUMMARY

This dissertation consists of four main sections:

(i) The Text: a new edition and translation of the medieval Irish text known as *Fingal Chlainne Tanntail* (*FCT*), 'The Kinslaying of the family of Tantalus', which contains versions of several Classical narratives concerning Tantalus and his descendants down to Orestes . This edition includes linguistic and textual notes, and a commentary on certain personal names found in *FCT*.

(ii) The Classical Context: a comparative analysis between the respective contents of *FCT* and analogues from the Classical tradition from the time of Homer until the approximate date of composition of *FCT*. The most likely types of sources from the extant Classical tradition are suggested from this comparative analysis, as is material which is unique to *FCT*, and therefore likely to indicate its author's preoccupations.

(iii) The Medieval Irish Context: an assessment of the material in *FCT* which is unique to it among accounts of the Classical narratives which the text relates. This unique material is both compared with examples found within the wider corpus of medieval Irish literature and examined from a thematic perspective.

(iv) A Parallel Text to *FCT*: *FCT* is found in two manuscripts alongside several other vernacular works dealing with Classical material. The sources for several of these texts are, as in the case of *FCT*, unknown. Only one, *Merugud Uilix meic Leirtis*, 'The Wandering of Ulysees son of Laertes' (an abridged, and idiosyncratic, version of part of the narrative of Homer's *Odyssey*) is found in both manuscripts which also contain *FCT*. The content of *Merugud Uilix meic Leirtis* is compared to its analogues found in the Classical tradition, with reference to the findings in (ii) in relation to *FCT*.

The thesis concludes by drawing together the findings of all four sections, with particular reference to the findings in (ii) concerning both the most likely types of source for the Classical material contained in *FCT*, and its unique content and apparent thematic preoccupations as discussed in (iii). These results are placed in the context of those found in (iv) in relation to *Merugud Uilix meic Leirtis*. The thesis points to other examples of medieval Irish Classical adaptations which appear to possess manuscript, source-type, and thematic similarities with *FCT* and which might therefore be worthy of further study using a similar methodology. The thesis also points to the socio-historical context of *FCT* which may have influenced its author, and to possible underexplored conduits for the unorthodox material contained within this and other medieval Irish literary works.

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FINGAL CHLAINNE TANNTAIL: TEXT AND CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Fingal Chlainne Tanntail (*FCT*), 'The Kinslaying of the Family of Tantalus', is a medieval Irish adaptation which relates versions of the Classical narratives in which Tantalus and his descendants commit acts of *fingal*, and the family eventually loses political power. Since Byrne's edition of the text in 1927, scholarship on *FCT* has been confined to a small number of brief observations within studies whose primary focus is on other works.[1] This is the case despite the relatively high levels of interest in medieval Irish Classical adaptations in general, especially over the past forty years.[2] This study aims to redress this particular imbalance: firstly, via the production of a new edition and translation of the text based upon the manuscript version of the text which, though it is far closer to complete than the other extant witness, was not the basis for Byrne's edition;[3] secondly, by undertaking the first detailed analysis of *FCT* as a literary text. This analysis focuses not only on the place of *FCT* within the corpus of medieval Irish adaptation texts based on Classical material, but also seeks to investigate the thematic preoccupations of the author.

An important reason why *FCT* appears to have been neglected may be that much of the Classical material it relates is not based upon a Latin model by a known author, making direct

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[1] Byrne's edition is based on the version found in Dublin, RIA D iv 2, in which the text has the plural title *Fingala Chlainne Tanntail*: 'The Parricides', pp. 16–33. The other extant witness, in Dublin, King's Inns' Library 12, has the title in the singular form, referring to the kinslaying activity of the Tantalus clan. For further discussion of issues surrounding the title of the text see below, p. 16, note 34. Reflections upon *FCT* in later scholarship include Stanford's remark that it, 'has little vividness or style': 'Towards a History', p. 35. Nevertheless, it has become apparent that *FCT* may be approached both from a thematic perspective and as one of several medieval Irish Classicaladaptations found in close proximity in Dublin, RIA D iv 2, none of which is based on a known single Latin model. Miles proposes that 'The shorter classical tales [including *FCT*] ... may be considered a generic grouping distinct from the more substantial classical texts, such as *Togail Troi* and *Togail na Tebe*': '*Riss*', p. 69. Miles also notes both the 'comparative simplicity and episodic structure' of *FCT* [versus the other 'shorter classical tales']', as well as its 'greater affinity with the scope and narrative style of the scholia of the antique *grammatici*, on whom it relies almost to the exclusion of the *poetae*': '*Riss*', p. 70.

[2] For an overview on the corpus of scholarship concerning medieval Irish Classical adaptations see Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical Compositions', pp. 1–10; for the position in 1970 see Stanford, 'Towards a History', pp. 33–8.

[3] This new edition of *FCT* is below, pp. 16–45.

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comparison impossible.[4] Characters found in *FCT* include not only those such as Agamemnon, Menelaus and Helen who might reasonably be supposed to have been familiar at least to educated medieval Irish consumers of such works, but also those not associated directly with the Trojan War, who were doubtless less well-known, such as Aegisthus, Atreus, Thyestes, Aerope and Pelops.[5] In addition to the presence of these characters, much of the narrative content of *FCT*, even of the parts of the text which chiefly concern the aforementioned better-known characters, appears to be unusual in a medieval work. Therefore, one of the principal aims of this study must be to attempt to place *FCT* in its context within the Classical tradition. In particular, if precision is impossible concerning the identification of the source material used by the author of *FCT*, it is hoped that this study will succeed in identifying the most likely types of sources which might have both inspired and informed him.[6]

The narratives which together form *FCT* may have been Classically-inspired, yet without a systematic analysis of their context it is impossible to say with any degree of confidence which of their elements are orthodox (represented in at least one other account of the story in question) and which are unique to *FCT*, and therefore possible innovations by the medieval Irish author. Since only by identifying these unique elements can any reasoned assessment be made concerning *FCT* as a literary work, a systematic analysis of the content of its sub-narratives in relation to analogues found in the Classical Tradition will form a major part of this study. This analysis, focusing on similarities and differences between the respective treatments of essentially the same narratives in *FCT* and in analogues, may shed significant light upon the question of the likeliest source types for the versions found in *FCT*. However, it is recognised that it may not be possible to separate the input of the author of *FCT* from

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[4] Authors of model texts from the Classical tradition which are the bases for medieval Irish adaptations include not only such figures as Virgil, Lucan and Statius, but also those whose true names are not known, such as the author of *De Excidio Troiae Historia* (*DETH*) whom I shall refer to as Dares for convenience. Other works with relevance to this study whose authorship is uncertain, but which have a tradition associated with a particular individual include the Classical mythographical tracts *Fabulae* and *The Library*. I shall call these respectively the works of Hyginus and Apollodorus throughout, though modern scholarship suggests that neither text was written by the author traditionally associated with it: Smith & Trzascoma, *Apollodorus' Library*, pp. xxix–xxx and xlii–xliv.

[5] Except in the edition of *FCT* I employ Classical characters' anglicised names throughout, save where there is significant doubt over the identity of a character, in which case I quote the gaelicised form of the name as it appears in *FCT*.

[6] I refer to the author of *FCT* using masculine pronouns throughout, whilst recognising that he might not have been male, even though the text appears to exhibit a clearly negative portrayal of women throughout, see below, pp. 152–65.

that of his sources, since the latter's content is inherently unlikely to be established with sufficient precision in order to do so with confidence.

Having established, as far as possible, which material found in *FCT* is unique to it and which may, therefore, be authorial, the thematic content of *FCT* will be analysed in order to identify the most likely preoccupations of its medieval Irish author. The greater part of this study, then, will concern the analysis of *FCT* within the contexts of both the wider Classical tradition and that of a medieval Irish author with his own preoccupations and methods. The final chapter will aim to consider *FCT* within the context of other medieval Irish adaptations of Classical narratives, specifically those found in the manuscripts which also contain *FCT*, and those whose major sources are likewise unknown. I will focus on *Merugud Uilix meic Leirtis* (*MU*) in particular, since it is directly adjacent to *FCT* in both manuscripts which contain the latter text.[7] Furthermore, *MU* is similar to *FCT* in that it is a medieval Irish adaptation text for which there is no known model which, despite its Classical subject matter, also contains a significant quantity of material which is unique.

Therefore, by producing a new edition of the text and by conducting a detailed analysis of its content and context, I hope to both address the aforementioned relative neglect of *FCT* and to shed further light upon the corpus of medieval Irish Classical adaptations.

[7] The edition cited here throughout is R.T. Meyer, *Merugud*.

1. *FINGAL CHLAINNE TANNTAIL*: THE TEXT

1.1 Manuscripts

The two manuscript versions of *FCT* are:

K: Dublin, King's Inns' Library (KIL) 12, folios 43c –45c. This manuscript was once part of a greater whole which also included what is now KIL 13. The combined entity was written by Moilechlainn Ó Cianáin, perhaps in Co. Fermanagh, between 1491 and 1493. Apart from the short non-Classical text which immediately follows *FCT* (and which may have been added after the other material) the combined KIL 12–13 contains only the Classical adaptations *Togail Troí*, Recension 3, (*TTr*^{3}), *MU*, *FCT* and *Imtheachta Aeniasa* (*IA*).[8] Although it is difficult to be certain about the original manuscript order of these texts, if *IA* (now found in KIL 13) originally immediately followed *FCT* this may reflect a compiler's attempt at chronological ordering.[9] Apart from a small area at the foot of folio 45a the text of *FCT* is well preserved and readily legible.

S: Dublin, Royal Irish Academy (RIA) D iv 2, folios 66vb–67va. Much of the manuscript, whose foliation has become disordered, was written by two named scribes, Seáan mac Aedacain and Eoghan Ó Hachoidern, perhaps in Offaly and probably in the late fifteenth century.[10] Ó Hachoidern was the scribe of all of the manuscript's Classical adaptations except its version of *In Cath Cathardha*, which appears to be separate from the manuscript's other Classical adaptation texts. Although it is difficult to be certain of the original foliation, it seems that the Classical adaptations copied by Ó Hachoidern followed the order *TTr*^{3}, *FCT*,

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[8] De Brún, *Catalogue*, pp. 30–3. For a discussion of the issues surrounding the categorisation of the recensions of *TTr*, see Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, pp. 107–30. As an edition of *TTr*^{3}, a version of which is found each of the same two manuscripts which contain versions of *FCT*, is currently in preparation by Professor Michael Clarke I shall refer here only to *TTr*^{1} and *TTr*^{2}; even so, it appears that *TTr*^{3} is an expansion from *TTr*^{2}, which also includes the text sometimes given the separate title *An Tres Troí*, 'The Third Troy'. The edition of *IA* is Calder, *Imtheachta*; see also Poppe, *A New Introduction*.

[9] Although the opening paragraphs of *FCT* recount events enivisaged to have taken place generations before the Agamemnon-led Argive assault on Troy, its final sentence makes clear that the text also focuses on what it calls the 'échta ⁊ aighedha Gréc iar toghail na Troí', 'murderous deeds and violent deaths of the Greeks after the destruction of Troy': *FCT*, § 22. Such a chronological view may have influenced the placing of *FCT* between *MU* and *IA* in this manuscript.

[10] See Mulchrone, *Catalogue* Fasciculus 26, pp. 3297–3307, and Ó Concheanainn, 'Notes', p. 73.

MU, *Sgél In Mhinaduir* (*SIM*) and *Riss In Muindtuirc* (*RIM*).[11] There appears from this to be little chronological ordering at work, and the texts may simply have been copied and grouped together as Classical adaptations. However, a most unusual, and apparently non-Classical, text intervenes between *SIM* and *RIM*, which may cast doubt on the rationale for grouping the texts copied by Ó Hachoidern together, though five out of the six texts which he copied in this manuscript are Classical adaptations. This intervening text, which Mulchrone calls 'Story of the Release of the Geistedes from a Plague', requires further study both per se and in relation to its place in the manuscript in the midst of a grouping of Classical adaptations in the same hand. Thus far I have found no trace either of the 'Geistedes' or of the priest / author 'Neimias' who is mentioned in the scribal colophon on folio 71.[12] The text of *FCT* is generally well preserved except in places where the manuscript has either worn away completely or been damaged, perhaps by water. This has resulted in the loss or illegibility of several lines at the foot of each folio.

1.2 Orthography and Phonology

Both K and S exhibit spelling norms which may be described as a mixture between those of Middle Irish and Early Modern Irish, with no clear pattern either within each manuscript version or between them over the representation of certain sounds. A good example of this is the lack of consistency over the spellings of intervocalic and final stops, approximately half of which in each of K and S are represented by the older spellings 'c', 'p' and 't' whilst the other approximately half have the more modern and phonologically correct 'g', 'b' and 'd' respectively. This is in evidence in, for example, the spellings of two words connected to the verb 'opaid' / 'obaid', 'refuses', found in respectively § 1 and § 2 (in this edition of *FCT*), in which 'roob' (3s. past) and 'hopadh' (vn.) are found in K but respectively 'roop' and 'hobadh' occur at the equivalent points of S.

A similar situation to that evident in the inconsistent spelling of voiced stops is found in relation to the spelling of the spirants spelt 'gh', 'bh', and 'dh' according to the orthographical norms of the fifteenth century. Though such spellings are in evidence in both K and S, they are not always marked, and the older spellings 'g', 'b' and 'd' are also found.

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[11] Edition of *SIM*: Hillers, '*Sgél*', pp. 134–8; edition of *RIM*: Miles, '*Riss*', pp. 84–93.

[12] Mulchrone, *Catalogue* Fasciculus 26, p. 3306. Following the publication of a synopsis of this text by Meyer in 1903: – 'Mitteilungen', p. 467 – Marstrander's edition, with a short discussion, was published in 1911: 'How Samson Slew the Gesteda'.

However, the practice of both scribes to finish a significant proportion of words, especially past passive forms of verbs which end in 'ed(h)', with a simple '˷' without a lenition point does not assist the assessment of their respective spelling conventions for these sounds. Despite the unmarked lenition in words whose endings are spelt simply '˷', lenition is generally marked in both manuscripts, yet the scribe of K often fails to mark the letter 'c' with a lenition point where expected, for example to indicate a masculine singular possessive. S includes a single example of 'ts' for lenited 's' ('fam tseitidh', § 5), a common convention in Irish scribal practice after around 1200.[13]

The spelling of the earlier distinct voiced spirant sounds 'gh' and 'dh' are conflated in both manuscript versions, giving examples such as 'áidhidha' (§ 2) and 'aentaigh' (§ 4) in K and 'cinaigh' and 'tseitidh' (both § 5) in S.[14] Another spelling convention associated with the transition from MI to EMI, the marking of the glide vowel in words such as 'bean' and 'fear', is found intermittently in both K and S along with the earlier spelling without the glide vowel. The first word of the text, for example, is the proper name spelt 'Pealoip' in S, yet elsewhere in this version it is spelt 'Peloip'. Forms of the word 'fled(h)' are spelt in both S and K without a marked 'a' (on five occasions, all in § 5), and where glide vowels are marked in K it may be revealing that the 'a' is most commonly marked either as a subscript or as a superscript, perhaps suggesting scribal intervention, especially since the 'a' is not found in the equivalent places in S. This phenomenon occurs once in K in the case of Pelops' gaelicised name which is spelt 'Pealoip' with a subscript 'a' (§ 6), and twice in the space of a few words where first the proper name for 'Helen' is spelt 'Eilleann' and then she is also described as 'bean (Menalaus)', in both cases with superscript 'a' (both § 7).[15] However, the aforementioned lack of scribal consistency over this is evidenced by the fact that these two latter spellings each with a with superscript 'a' are flanked in K by instances of 'Ellin' and the description of Clytemnestra as 'ben (Aigmemnoin)' each without a marked glide vowel (both § 7). As in the above examples which refer to personal names, the 'a' in which marks the glide vowel in 'ceana', is also written subscript in K (§ 11).

Similar to the aforementioned inconsistency concerning the spellings 'ea' and 'e' for the

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[13] 'ts(h)' for lenited 's' also occurs in *RIM*, which is found only in the same manuscript which contains S and, like the latter text, is in the hand of Eoghan Ó Hachoideirn: Miles, '*Riss*', pp. 82–3.

[14] Where S has 'cinaigh' K has 'cinaid' (§ 5); 'fuidhbidh' is spelt 'fuighbidh' in K (§ 6); 'iaraigh' is simply 'i- -' in K (§ 20); on this phenomenon see GOI, p. 77.

[15] S has 'Peloip', 'Eleann' and 'ben' at the equivalent points in its version of the narrative.

same sound in both S and K, although both versions of *FCT* show palatalisation via the presence of the letter 'i'. This is very common in both K and S especially after either 'e' or 'a', yet identifying whether palatalisation is marked or not is not helped by the normal practice of abbreviation found in both manuscript versions of *FCT*. For example, though both S and K have 'deirb(h)siur' spelt in full with palatalisation marked they also have respectively 'd–b–it–' and 'd–b–t', each of which might be expanded to either 'derbráthair' or, with palatalisation marked, 'deirbráthair' (§§ 1 and 8). However, with but a few exceptions only, the spelling of proper names present in both S and K seem to have palatalisation marked. This is evident from both 'Aig(h)memnon' (§§ 7–14) and 'Eille(a)nn' (§§ 7–20), the latter found only in K, S has the non-palatalised spellings 'Eleann', 'Ellind' and 'Elenda', as well as other proper names which occur frequently such as 'Oirist' (§§ 17–22).[16] While this may be considered to be a part of the adaptation / gaelicisation process, it is notable that the first two names are spelt respectively 'Agmemnon' and 'Elena' or 'Elind', i.e.without marked palatalisation, in the version of *TTr* found in the twelfth-century *Book of Leinster* (LL).[17] Since these two personal names are relatively common in both *FCT* and in the version of *TTr* found in LL, it seems safe to conclude that their respective spellings in these texts – with palatalisation marked only in *FCT*– appear to have been have been updated between the compilation of LL and the fifteenth century, when both manuscript witnesses of *FCT* were produced.

Indeed it is likely that in both S and K where possible such updating with marked palatalisation can be assumed to have taken place in the spellings of gaelicised Classical names such as 'Aichil', 'Oirist' and 'Eighist'. However, the situation is not completely uniform or regular within either K or S. Though S has both 'Poireth' and 'Eirmiona' (in respectively § 16 and § 20), K has the non-palatalised spellings 'Poreth' and 'Ermiona' – the reverse of the aforementioned situation concerning the marking of palatalisation in Helen's gaelicised name in S and K.

Nasalisation following a noun in the accusative singular is marked twice in each manuscript version, both times in the phrase 'tuc grádh ndermháir','[she] fell passionately in love' (literally,'[she] gave truly-great love') which appears in both the first line of the text and in

[16] K has a single instance of 'Ell*enn*' in § 16.
[17] There are several examples of each of these spellings in the version of *TTr* in LL: Stokes, *Togail*, especially pp. 25–7; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, pp. 1089–91.

§ 8. Temporal nasalisation occurs in the phrase 'tri lá 7 tri n-oidche', '[for] three days and three nights' (§ 10). These might be the result of set phrases, and this and the lack of possible counterexamples makes it impossible to use them as dating evidence.[18]

Overall, therefore, the evidence from the orthographical practices found in both K and S suggests that they are both either partially updated copies from at least one earlier manuscript version of *FCT* in which older spelling conventions held sway, or faithful copies from exemplars whose spelling conventions were already a mixture of older and newer, a situation which would itself imply the existence of an earlier version of the text. In the absence of any knowledge about the tradition of *FCT* prior to K and S any suggestion concerning the extent of any updating undertaken by the scribe of either is speculative to a degree. However, from the evidence of the significant proportion of earlier spellings found in both manuscript versions of *FCT* it seems safe to conclude that at least one exemplar of a much earlier date than either extant manuscript must have existed.

1.3 Morphology

(i) *The Verbal System*

All verbal forms found in *FCT* are from simple verbs, associated with the MI period and later. Examples of this include forms such as 'dotuairc' (§ 2), 'roaircset' (§ 7), 'imdhighed' (§ 9) and 'forfácaib' (§ 17) which are based on the respective simplex verbs 'tuaircid', 'éirgid', 'immthigid', and 'fácbaid', as opposed to the forms associated with these verbs' respective compound predecessors 'do-fúairc', 'at-reig', 'imm-tét' and 'fo-ácaib'.[19]

The past tense of such verbs was formed with an 's' preterite, i.e. a preverbal particle plus the stem plus the relevant personal ending, and this means of forming the past tense is found throughout *FCT*, as might be expected of a text composed in the MI period or later.[20] Owing to the nature of the text's narrative style, many of its verbal forms are 3s. past either indicative or passive. The only survivals of the 't' preterite in *FCT* are found in forms of the very common verbs 'as-beir', of which both the earlier MI 3s. form 'atbert' / 'adbert' (§§ 5,

[18] On the demise of nasalisation following nouns in the accusative singular see Jackson, *Aislinge*, pp. 79–80.
[19] Respectively, 'beats', 'rises' or 'attacks', 'sets off' and 'leaves'; for earlier and later forms of these verbs see DIL, pp. 234, 58–9, 268, 393 and 311 respectively.
[20] On the spread of the 's' preterite in the MI period, see McCone, *The Early Irish Verb*, pp. 209–10 and Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', pp. 282–3.

9, 10 and 20) and later MI and EMI form 'adubairt' (§§ 14 and 20) are found, as well as 'ro-saig', in its relatively late 3s. form 'doriacht' (§ 13).[21] Since these two verbs preserved 't' preterite forms later than other verbs, this is to be expected. From the evidence of the presence in the text of both 'atbert' and 'adubairt' it seems that either *FCT* was composed at a time when both forms were possible in writing, or that the later form represents a later layer in the text's tradition.[22]

There are few examples of verbal forms in either the future or secondary future tenses in *FCT*. Where they occur they are marked exclusively with either 'f' or 'é', depending on the verb in question, and the text's only instance of a verb which once formed its future and secondary future via reduplication, 'gainithir', 'is born' has the 'f' marker in *FCT* for the secondary future and no reduplication, 'rogeinfidh', 'would be born' (§ 6).

This form is also an example of the apparent interchangeability of the preverbal particles 'ro' 'no' and 'do' in *FCT*, a feature associated with later MI and EMI.[23] In the case of the secondary future, the historically correct preverbal particle was 'no' and not 'ro' as in the above example 'rogeinfidh'. In the case of preverbal particles used to mark the past tense, *FCT* contains approximately equal numbers of 'do' and the historically correct 'ro' (once used to mark the perfective), and these appear to be used interchangeably, as the existence of both 'rohinnised' and 'dohinnised' for 'it was told' within a few lines of each other in § 9 demonstrates.

(ii) *The Nominal System*[24]

(a) The definite article

There are two examples in *FCT* where the dative plural ending '-aib' is used in the noun but not in the preceding preposition plus definite article: 'dona déibh' (§§ 2 and 3) a combined preposition with definite article. There are no examples of the older '-aib' marked dative ending on such a construction.

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[21] There are other examples of relatively late forms of 'as-beir' in the text, such as the 1s. pres. 'aderim' (§ 2); on this form of 'as-beir' see DIL, p. 53, col. 424.

[22] Both 'atbert' and 'adubairt' are found in the LL version of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (*TBC*), which indicates that the 'later' form was already in use alongside the earlier form in the twelfth century: DIL, p. 54, col. 425.

[23] On this phenomenon in MI see Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', p. 280.

[24] On the nominal system in operation in MI see Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', pp. 239–51.

(b) Plural endings after prepositions[25]

There are two unambiguous examples in *FCT* of the formerly exclusively dative plural ending '-(a)ib' being applied to a plural noun following a preposition controlling the accusative. These are 'fri macaib' (K), (S) has the orthographical variant 're' for 'fri' (§ 8), and 'co Colamhnaibh' (§ 16) where 'co' must mean 'to' and therefore ought to control the accusative case. Other examples of '-(a)ib' endings on plural nouns following prepositions which control either the dative or accusative where an accusative would be expected because of the context are 'for géraitibh' and 'a críchaibh' (both § 11), and 'for macaibh' (§ 13). There are no examples of non-'(a)ib', plural endings following prepositions in *FCT*. This situation is entirely consistent with the norms of both MI and EMI, wherein the '-aib' ending survived and spread to the accusative because it was a marked plural ending.

(c) The spread of dental-stem plural endings[26]

Nouns which in OI had been declined with plurals in unstressed vowels, e.g. 'i', 'ai', 'u' or 'iu', especially 'io stem' nouns, gained dental endings in both nominative and accusative plural during the MI period, probably because these became understood as effectively generic plural markers following the collapse of unstressed nouns into 'schwa'. This phenomenon is evidenced twice in *FCT* in 'áidhedha' (K) / 'áighidha' (S) in § 2, and '(do) dhaltadha' in § 5, respectively the nominative and accusative plurals of the 'io stem' nouns 'áige', 'part of the body' and 'daltae', 'fosterling'. The spread of dental endings to nouns whose nominative and accusative plurals once ended in unstressed vowels appears to be a feature which is most commonly represented only in texts composed from the twelfth century onwards, though this dating criterion is far from precise, especially in the case of *FCT*, a text with but two examples of such nominal endings, and no opportunities for counterexamples i.e. other instances of 'io stem' nouns in the nominative or accusative plural.[27]

(d) Object Pronouns

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[25] See Jackson, *Aislinge*, p. 88 and 'The Date', p. 19.
[26] See Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', p. 246; on dental endings in EMI see McManus, 'An Nua-Ghaeilge', pp. 370–1.
[27] On the spread of dental endings in the MI period, see Jackson, *Aislinge*, p. 82.

There is a 9:6 split between independent and infixed object pronouns in the text, and of the infixed examples only five are employed correctly according to the standards of OI, as the following list of the object pronouns found in *FCT* shows:

Independent

§ 3 é

§ 4 iatt (K only)

§ 15 iat

§ 20 é (x 3); í (S only)

§ 21 í

§ 22 é

Infixed

§ 1 'rusdímicnigh' 3sf., correct as per the standards of OI

§ 5 'rustogaibh' correct if 3pl., or incorrect, if used as a marker of the relative, replacing 'a^{n}'[28]

'roscaithedh' 3pl., correct

§ 8 'rotinnarpsat', 2s., correct

§ 19 'rusfothraig' (K only), 3sm., reflexively, incorrect

'rusgab' 3sf., correct, anticipating 'righi'

It may be inferred from the fact that all third person infixed object pronouns in the text are 's', 'correct' or not, that at the time of composition of *FCT* the system of 'infixed' object pronouns had either broken down, or was close to breaking down. However, that only second-person object pronoun of either type found in *FCT* is infixed in 'rotinnarpsat' may indicate that when the text was composed the older system was at least still understood, at least for non third-person object pronouns. However, it must be noted that second person

[28] On the use of an infixed 's' to denote a relative from the late MI period see Jackson, *Aislinge*, pp. 95–6.

singular infixed pronouns are also found in Classical Irish poetry.[29] Even though the sample size is relatively low in *FCT*, the combination of the proportion of each type of pronoun may allow a useful comparison to be made between *FCT* and other texts. Jackson quotes ratios of independent to infixed object pronouns of 1:30 and 1:9.5 for *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* and *TTr*[1] respectively, and quotes Dillon's finding that the equivalent ratio is 1:2 in *TTr*[2].[30] On this basis, the transition from infixed to independent in written texts proceeded apace in the twelfth century.

From the perspective of relative chronology, then, the object pronominal system in evidence in the 9:6 ratio between pronoun types found in *FCT* appears to indicate that it was composed after the above texts as quoted by Jackson. However, the evidence from *FCT* does not offer a great deal of precision concerning absolute chronology, particularly since there is some doubt concerning how long infixed object pronouns, whether used 'correctly' or not, persisted in written Irish. Jackson quotes both Murphy's and MacEoin's separate suggestions that the 'infixed' system had broken down by the middle of the twelfth century, yet with the dearth of firmly datable thirteenth-century Irish texts it impossible at present to be sure that the kind of patchy pronominal system found in *FCT* is evidence that it must have been composed before any given date.[31] The evidence from the object pronouns of *FCT* is that it was composed at a time when infixed object pronouns were still understood, yet, for third person pronouns especially, only traces of the older system survived, and there are no examples in *FCT* of an independent pronoun reinforcing an infixed one (being used correctly or not). At present, it is unknown whether this situation is consistent with a text composed in, say, 1250. From the evidence of object pronouns alone, it would seem that *FCT* was composed after *TTr*[2], a text dated to the mid twelfth century.

1.4 Conclusion

Both S and K are found in manuscripts which may be associated with some certainty with the late fifteenth century. Despite disagreements between them over individual instances, the orthographical practices evident in K and S are close to indistinguishable, and equally mixed

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[29] McManus, 'An Nua-Ghaeilge', pp. 429–30.
[30] Jackson, *Aislinge*, p. 96.
[31] The respective views of Murphy and MacEoin are quoted in Jackson, *Aislinge*, p. 96. All three authors appear to have been concerned with texts which were composed well before *FCT*. Unfortunately, Irish prose texts firmly datable to shortly, i.e. within a century, *after FCT* are rare at present.

between the older and the newer, concerning such practices as the marking of voiced stops and glide vowels. However, neither of the respective manuscript provenances of K nor S offer any significant clues concerning the pre-existing tradition of *FCT*. It is therefore impossible to determine either which of the two manuscript versions is closer to the underlying *FCT*, or how many intervening versions of *FCT* existed between its composition and K and S.

The date of the underlying *FCT* may only be approached with caution via the language of the text. Nevertheless, from both the verbal and nominal systems evident in both versions of *FCT* it seems safe to conclude that there are no morphological features in the text which suggest that it might have been composed before the twelfth century, and the mixed pronominal system in particular which appears to be in use seems to suggest that the text was composed at the turn of the MI / EMI period, about 1200, with a fairly wide window to allow for the unknown scribal practices of the originator, plus gaps in current knowledge concerning how a thirteenth-century text might be recognised on morphological grounds. This dating for *FCT* is in broad agreement with Miles' comments concerning both it and *RIM*, plus the other Irish adaptations from unknown sources also found in RIA D iv 2, i.e. *MU* and *SIM*. The situation concerning the date of the unique material found in TTr^3, versions of which are found in both manuscripts containing *FCT*, will doubtless become clearer following the publication of the forthcoming edition of that text. In the meantime, it appears safe to say that there appears to be no strong reason to distinguish between the date of the composition of *FCT* and those of its fellow Classical adaptation texts found in RIA D iv 2 on morphological grounds.

1.5 Edition

This edition has been produced with the aim of producing a version of the text which is both easily accessible and, as far as possible, representative of how *FCT* was known to at least one fifteenth-century Irish scholar, with as few interventions as possible. The fact that K has suffered considerably less damage than S and is by far the closer of the two to complete makes it the better witness of the two on which to base such an edition. Furthermore, since Byrne's 1927 edition of *FCT* is based on S, the production of an edition based on K means that modern editions will exist based on each of the two witnesses of *FCT*. The new edition is not intended to replace but to complement that by Byrne, adding to our knowledge and understanding of *FCT*.

Readings from S are given, in square brackets, in the main text only on those very few occasions where K is either illegible or, on rare occasions, where a word necessary for sense is present in S but absent in K owing, it is assumed, to scribal error. Words present in K which are missing in S and other non-orthographical variant readings found in S, i.e. when S contains wording, and not merely spelling, which is different to that found in K, are given in footnotes. Round brackets are used in the main text to indicate words present in K which appear to be the result of scribal error, for example in cases of repetition. Footnotes to the text refer to mechanical details, such as variant readings between the two manuscripts, manuscript punctuation, and suggested scribal errors. Footnotes to the translation refer to the few occasions where the meaning of the text is ambiguous, several of which instances are examined at greater length in the section 1.7 'Notes to The Text' below, pp. 46–51.
All expansions in the main text are shown in italics. Expansions in variant readings from S shown in footnotes are underlined. The scribe of K consistently uses the same particular common medieval Irish abbreviations for each of 'ar', 'air', 'er', 'n', 'm', 'us', 'con' and a long stroke for either 'a(i)d' or 'u(i)d', and both 'et' and 'ed' are represented by '$_7$'. Less conventionally, a version of the letter 'k' occasionally appears as shorthand for 'ca'. The letter 'r' followed by a vowel is often marked by the relevant vowel only, in superscript. A symbol resembling a curly version of the letter 'k', favoured by insular scribes as shorthand for *autem*, is transcribed using the Irish equivalent 'imorro';[32] similarly, the common insular abbreviation for *uel* – a symbol resembling a tall 'l' with a suspension stroke branching from the right – is transcribed using the Irish equivalent 'nó'; '.ī.' is expanded to *ingen*.

As little as possible orthographical normalisation has been introduced. Thus, where a point above a letter marking either lenition or a fricative 'c' might be expected but is not present in K (especially after 'c' in such instances as 'a c[h]oscairt', 'his slaughter' and 'nac[h]', 'that not') this is not represented in the edition either. This both reduces the need for the distraction of square brackets and preserves the practice of the scribe of K who did not, it seems, feel the need to consistently mark either lenition in general or, more especially, the fricative sound of the letter 'c' where it might be expected. However, length marks have been added where they might be expected, but are lacking in K, in order to assist clarity of meaning; where length marks are found in K this is marked with a footnote.

[32] On the insular symbol for *autem*, see Beeson, 'The Manuscript Problem', pp. 342–3.

All punctuation in the edition is my own, unless stated. The only examples of what may be regarded as punctuation in K, marked in footnotes in this edition, are: large letters which sometimes appear to be slightly less indented than the main text; length marks, of which there are few marked by modern standards; and the presence of symbols which resemble large, curly, elongated, very forward-sloping, 'ss' or 's', sometimes with dots above and below, which appear to indicate a break, either in the narrative or in the scribe's work. As indicated above, these apparent break symbols are marked in footnotes, and their more numerous counterparts in S (in which they appear as unfilled, modern graffiti-style, outlines of large, sloping, straight-sided versions of the letter 's') are also marked in footnotes. Apart from the first instance, which occurs at the end of § 3 in terms of this edition, these break symbols do not occur in the same places in the narrative in the two manuscript versions, which may indicate that they are scribal and not authorial. However, the fact that the first one appears in the same place in the text in both K and S may suggest that at least this opening break in the narrative predates them, and that its use was intended to 'close the book' on the story of Pelops, i.e. on the account of his murder and resuscitation. Although, following this initial break mark there is little consistency between K and S over either capitalisation or break marks, it seems that what may have been begun with the first break mark represented, at some point in its tradition, an attempt to mark the ends of sub-narratives within *FCT*.

With this in mind, although it is recognised as impossible to reconstruct it with confidence from the paragraphing and capitalisation found in K and S, it seems reasonable to make the suggestion that *FCT* had an authorial episodic structure, and this is supported by the nature of the action it recounts, as it moves from *fingal* to *fingal* in the Tantalus dynasty one generation at a time. In the tradition of both fifteenth-century scribes I have to an extent imposed my own structure on the text via its separation into paragraphs which do not consistently agree with the break marks or capitalisation practices of either K or S. This imposed structure is intended to assist in both reading *FCT* as a work of literature and in analysing its content. However, it remains at least reasonable judging from the action of *FCT* that it is intended to be understood as consisting of a series of episodes. The whole work gains its cohesion via the two elements evident from its title which are present in each and every episode: the Royal House of Tantalus, and *fingal*.

1.6 Text and Translation[33]

Fingal[34] Cloinne[35] Tannail annso sis

§ 1. [P]eloip[36] mac Tantail is dó tuc a lesmáthair an grád ndermháir, .i. Moesia ingen Aiax mic[37] Mirmedoin, deirbhsiur athar í sidhe d'Aichil Échtach[38] mac Peil. *Imorro* roob-sum an inghin co rusdímicnigh co mór iarsin, co nd-ebert Peloip: 'dia mbeidis mná an talman a cóemthach m'hathar uili, ní edraidhfinn én[39] mhnaí díbh, 7 ní dhingninn míréir m'hathar.'

§ 2. Rofergaighedh[40] an bhen ghusmar ghnáthúaibhrech accarbh aininnech annsin[41] ima hopadh don gilla. 7[42] roscail-si a folt[43] 7 dorép[44] a haghed,[45] dotuaircc[46] a huchт 7 a cighi, 7 tánaic dochum Tannail 7 atfét[47] a sárugad do Pheloip. 'Apair-siu,[48] a ríghan', ar Tanntal,[49] 'créd dogéntar fris'. 'Aderim',[50] ar sí, 'a coscairt 7 áidhedha[51] do dhenamh dhe, 7 a brúith 7 a

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[33] Beginning at KIL 43c, l. 14.

[34] The title appears directly above the first line of the text proper; the use of the singular *fingal* may seem to be at odds with the multiple kinslayings recounted (the title in S is *finghala chlainne tanntail innso*, in the plural) yet the singular form may refer to the kinslaying behaviour of members of the Tantalus clan. Grounds for preferring *fingal* over *fingala* may be found in that the singular form is used in a likely reference to *FCT* in *Togail na Tebe*, a medieval Irish adaptation of Statius' *Thebaid*. For a discussion of issues arising from this apparent mention of *FCT* in another medieval Irish work on a Classical subject see below, pp. 94–6

[35] The scribe seldom marks lenition throughout the text after 'c'.

[36] There is a P-shaped space seven lines high where the initial letter ought to be; *Pealoip* S.

[37] *ic* superscript.

[38] On the use of 'Échtach', 'Murderous', as an epithet for Achilles see below, p. 17, note 52, and pp. 53–4.

[39] om. S.

[40] Initial *R* upper case and in margin; *Rofergaigh* S.

[41] om. S.

[42] om. S.

[43] *...iarsin* S.

[44] *roreb* S.

[45] *...uili* 7 S .

[46] *rotuairc* S.

[47] *roinnis* S.

[48] Large *A*; *Abair sin* S.

[49] *ar si tantal* S.

[50] Large initial *A*.

[51] *aighidha becca* S.

The Kinslaying of the Family of Tantalus here below

§ 1. It was Pelops son of Tantalus whom his stepmother loved greatly, that is, Moesia daughter of Ajax son of Myrmidon, she was the sister of the father of Murderous Achilles[52] son of Peleus. He refused the girl, however, and then he rebuked her greatly, and Pelops said: 'Even if all the women of the world were my father's lovers I would not become involved with a solitary woman of them, and I would not act against the will of my father.'

§ 2. Then the fierce, angry, very violent, proud woman became enraged[53] at her rejection by the youth. And she unbound her hair, and tore at her face, and beat her bosom and her breasts, and she came to Tantalus and told of her violation by Pelops. 'Pronounce, o queen,' said Tantalus, 'what shall be done to him'. 'I pronounce', said she, 'that he be slaughtered and dismembered, and crushed up into pieces, and be

[52] The epithet 'Échtach' may be honorific, yet it must refer to Achilles' prowess in battle, i.e. as a killer of foes. It is difficult to gauge its force here, yet since the final lines of *FCT* refer to Greek 'échta' which appears to mean 'murders' in the light of the action to which it refers, 'Murderous' seems to be a justifiable translation of 'Échtach'. In any case, 'Murderous' for a warrior such as Achilles might easily be understood as honorific rather than purely pejorative, and may reflect the tension between the demands of martial honour and its often tragic consequences (such as kinslayings, which often take place in battle in *FCT*) as related in the Irish text.

[53] It is unusual that the passive form 'rofergaigedh' is used here in K (S has the expected active 'rofergaigh'). 'Rofergaigedh' occurs several times in *FCT* and appears to mean 'x became enraged' or 'x grew angry'.

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*th*ab*a*rt do*n*a déib*h* ga*n* f*h*is dóib d'a c*h*ait*h*em*h*, co fesa*m* indat dei iat i*ar* fír.' *Ar* nir léics*et*[54] cloi*nn* doib*h* ⁊[55] is *air*e doráid*h*[56] sí si*n*. Rog*ai*rmed[57] i*ar*si*n* na dei doc*um*[58] Tan*n*tail g*ur* roid*h*b*r*ad*h* a m*a*c dóib*h*.

§ 3. Rob*er*b*h*ad*h*[59] i*ar*si*n* a*n* mac ⁊ tuc*ad* do*n*a déib*h* é. Tucad*ar* na dei i*ar*si*n* ait*h*ne[60] g*ur*uo dui*n*e tuc*ad* dóib*h*,[61] ⁊ ní rohit*h*ed*h*[62] ní dé *acht* a *sh*lin*n*én romeil[63] Cirir .i. bandei na c*ru*t*h*aig*h*ec*h*ta. Rof*er*ccaig*hed*[64] i*arum* na dei f*ri* Tan*n*tal ⁊ f*ri*a mnaí[65] ⁊ rom*ar*bsait[66] a ndíss[67] do[68] saig*h*n*é*n tentig*h*i, ⁊ dohat*h*nuaaig*h*edh[69] Peloip dorid*h*isi ⁊ tuc*ad* slin*nén* eb*er*necd*h*a in*n* *ar* so*n* a*nt* slin*n*éi*n* roc*h*ait*h* Cirir.[70]

§ 4. An[71] Peloip hési*n*[72] t*uc* sid*h*e m(*h*)naí[73] a d*hi*ngm*h*ála an u*air* t*h*éch*t*a, .i. Taithis i*ngen* Palloir[74] mic Pic. Ruc a*n* b*h*en si*n* dá mac d'ae*ntair*be*r*t,[75] .i. Teist ⁊ Aídir[76] a n-a*n*man*n*a. Rof*h*ás olc ad*h*b*h*al ⁊ cog*a*d cat*h*ard*h*a et*er*ra *ar*aen i*ar* dai*n* u*m* fe*r*an*n* a n-at*h*ar, *gur* rolad*h*

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[54] Preferred to the passive form 'léics*ed*', though that reading is possible, see below, pp. 46–7; *lecs<u>e</u>t* S.
[55] om. S.
[56] *ro<u>r</u>aid<u>h</u>* S.
[57] Large initial *R*; the ending might instead be expanded to 3pl. active *-et*; the same applies here in S.
[58] This is another example of the scribe's failure to mark fricative 'c' – the spelling 'dochum' might be expected here; S also has *doc<u>um</u>*, however.
[59] Large *R* in margin.
[60] *aicni ac<u>e</u>toir* S.
[61] om. S.
[62] *nir chait<u>h</u>id<u>h</u>* S with the 'c' superscript after the first 'h', indicating a letter missing in error.
[63] *roc<u>h</u>aith* S.
[64] Large initial *R*.
[65] *⁊<u>fr</u>ia mnai* om. S.
[66] *rom<u>ar</u>buit* S; this would be an example of a particular form of the 3pl. past passive in '-(a)it' which is found chiefly in twelfth-century texts; K has the 3pl. past active form, and either makes sense here.
[67] *do* subscript, perhaps as a reminder of the first word of the next column.
[68] 43d.
[69] *rohat<u>h</u>nuaig<u>h</u>edh* S.
[70] Break marks in both manuscripts here.
[71] Large initial *a* in margin.
[72] *sin* S.
[73] Lenition marked in error in manuscript; *mnai* S.
[74] *falloir* S, with the expected lenition after the feminine noun 'ingen' marked.
[75] *... do peloip* S.
[76] Length mark in manuscript.

given to the gods to be eaten without their knowledge, so that we may find out whether they are truly gods.' For they did not allow them to have offspring, and that is why she said that.[77] After that the gods were summoned to Tantalus so that his son might be offered up to them.

§ 3. After that, the lad[78] was cooked and given to the gods. Then the gods perceived that it was a human being who was offered to them, and nothing was eaten of him but his shoulder, which Ceres, the goddess of creation, consumed. At that the gods became angry at Tantalus and at his wife, and they killed them both with a thunderbolt, and Pelops was revived and given a shoulder of ivory in place of the shoulder which Ceres had eaten.

§ 4. That same Pelops took a suitable wife at the customary time, namely Taithis daughter of Pallor son of Picus.[79] That woman bore twin sons, Thyestes and Atreus their names. Great ill-feeling and civil war developed between them afterwards concerning their father's land, so that

[77] On the possible meanings of 'nir léics*et* cloinn doibh' see below, pp. 46–7.
[78] On the use of 'mac' here with reference to Pelops see below, p. 47.
[79] On 'Taithis' see below, pp. 54–5; on 'Pallor' see below, pp. 55–8.

ár fer eatorra.[80] Araísi*n*[81] dorig*h*ne*dh*[82] síth 7 aentaig*h* eto*r*ra *ar*[83] gac n-ulc díb si*n* uile, 7 a mb*erth*i do c*h*loi*nn* do T*h*eist dob*eredh ar* alt*r*om do Aídir iatt.[84] 7 ba haentad*h*ac*h* 7 ba dluit*h* a*n* cuma*nn* buí et*er* Eoraip, .i. ben Aídir, 7 Teist.[85] Docuaid*h* t*rá* Teist co mnaí a br*áth*a*r*, .i. Eoraip.[86]

§ 5. Rohin*nise*d[87] si*n* do Aídir 7 dogab*h*[88] fe*r*g mór 7 éd ad*h*b*h*al é ui*m*e,[89] 7 tuc*adh* a æs g*rádh*a 7 a m*uinter* cuigi 7 adbe*r*t fr*i*u, 'Rop áil lim-sa', *ar* se, 'to*r*gnu*m* fled*h*e móire do*m* br*áth*a*ir*, 7 a dena*m* feib[90] is dech dorónad*h* fled*h* bai*n*secd*h*a ria*m*'.[91] Rogabsat-so*m* do lái*m* a cuid do*n* fle*d* do fr*ith*álam, 7 ó rop urlam hi[92] docúas úath*ib*[93] *ar* cen*n* Teist, 7 rosmuai*nedh* co*maith*le ainngid*h*[94] úat*h*m*ar* ag Aídir i*n*a me*n*mai*n*, .i. a*n coíca*[95] mac r*u*stogaib*h* dia br*áth*a*ir*, a m*ar*b*ad* uile 7 a tabai*r*t *ar* so*n* f*h*eola cet*h*rad*h* dia n-ath*air* co roscait*h*ed*h*[96] leisi*n* fle*d*. 7 i*ar* cait*h*e*m* na fle*dh*i 7 na mac[97] rofí*ar*fa*ig*[98] Aídir dia br*áth*a*ir*, 'i*n*d at buidec*h*-sa dot' s*h*ódh?' *ar* se. Atbe*r*t Teist ba buid*h*ec*h*. 'Masa[99] buidec*h*', fo*r* Aidir, 'is iad do *coíca* mac

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[80] *co rola ar fer 7 sluagh atarru* S.
[81] Large initial *a* in margin; length mark in manuscript.
[82] *dorighnetar* S.
[83] *as* S.
[84] om. S.
[85] Break symbol in S.
[86] *co heorpa 7* S.
[87] Large initial *R* in margin.
[88] *rohinnsidh do aidir eisidhe .i. a brathair do dul cona mnai o rocuala aidir sin roghab* ...S.
[89] *ferg romhor 7 et dermair* S.
[90] *amal* S.
[91] Break symbol in S.
[92] *o rop urrlum in fledh* S.
[93] Length mark in manuscript; om. S.
[94] Parts of S are either barely legible or completely worn away between here and *mac* 3 lines down in this edition.
[95] Expanded from *.l.* .
[96] *dia chaithem* S.
[97] *...do chaithem* S.
[98] Length mark in manuscript.
[99] Large *m* in margin.

a slaughter of men took place between them. Then peace and harmony was made between them concerning their each and every grievance, and the children who were born to Thyestes were given in fosterage to Atreus. And the fellowship between Aerope, Atreus' wife, and Thyestes was united and close. Indeed Thyestes had sex with Aerope, his brother's wife.

§ 5. This was told to Atreus and he became very angry and greatly jealous about it, and his retinue and household were brought before him and he said to them, 'I would like', he said, 'to hold a great feast for my brother, and to do it in the best manner that a wedding feast has ever been prepared'. They set about preparing their part of the feast, and when it was ready a messenger was sent from among them to Thyestes, and Atreus conceived a terrifying, wicked plan in his mind, to kill all the fifty sons which he had taken from his brother, and to serve them to their father in place of beef that he might eat them at the feast. And after consuming the meal and the boys, Atreus asked his brother, 'Are you satisfied with your fare?' he said. Thyestes said he was satisfied. 'If you are satisfied', said Atreus, 'it is your

féin adúaghais arna marbad 7 arna mbrúith(t) duit a cinaid do[100] tholu-sa[101] com' mhnaí-siu'.[102] 'Is[103] olc an gním dorónais', ar[104] Teist, 'do dhaltadha féin do marbad'.[105] 'Niruo[106] ferr duit-si, mo conugud-sa fom' sheitidh', for Aídir.[107]

§ 6. Rofergaiged[108] Teist fria bráthair cinco raibhe cumacc a dhíghalta lais do cétaib nó do curadhaibh inn amus sin tuc a bráthair fair.[109] Co[110] ndechuidh Teist[111] iarsin do acallaim Apaill día[112] fhis an fuighbedh furtacht úadh 7 d'a fiarfaigidh[113] de a ndíghelad for Aídir an ainigin tuc fair.[114] Adubert Apaill na[115] díghelad co bruinn[i][116] mbratha 7 bethad acht muna dhigsedh[117] coa[118] inghin féin, .i. Telepía[119] a hainm side, 7 co ndíghelad an mac rogeinfidh úaithi sin[120] for Aídir ant olc roimir for Theist. Tuc[121] iarsin Teist a ingen féin mar[122] mhnaí 7 ruc[123] mac dó, .i. Eigist mac Teist, 7 is eiside rogabh ríghi Gréce, .i.[124] romarb Pealoip[125] .i. athair Aídir.[126]

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[100] om. S.
[101] *dula* S.
[102] Lenition is erroneously marked above the *m* of co*m* instead of above that of *mhnaí*; *co mnai sea duitsi* S.
[103] *I* upper case and in margin.
[104] *bar* S.
[105] Break symbol in S.
[106] *N* upper case.
[107] ...7 S.
[108] Initial *R* upper case and in margin.
[109] *condeachuidh teist* subscript, as a scribal reminder of the words to begin the next column.
[110] 44a.
[111] *condechuidh teist* appears at the bottom of 43vb below the text proper, probably as a reminder to the scribe of where to rejoin the text on the following folio.
[112] Length mark in manuscript.
[113] *fiarfaige* S.
[114] Break symbol in S.
[115] *nach* S.
[116] *bruindi* S
[117] partially legible; dhigsidh S.
[118] *co* S.
[119] Length mark in manuscript.
[120] *sidhe* S.
[121] Large *T* in margin.
[122] *do* S.
[123] ...*in ingen iarsin* S.
[124] 7 S.
[125] *a* subscript.
[126] Break symbol in S.

own fifty sons you have eaten after being killed and chopped up for you in revenge for you having sex with my wife'. 'Evil is the deed you have done', said Thyestes, 'to kill your own foster-sons'. 'It was not better for you to inflict a severe wound[127] on me through my wife', said Atreus.

§ 6. Thyestes grew angry towards his brother, though he did not have the force of troops or warriors to avenge the attack which his brother had made on him. Thyestes then went to converse with Apollo to find out if he would get help from him, and to ask him whether he would avenge on Atreus the outrage he had carried out against him. Apollo said that he would not get vengeance up to the end of Judgement and life[128] unless indeed he were to have sex with his own daughter, whose name was Pelopia, and that son who would be born from her would avenge upon Atreus the evil which he had carried out on Thyestes.[129] Then Thyestes took his own daughter as his wife and she bore him a son, Aegisthus son of Thyestes his name, and it is he who seized the kingship of the Greeks, i.e. killed Pelops, Atreus' father.

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[127] 'Conugud', not present in the DIL, appears twice as in *The Passions and the Homilies from Leabhar Breac*, ed. Atkinson, p. 115, l. 2647 (where Atkinson amends to '(a) ch[r]onugud') and p. 148, l. 3847 ('(do) chonugud'). Atkinson translates these instances, both of which refer to the unpleasant fate of Satan, 'defeat' (following amendment) and 'calamity' respectively, pp. 361 & 398, yet Atkinson suggests that both are connected to the verb 'cronaigim', 'I chide, rebuke', p. 617. The amended form '(do) ch[r]onugud', (translation, 'punishment') is also preferred (pp. 88–9, l. 180) by Hughes in his edition of *Stair Nicoméid*, which contains the second of the above instances from *The Passions and the Homilies from Leabhar Breac*. The form 'conugud' also appears in the version of *TBC* in LL in the phrase 'conugud a curad', where O' Rahilly also amends to 'c[r]onugud', and translates 'defeat (of their hero)': *TBC from the Book of Leinster*, pp. 82 & 219, l. 2966 (in which Fer Diad, somewhat optimistically, foretells Cú Chulainn's demise). Previously, Windisch proposed the amendment of this instance in of 'conugud' in *TBC* to 'córugud': *Die altirische*, p. 497, l. 3429; yet the normal meaning of 'córugud', 'arranging', does not appear to make good sense in the context. Taking these instances, including that in *FCT*, together, it seems that 'conugud' should be considered a separate word from 'cronugud' – though confusion between the two is understandable – and that 'conugud' carries the meaning of a painful and long-lasting injury, which might go as far as death, as the example from *TBC* illustrates. Byrne, mentioning two of the aforementioned instances of 'conugud', tentatively suggests a connexion between this word and '*cú*, wolf' and translates the example of 'conugud' in *FCT* 'to misuse': 'The Parricides', pp. 18–19, and p. 19, note 3.

[128] The expression 'co bruinni mbratha ⁊ mbethad' gives a meaning which is possible, i.e. 'to the end of Judgement and life', as it is rendered here. However, it is possible that 'mbethad' should be 'mbetha', giving 'to the end of Judgement and the world'. The expression with 'mbetha' where both witnesses of *FCT* have 'mbethad' is found in at least two manuscript contexts see DIL, p. 88, col.214.

[129] 'Pelopia' for 'Telepía' is a relatively straightforward emendation.

§ 7. Aídir[130] *imorro* dá m*h*ac lais, .i. Menalaus ⁊ Aig*h*mem*n*o*n*. Tucad*ar*[131] na mic si*n* dá m*h*naí[132] an u*air* tec*h*ta, .i. Clemest*ra* be*n* Aigm*e*mnoi*n* ⁊ Eilleann[133] Leg*h*da bea*n*[134] Me*n*alaus, dá i*ngen* Tena*ir*. Eig*h*ist mac Teist[135] *imorro* ce*t*muinn*ter* Elli*n* Leg*h*da. Rohin*n*ar*bad*[136] do*no* dá mac Aíd*ir*, .i. Aigm*e*mno*n* ⁊ Me*n*alaus, ⁊ rogab Eig*h*ist Gré*c*. Gab*h*ais i*ar*si*n* Aigm*e*mno*n* a rid*h*isi rígh*i*[137] na Gré*c*e, ⁊ gabais Me*n*alaus rígh*i* Meci*n*e ⁊ na nAt*h*ene*n*sta, ⁊ roat*h*rígh*s*at Eig*h*ist ⁊ robe*n*sat a m*h*naí dhé, .i. Eill*eann* Leg*h*dha. Ro*air*cset[138] i*ar*si*n* ócba*d*[139] na hAisía[140] Bigi ⁊ na T*r*oíg[141] inis Ceit*hir*ria, .i. Alaxand*air* ⁊ Enías[142] ⁊ Antinoír,[143] ⁊ t*uc*sat m*h*naí Me*n*alaus leo .i. Eill*eann* Le*gh*dha ⁊ ban*ntracht* in*n*si Ceit*h*irria, ⁊ roma*r*bsat ait*r*eaba*d* na hin*n*si uili. Rof*h*ás[144] coca*d* i*ar*si*n*[145] et*er* Gré*caib* ⁊ T*r*oígai*b*[146] gu*r* rot*h*eclamsa*t*[147] slúai*g* na nGré*c* fa Me*n*alaus ⁊ fa Aigm*e*mno*n*[148] do t*h*ogail T*r*oí for P*r*iai*m* co*n*a ma*c*aib*h*.[149]

§ 8. Fácb*h*ais[150] Aig*h*mem*n*o*n* a m*h*naí agá[151] t*h*ig*h* isi*n* Gré*c*, .i. Clemest*ra*. Is[152] sí aireg

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[130] Large *a*.
[131] *tucsat* S
[132] Length mark in manuscript.
[133] *a* subscript.
[134] *a* subscript.
[135] There is a deleted word between *Teist* and the abbreviation for *imorro*.
[136] Large initial *R*.
[137] Length mark in manuscript.
[138] Large initial *R*.
[139] Length mark in manuscript.
[140] Length mark in manuscript.
[141] *troian* S.
[142] Length mark in manuscript.
[143] Length mark in manuscript.
[144] Large initial *R*.
[145] 44b; *mor* S.
[146] *troiana* S.
[147] *thinoilsit* S.
[148] *...fa righ grec* S.
[149] Break symbol in K.
[150] Large *f* in margin; length marker in manuscript.
[151] Length mark in manuscript
[152] *IS* in manuscript.

§ 7. Atreus for his part had two sons, Menelaus and Agamemnon. Those sons took two wives at the appropriate time, i.e. Clytemnestra wife of Agamemnon and Ledan Helen wife of Menelaus, two daughters of Tyndareus. However, Aegisthus son of Thyestes was Ledan Helen's first husband. Indeed the two sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, had been expelled and Aegisthus had taken Greece. Then Agamemnon retook the kingship of the Greeks and Menelaus the kingship of Mycenae and of the Athenians, and they deposed Aegisthus and took his wife from him, i.e. Ledan Helen. Then the warriors of Asia Minor and of Troy, i.e. Alexander, Aeneas and Antenor, attacked the isle of Cytherea, and they carried off Menelaus' wife, Ledan Helen, with them, as well as the Cytherean womenfolk, and they slew all the inhabitants of the island. A war then developed between the Greeks and the Trojans, and the Greeks' forces assembled under Menelaus and Agamemnon to destroy Troy upon Priam and his sons.

§ 8. Agamemnon had left his wife Clytemnestra in his house in Greece. This is the scheme[153]

[153] On 'aireg menman' as a play on 'Aigmemnon' see below, pp. 48–9.

menman for-fúair sí,[154].i. tuc grádh ndermháir do Eighist mac Teist ⁊ rochuir fis a[i]r[155] dia shaiged ⁊ is ed roráidh[156] an techtare fri hEigheist, 'Tuc ben Aighmemnoin grádh duit-si, ⁊ adbert rit dul d'á[157] saighidh[158] ⁊ co faífedh[159] let ⁊ cosain féin[160] ríghi[161] na Gréce fria d'naimdibh imalle fria-si. ⁊ dono dligi-si[162] mhnaí[163] is a ben suut, uair ruc a derbráthair súd do mnaí-siu[164] ar éigin lais,[165] ⁊ rotinnarpsat a ríghe na Gréce.' 'Is[166] fír sin', ar sé,[167] '⁊ ragat-sa ar cenn mná Aighmemnoin, ⁊ coisénat rígi na Gréce fri[168] macaib Aídir'.

§ 9. Tuc[169] Eighist iarsin mhnai[170] Aigmemnoin leis[171] ⁊ romarb athair Aigmemnoin,[172] .i. Aídir. Rohinnisedh[173] do Aigmemnon sin, ⁊ adbert[174] nach[175] tairmiscfedh (sin)[176] a shlúaiged uime noco n-dechaid[177] an cocad for áen leith. An tan imorro roimpo Aigmemnon[178] ón Traí iarna thogail[179] ⁊ slóg Gréc[180] maille fris, dohinnised dó[181] a bhen ⁊ a ferann do bheth ag mac

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[154] Length mark in manuscript.
[155] The normal abbreviation for *ar* with two dots beneath; om. S.
[156] Length mark in manuscript.
[157] Length mark in manuscript.
[158] *hindsaigid* S.
[159] Length mark in manuscript.
[160] om. S.
[161] Length mark in manuscript
[162] *dlighi-si* S; the use of a stroke (above 'g') for the final *i* of *dligi* is unusual, and *e* is also possible; for a possible instance of an equally unusual use of a suspension stroke for *a* see below, p. 28, note 185.
[163] *inti* S.
[164] Length mark in manuscript.
[165] om. S.
[166] *IS* in manuscript.
[167] Length mark in manuscript.
[168] *re* S.
[169] Large *t* in margin.
[170] Length mark in manuscript.
[171] *leis* superscript in right margin.
[172] *romarbh a athair* S.
[173] Large *R* in margin.
[174] *is ed roraidh* S.
[175] *n* with *c* superscript.
[176] om. S. The presence of the word 'sin' in K here may be a scribal error related to its earlier instance in this sentence.
[177] *noco ndecsat* S.
[178] Parts of S are barely legible between here and *téighed* 5 lines down in this edition.
[179] Lenition mark subscript.
[180] *slogh mor* S.
[181] *dosum* S.

she fixed upon, she developed a great passion for Aegisthus son of Thyestes and she sent for him to come, and this is what the messenger said to Aegisthus: 'Agamemnon's wife has fallen in love with you and she said to you to come to her and that she would sleep with you, and that you yourself alongside her contest the kingship of Greece with your enemies. And you are entitled to the woman who is *his*[182] wife, for that man's brother took your own wife away with him by force, and they have expelled you from the kingship of Greece.' 'That is true', he said, 'I shall go and meet Agamemnon's wife and I shall contest the kingship of Greece with the sons of Atreus'.

§ 9. Then Aegisthus took Agamemnon's wife for himself and slew Agamemenon's father Atreus. That was told to Agamemnon, and he said that he would not hold back his campaign because of that until the war went one side's way. Furthermore, when Agamemnon had turned back from Troy after its destruction, and the Greek hosts together with him, it was related to him that his wife and land were in the possession of

[182] See DIL p. 568 for the usage of 'súd' with a possessive adjective as an intensifier.

a br*á*th*ar*.[183] Atb*er*t[184] Aigm*emnon* na[185] rod*h*lig*h* a n-d*er*na ⁊[186] rotuitfed*h* Eig*h*ist in*n*. Rof*h*aid*h*[187] an b*h*en tec*h*t*ar*e co hAig*h*m*emnoin* ⁊ is *ed* adbert fr*i*s, ga*n* toc*ht* do s*h*aig*ed* Gr*é*c mi*n*ab áil leis a b*h*ás co luat*h* *acht* imd*h*ig*h*ed do rid*h*isi co Tr*o*íg*an* b*h*ail *ar* gab*h* nert *nó* t*é*ig*h*ed isi*n* *conair* b*us*[188] áil leis f*é*in.

§ 10. Araisi*n*[189] t*r*á[190] táinic Aigm*emnon* isi*n* tír, *ar* atb*er*t g*ur* fe*r*r[191] lais a m*ar*b*ad* i*n*a t*h*ír bud*h*ei*n* inas a in*n*ar*b*ad asa at*h*ard*h*a ndílis. Araísin docuin*n*ig*h*[192] Aigm*emnon* ca*ir*de t*r*i lá ⁊ t*r*i n-oidc*h*e f*or* a mnaí co c*uired*[193] a scís dé, ⁊ co codlaidis a sl*ú*aig i*n*a tír f*é*in a hait*h*le a*n* tíre na*n*at i*n*a[194] rabad*ar*. 'Rag*h*aid*h*[195] si*n* dáib-si',[196] *ar* a*n* rígh*an*, '*acht* na tí sib*h* as b*ar*[197] lo*n*gaib isin tír atái*m*-ne, ⁊ n*ar* s*h*altr*ad* b*ar* mbuin*n*[198] *ar* f*é*r *nó*[199] *ar* fer*an*n a*n* tíre *acht* b*eth* isi*n* t*r*áig*h* an airet si*n*'. ⁊ rogabsat-s*om* do láim si*n*.

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[183] Break symbol in K.
[184] Large *a* in margin.
[185] This might also be read *Aigmemnon*, without the negative particle, as per Byrne's edition, yet Byrne recognises that this produces a doubtful sense placing a question mark following her translation of this sentence: 'The Parricides', pp 22–3; the use of a suspension stroke for *a*, as suggested here, would be unusual, yet this produces a reading which makes more sense; unfortunately, the equivalent part of S is worn away; for the unusual use of a suspension stroke as an abbreviation for either *i* or *e* see above, p. 26, note 162.
[186] 44c.
[187] Large *R*.
[188] *bud* S.
[189] Large initial *a*; length mark in manuscript.
[190] Om. S.
[191] *f* with *rr* superscript.
[192] *rochuingid* S.
[193] *rocuiredh* S.
[194] *a* S.
[195] Large *R* in margin.
[196] *daib* S.
[197] *na tisat asa* S.
[198] *bhar mbuinn* om. S.
[199] *na* S.

his brother's son.[200] Agamemnon said what he[201] had done was not right and that Aegisthus would fall there. The woman sent a messenger to Agamemnon and said this to him, not to come as far as Greece unless he wished to die soon, but to set off back to the town of Troy where he held power, or that he should go wheresoever he desired.

§ 10. Despite this, Agamemnon came into the country for he said that it would be preferable to die in his own land than to be banished from his own patrimony. Even so, he asked his wife for a truce for three days and nights to rid himself of fatigue, and to allow his warriors to sleep in their own land after the hostile territory in which they had been. 'You shall have that', said the queen, 'as long as you do not go from your ships into the land in which we are, and that the soles of your feet do not trample on the grass or soil of the land but stay on the shore during that time'. And they undertook to do that.[202]

[200] Aegisthus is the son of Agamemnon's uncle (Thyestes) not of his brother as stated here.
[201] Aegisthus, presumably.
[202] On this meaning of 'gaibid do láim' see DIL, p. 420, col. 39.

§ 11. Ó[203] *thair*nic a*n* *cair*de rof*h*úag*air*[204] a b*h*en[205] cat*h* *for* Aigm*emnon* 7 *for* Me*n*alaus,[206] *nó* a*n* tír do *fh*ágb*h*ail. Docuad*ar*[207] a co*m*a*ir*li,[208] .i. Aigm*emnon* 7 Me*n*alau*s* 7 an t*r*e*s* be*n* is aille baí[209] *for* bit*h*, .i. Eill*eann* L*eghdha*.

'A[210] rígh*an*', *ar* siat, 'tab*hair* co*mair*le c*air*dem*ail* dúin*n*'.[211]

'Dober'[212], *ar* sie,[213] 'mas[214] *ch*ugam dob*erar*', 7 niruo cóir a tabairt.'

'Is[215] cóir[216] ám', b*ar* iat-su*m*.[217]

'Is[218] sí mo c*h*om*air*li-sí[219] dáib*h*', *ar* sí, 'an tír a tán*c*ab*ar* d'fágbai*l*, 7 ga*n* cat*h* do t*h*abai*r*t do*n* cu*r*-sa ite*r*, u*air* ní mei*n*ic b*erair*[220] dá c*h*osc*ar* cat*h*a *ar* ilcen*é*l*aib* diaid a ndiaid*h*', *ar* sí.

'Cid*h* cea*n*a[221] dogh*é*nam?' *ar* siat.

'Is[222] ed is cóir dáib',[223] *ar* sí, 'dul doc*um* Pirr mic[224] Aic*h*il isin Tesail 7 a guide u*m* tect lib*h* isi*n* *cat*h[225] 7 dá tí sé[226] lib*h* ni gh*é*b*h*at a*n* fiallac*h* út rib'.

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[203] Large *O*.
[204] *rofhocair* S.
[205] *an ben* S.
[206] *for a brathair, .i. Menalaus* S.
[207] Large initial *d*.
[208] *...an tan sin* S.
[209] *roboi* S.
[210] Large *a*.
[211] *...ar Aigmimnon* S.
[212] Large *d*.
[213] The *e* at the end of *si* seems to be in place of a length mark; *ar an righan* S.
[214] *masa* S.
[215] *IS* in margin.
[216] Length mark in manuscript.
[217] *ar siat* S.
[218] *IS* in manuscript.
[219] *is i mu comairli* S.
[220] *doberar* S.
[221] First *a* subscript.
[222] *IS*.
[223] 44d.
[224] *ic* superscript.
[225] A symbol resembling the letter *K*, for *ca*, see also below, p. 32, note 233; note also the similar abbreviation used for the entire word 'cath' at the equivalent places in S,
[226] om. S.

§ 11. When the truce had come to an end, his wife challenged Agamemnon and Menelaus either to fight a battle or to leave the country. They went into council, that is Agamemnon and Menelaus and one of the three most beautiful women on earth, Ledan Helen.

'O queen', they said, 'give us friendly counsel'.

'Yes I shall give', she said, 'if it is given to me, yet it was not proper to give it'.[227]

'It is proper indeed', they said.

'This is my advice to you', she said, 'to leave the country into which you have come, and not to give battle at all at this time, for two victories in battle are seldom won over many races one after another', she said.

'So what shall we do?', they asked.

'What you should do', she said, 'is to go to Pyrrhus son of Achilles in Thessaly, and entreat him to go into battle with you, and if he should come with you then that warrior band yonder shall not prevail over you.'

[227] On the meaning of ''Dober', ar sie, 'mas chugam doberar, ⁊ niruo cóir a tabairt'', see below, pp. 49–50.

'Is[228] mai*th* a*n* co*mair*li dobe*r*e dúin*n*,[229] a rígan', *ar* Aigm*emnon*, '*acht* cena ní[230] miad*h* ⁊ ní[231] maisi lim-sa cat*h* do b*r*ised*h* ané *ar*[232] an t*r*es ran*n* do*n* domu*n* ⁊ *for* gé*r*aitib*h* a*n* talm*an*, ⁊ féim*e*d*h* cat*h*a[233] anuib*h* do Clemest*r*a ⁊ do Eig*h*ist'.

'Trúag*h*[234] an *ni* bias de si*n*', *ar*[235] Eill*eann* Le*ghda*, '.i. misi do b*reith* a c*rích*a*ibh* cía*n*a co*mh*aid*h*e'.

Adbe*r*t[236] Aigm*emnon*, 'ni hed*h* dog*h*éna*m*,' *ar* se, '*acht* cait*h*éoc*h*máit[237] ⁊ na túat*h*a ti*n*óilti út.'[238]

§ 12. Roti*n*óilset[239] i*ar*si*n* le*th* *ar*[240] leat*h* ⁊ rocat*h*aig*h*set co fe*r*d*h*a fic*h*d*h*a[241] g*ur* rocui*mn*ig*h* cá*ch*[242] díb*h* a a*nfh*ola*ig* d'a c*h*éili a céi*n* ⁊ a fogu*s*, *co n*dorc*air* slóg díri*mh*[243] ete*r*ra. An[244] ta*n* ropa déi*n*e dóib*h* ag[245] cu*r* a*n* cat*h*a[246] roco*m*raig Aigm*emnon* ⁊ Eig*h*ist fo*r* lá*r* med*h*ó*n* a*n* cat*h*a, ⁊ tuc cá*ch* díb*h* amu*s* fic*h*d*h*a feoc*hair* ain*n*gid*h* a*mn*u*s* éttróchta*r*[247] *for* *ar*aile, ⁊ rotua*ir*c cá*ch* díb*h* a c*h*éili do b*rath*buill*aibh*[248] díg*h*lac*h*a dímhóra.

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[228] *IS* in margin.
[229] Length mark in manuscript.
[230] Length mark in manuscript.
[231] Length mark in manuscript.
[232] *for* S.
[233] *K* for *ca*; see above, p. 30 note 225.
[234] Large *T*.
[235] *bar* S.
[236] Large *a*; *coimidhithi ⁊ adubairt* S.
[237] Length mark above *e* in manuscript.
[238] *...⁊ bermait buaigh ⁊ coscor uaithib don cur sa* S.
[239] Large *R*.
[240] *for* S.
[241] *co ferrda ⁊ co feochair fichdha* S.
[242] Length mark in manuscript.
[243] *...difegra* S.
[244] Large *a*.
[245] *a* S.
[246] *...rofergaid cach re ceile dib co mor* S.
[247] om. S.
[248] *brathbuilledhaibh* S.

'The counsel you give us is good, o queen', said Agamemnon, 'yet I consider it neither seemly nor honourable to have defeated one of the three parts of the world and the champions of the earth yesterday, but to refuse battle to Clytemnestra and to Aegisthus today.'

'Sad the thing which shall happen because of that', said Ledan Helen, 'namely my carrying off to faraway foreign lands'.

Agamemnon said, 'We shall not do that, but we and the peoples assembled yonder shall engage in battle'.

§ 12. Then they gathered together on both sides and fought manfully and with anger, each of them remembering his grievance towards his adversary fiercely and valourously, far away and close at hand, and a countless host among them fell. When they were fighting at their fiercest during the course of the battle, Agamemnon and Aegisthus met at the epicentre of the fray and each wrought an angry, fierce, cruel, hard and relentless attack on the other, and each struck his adversary with very powerful, murderous blows of revenge.

§ 13. Amal[249] dobadar[250] amhlaid sin doriacht righmílid do Grécaibh chuca, 7 is é táinic ann .i. Teochurus mac Tailemoin, 7 ba do muinnter[251] Eighist dó-sidhe, 7 is do cobhair dothâinic,[252] 7 ba hí Esiona ingen Laimedhoin máthair an gilla sin. 7 ní raibhe mharaen re Grécaib ag togail na Troí, uair nir léig a mháthair dó[253] dhol do trascradh for a derbráthair 7 for macaibh a bráthar. 7 roan abhos, 7 ó rogabh Eighist ríghi Grécc tuc ferann Tailemoin 7 Aiax mic Tailemoin do Teochurus, ar beth d'aen láim fris a cenn Aigmemnoin.

§ 14. Ó[254] tuc imorro Teocurus aithni for Aighmemnoin, is[255] ed roráidh, 'Ní ragha as at bethaid', ar sé,[256] '7 dighélat-sa slúaiged na Troí fort'. 7 is cuma adubairt sin 7 luidh etert da righ Grécc[257] isin comruc,[258] co tuc[259] furmedh don ghae mór baí ina láim ar amus Aighmemnoin gur roroinn an sciath sechtfhillti[260] ar inchaibh an airdrígh, co ruc[261] uartainn tresin luirigh treabraid tredhúalaig don leth anall. Ba[262] garbh an guin sin, 7 ba guin díghla 7 bháis donti ar a tucad hí, 7 rodhligh anti (ar a tucad hí) [tuc][263] a tabairt diamadh maith lais

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[249] Large *a*.
[250] *batar* S.
[251] *.m.* with superscript *t* and stroke denoting 'er'.
[252] *docuaidh* S.
[253] Length mark in manuscript.
[254] Large *O*.
[255] 45a.
[256] *ar sé* om. S.
[257] *na ngrec* S.
[258] final *c* superscript.
[259] *c* superscript.
[260] *.uii.fhillti.*
[261] *c* superscript.
[262] Large *b*.
[263] Taking the reading from S to make better sense; the suggested error was perhaps caused by eyeskip.

§ 13. While they were thus a royal Greek warrior approached them, and this was Teucer son of Telamon who came, and he was one of Aegisthus' household, and it was to offer assistance he came, and Hesione daughter of Laomedon was the mother of that youth, and he was not with the Greeks at the destruction of Troy for his mother did not allow him to go to overthrow her brother and her brother's sons. And he stayed at home, and when Aegisthus seized the kingdom of the Greeks he gave the land of Telamon and Ajax son of Telamon to Teucer, so that he would be his ally against Agamemnon.

§ 14. Consequently, when Teucer recognised Agamemnon he said, 'You shall not escape alive,' said he, 'and I shall avenge the siege of Troy on you'. And as[264] he spoke this and went into the encounter between the two Greek kings, he delivered an attacking blow on Agamemnon with the great spear which was in his hand, and split the sevenfold shield in front of the High King so that he drove the point through the thrice-woven, three-stranded corslet to the other side. That wound was severe, and it was an avenging wound and a lethal one to him to whom it was dealt, and he who delivered it was entitled to give it if he wished

[264] On the use of 'cuma' (+ 'as-beir') to mean 'as, while' see DIL, p. 169, col. 421.

díghail a breithrech, 7 dobhen[265] a chenn d'a mheidhe 7 docuadar fon cath asa aithle[266] a ndís, 7 dogabsat[267] for slaidhe na slógh, co ndorcair ár mor leo.

§ 15. Dorala[268] Menalaus cucu, 7 forean dia muinnter maille fris, 7 roóbair cách díb a céile, 7 tucsat-sum goin gaca fir a Menalaus 7 tuc Menalaus goin[269] gaca fir díbh-sium, 7 ruscaredar[270] a muinnter o chéli iat iarsin. Ó[271] roairigh Menalaus trá éislis air féin 7 an rí do thoitim, roéló[272] asin cath 7 cét óclach dia muinnter maille fris 7 rosiacht coa luing, airm a raibe Eillenn Leghdha.[273]

§ 16. Cidh[274] fuil ann trá, acht an bhail[275] a rabhadur lucht an trícha[276] long ní ternó[277] dhíbh ina mbethaid acht Menalaus a áenur, co lucht a luingi 7 dosiacht[278] iarum[279] Menalaus co Colamhnaibh Protin. 7 dorigne sídh 7 caemcomhrag re rígh an tíre, .i. Forann, 7 dobaí ann co fuair bás do ghaibh cró, 7 droimeslainti [iar][280] fairinn. Tuc[281] Poreth mac Rinnail iarsin Ellenn Leghdha dia hainndeoin, 7 baí[282] tri hoidhchi aca [7][283] atbath do recht iarna sárugad

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[265] *roben* S.
[266] *iarsin* S, in place of *asa aithle*.
[267] *rogabsat* S.
[268] Large *D* in margin.
[269] *sleg* S.
[270] *roscuirset* S.
[271] Large *O* in margin.
[272] Length marks in manuscript.
[273] *...ingen tenair* S.
[274] Large *C*.
[275] *cidhtracht bail* S.
[276] Expanded from .xxx.
[277] Length mark in manuscript.
[278] *rosiacht* S.
[279] *iarsin* S.
[280] Partially legible [Reading taken from S].
[281] Large *t*.
[282] *roboi* S.
[283] Partially legible [Reading taken from S].

to avenge his brothers, and he struck his head from the nape of his neck, and after that they both[284] went into the battle, and they began laying into the host so that a great number of slaughtered fell by them.

§ 15. Menelaus happened upon them, together with a large company of his retinue, and each of them attacked his counterpart, and every man wrought a wound on Menelaus, and Menelaus wrought a wound on every man of them, and then their people separated them from each other. Moreover, when Menelaus found himself being disregarded, and that the king had fallen, he escaped from the battle together with a hundred warriors of his retinue, and made for his ship where Ledan Helen was.

§ 16. It was clear, however,[285] that where before there had been the crews of thirty ships none had escaped alive but Menelaus alone with his ship's crew, and he then made for the Proteian Columns. And he made peace and friendship with the king of the land, Pharoah, and he stayed there until he met his death from bloody pangs and severe illness, according to some.[286] Poreth[287] son of Rinnal[288] then carried off Ledan Helen against her will, and she was three nights with him. She died in a frenzy following her violation

[284] Aegisthus and Teucer, presumably.
[285] Literally 'What then indeed but'.
[286] Menelaus' journey to the Proteian Columns is mentioned in Book 11 of Virgil's *Aeneid*: Fairclough, *Virgil* 2, 254–5, l. 262. It seems that the author of *FCT* understood that these were close to Egypt, giving 'Forann', i.e. 'Pharoah', as the name (as opposed to title) of the ruler befriended there. This hints at the possibility of a connexion between the brief account of Menelaus' journey in *FCT* and the reference to Vergil's *Aeneid* by Servius in his commentary thereon: Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui ferentur in Virgili carmina Commentarii* 2, p. 509. The friendship between 'Forann' and Menelaus in *FCT* may have echoes of the story told by Menelaus of his sojourn with Proteus in Book 4 of Homer's *Odyssey*, though naturally in this account Menelaus cannot have died here as is related in *FCT*. The identity of those whom the Irish author refers to as his sources for Menelaus' painful death must be open to speculation, and a degree of scepticism concerning their existence.
[287] On the identity of 'Poreth' see below, pp. 59–60.
[288] On the identity of 'Rinnal' see below, p. 60–1.

do g*h*alar oid*h*c*h*i[289] i*ar* maid*m* a c*r*oid*h*e[290] do c*h*u*m*aid*h* a cai*m*[lenn]ái*n*,[291] .i. Alaxa*n*d*air* m*a*c P*r*iai*m*.[292]

§ 17. [Ai]gm*emnon*[293] t*rá* f*or*fácai*b*-sid*h*e m*a*c mait*h*, .i. Oirist m*a*c Aig*h*m*emnoin*, ⁊ [Cle]mest*ra*[294] a m*háthai*r. ⁊ ó rom*ar*b*ad* a ath*air* docuaid*h* [ar techi]d*h*[295] a m*háthar* coa d*er*bsi*air* baí a Sléip*h* [Tuirc],[296] .i. ba*n*sacc*ar*t do D*h*ean í sid*h*e, ⁊ i*ngen* do Aigm*emnoin*[297] hí ⁊ Clemest*ra* a m*áthai*r. Rohin*n*laicead*h*[298] úait*h*i sei*n* hé co T*air*s co rí*gh* na Foceta *ar*a co*mair*c*h*e n*a*c[299] m*ar*b*ad* a m*háthai*r féi*n* hé, ⁊ dogab[300] sei*n* c*h*uigi hé, ⁊ dorin*n*ed*ar*[301] cu*m*an*n* ⁊ c*ar*ad*r*ad*h* et*er*ra, ⁊ dorin*n*e m*a*c rí*gh* na Foceta ⁊ Oirist co*m*an*n*[302] *con*id*h* ead*h* atb*er*dis các*h* bat[ar][303] d*er*b*r*áit*h*ri díb*h* lí*n*aib, ⁊ baí an*n*[304] co cen*n* *noí* mblia*dan*.

§ 18. Rot*h*i*n*óil[305] Oirist na Foceta i*ar*si*n*, ⁊ docuaid*h* do d*h*íg*h*ail a ath*ar* f*or* a m*háthai*r ⁊ f*or* Eig*h*ist .i.[306] a f*er*. Sec*h*t[307] cat*h*a *imorro* robaí m*a*c Aigm*emnoin* ⁊ a *noí* rob*h*aí Eig*h*ist ⁊ a*n*[308] rí*gh*a*n*. Rocat*h*aig*h*set[309] co hacc*ar*b*h* i*ar*si*n* do l*eth* f*or* leit*h*, ⁊ dororc*h*a*ir* Eig*h*ist co*m*t*h*uiti*m*

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[289] *aenoidthi* S.
[290] *...ina cliab* S.
[291] Partially legible [Reading taken from S].
[292] Break symbol in K.
[293] Partially legible [Reading taken from S].
[294] Partially legible [Reading taken from S].
[295] Partially legible [Reading taken from S].
[296] Illegible [Reading taken from S].
[297] 45b.
[298] Large *R*.
[299] *arna* S.
[300] *roghab* S.
[301] *dorinne* S.
[302] For *dorinne mac rígh na Foceta ⁊ Oirist comann* read *a mac fein* S.
[303] *robtar* S.
[304] *roboi ann sin* S.
[305] Large *R*.
[306] *for* S.
[307] Large *S*.
[308] *a* S.
[309] Large *R*.

from a night's illness after her heart broke from sorrow for her dear lover, Alexander son of Priam.

§ 17. Agamemnon left a noble son, i.e. Orestes son of Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra was his mother. And when his father was killed he fled from his mother to his sister who was on Mount Taurica, she was a priestess of Diana and daughter of Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra was her mother. He was escorted by her to Taurus,[310] to the king of the Phocians, for his protection so that his own mother did not kill him, and the king received him and they formed fellowship and friendship between them, and the son of the king of the Phocians and Orestes became so close that everyone said that they were two brothers, and he was there for nine years.

§ 18. Orestes then mustered the Phocians and set out to avenge his father on his mother and on Aegisthus, her husband. Agamemnon's son was among seven battalions and Aegisthus and the queen were in nine. They fought fiercely on both sides, and Aegisthus died falling together

[310] This seems to be an erroneous name for the Phocians' homeland, which is Phocis in orthodox accounts, and may be the result of confusion caused by the conflation of Orestes' initial escape into exile and his subsequent (in orthodox accounts) visit to the Taurians in order to seek a cure for his madness.

7 rí na Foceta,[311] 7 ní ternó duine maíneach do Grécaibh 7 do Fhocetaibh do neoch baí[312] isin *cath* ina bethad as *acht* Oirist mac Aighmemnoin 7 Teocurus mac Taílemoin.[313] Dono romarb rí na Foceta 7[314] Peris, 7 Oirist romarbh Eighist (.i. Eigist)[315] .i. rí Gréc 7 romarb[316] Oirist dono a máthair a ndigail a athar, 7 rogab féin righi na Gréce.

§ 19. Rogab[317] trá cuthach 7 fúalang iarsin Oirist iar marbad a máthar, 7 adubairt an guth ris isin oidhchi[318] co fuigbhedh sláinti ón cuthach dia marbad a shiair, .i. an banshacart baí a Sléip Tuaric, 7 dia fothraicedh hé asa fuil[319] robudh[320] slán dia ghalar.[321] Romarb-som[322] iarsin[323] a shiur 7 rusfothraig[324] ina[325] fuil[326] 7 rusgab féin righi Gréc.[327]

§ 20. Ermiona[328] dono, ingen[329] Menalaus mic Aídir 7 do Eillenn Leghdha, ben is caíme baí[330] isin domun *acht* a máthair, ronaiscedh[331] í re hOirist mac Aigmemnoin riasiu,

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311 ...7 *a mac .i. peiris mac rig na focheta* S.
312 *roboi* S.
313 Length mark in manuscript.
314 om. S.
315 Underscored with a dots, perhaps in recognition of an error.
316 Parts of S are either barely legible or completely worn away between here and *co fuigbhedh* 3 lines down (in this edition).
317 Large *R*.
318 ...*aislingi* S.
319 ...7 *co rucadh aracht deain leis co grecaib* S.
320 *robo* S.
321 ...*iarsin* S.
322 Large initial *R*.
323 om. S.
324 *rofotraic* S.
325 *asa* S.
326 ...7 *ruc aracht deain co grecaib* S.
327 *righi na greci* S.
328 Large *e*.
329 *i*.
330 *roboi* S.
331 Large *R*.

with the king of the Phocians, and not a nobleman of the Greeks or of the Phocians who were in that battle escaped alive from it but Orestes son of Agamemnon and Teucer son of Telamon. Indeed he[332] slew the king of the Phocians and Peris,[333] while Orestes slew Aegisthus king of the Greeks, and moreover Orestes slew his mother in revenge for his father, and took the kingship of Greece for himself.

§ 19. Then madness and frenzy seized Orestes after killing his mother, and the voice told him in the night that he would be cured of the madness if he were to slay his sister, the priestess who was on Mount Taurica, and if he would bathe in her blood he would recover from his sickness. Then he killed his sister and bathed himself in her blood and took for himself the kingship of Greece.

§ 20. As for Hermione, daughter of Menelaus son of Atreus and of Ledan Helen, the fairest woman there was in the world, bar her mother, she had been betrothed to Orestes son of Agamemnon before

[332] Teucer, presumably, if the K version with the abbreviation for 'ocus' is correct. S would imply that the previously unmentioned 'Peris' killed the king of the Phocians.
[333] On the identity of 'Peris' see below, pp. 61–2.

dom*ar*b*ad* a ath*air*, ⁊ i*ar* m*ar*b*ad* a ath*ar*[334] roinn*ar*b a m*háthair* ⁊ br*á*thair a ath*ar* é, am*al* rore*m*ráid*h*se*mar*. Tuc[335] Pirr mac Aichil i*ar*si*n* Ermio*n*ha d*ar* sár*ugad* Oirist, ot*connair*c co ha*n*b*h*fha*n*n é i*ar* m*ar*b*ad* a ath*ar* ⁊ i*ar*na in*n*arbad*h* bud*h*ei*n*. Ó[336] rogab*h* Oirist rí*gh*i Gr*e*c baí[337] oc i*arrad* a m*h*ná f*or* Pirr, ⁊ ni t*u*c Pirr frecc*ru* f*air* ac*h*t atb*er*t[338] co m*ar*bfed é fé*i*n dia n-i*m*ráided*h*[339] [í][340] co br*á*t*h*.

§ 21. Docuaid*h*[341] Oirist i*ar*si*n* do accall*aim* sac*air*t te*m*paill [Apai]ll[342] co hinis Deil, ⁊ tuc [seo]da[343] ⁊ maí*n*e imd*h*a dó *ar* Pirr do br*at*h, ⁊ roma*i*r*n*[344] a*n* sac*ar*t Pirr do Oirist ⁊ dogab*h*[345] Oirist tea*m*pall Ap*aill* f*or* Pirr, ⁊ rom*ar*b*h*ad*h* Pirr an*n* ⁊ rogo*n*ad*h* Ermio*n*a. ⁊ rohai*n*ced*h* í i*ar*na gui*n* *ar*a gr*á*d*h* ⁊ *ar* dáig*h* a t*ar*ber*t*a *imorro*. ⁊ roleada*ir* sisi fé*i*n a cr*éch*t guruo m*ar*b*h* d*h*é fo cé*t*oir, u*air* dob f*err* le a hoig*h*id*h* i*n*as a faicsi*n* do m*h*naí oca na*m*haid.

§ 22. Baí[346] Oirist i*ar*sin f*ri* ré ch*í*a*n* a rig*h*i na Gr*é*ce *nó* g*ur* gab*h* mac do[347] Eig*h*ist[348] m*a*c Teis[t],[349] .i. Ai*m*pit*ir* m*a*c (m*a*c)[350] Eig*h*ist tec*h* f*air*, ⁊ rom*ar*b*ad* Oirist and co maith*aib* a

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[334] ⁊ *o romarb a hathair* S.
[335] Large *T* in margin.
[336] Large *O*.
[337] *roboi* S.
[338] isb*e*rt S.
[339] Length mark in manuscript.
[340] Taking the reading from S for better sense.
[341] Large initial *D* in margin.
[342] 45c, partially legible [Reading taken from S].
[343] Partially legible [Reading taken from S]..
[344] *dotreic* S.
[345] *roghab* S.
[346] Large *b*; *roboi* S.
[347] om. S.
[348] Before *Eighist*, *Oirist* with a line through it.
[349] *theighist* S.
[350] Taking the reading from S. It appears that the second *m*...*c* is a scribal error and cannot be for m*i*c, since Aegisthus' son is already specified as the subject of the sentence.

his father had been killed but, after his father's killing, his mother and father's brother banished him as we have said. Pyrrhus son of Achilles then carried Hermione off to the dishonour of Orestes, having perceived that he was very weak after his father's killing and his own banishment. When Orestes seized the kingship of Greece he constantly demanded his wife of Pyrrhus, but Pyrrhus gave him no answer but said he himself would kill him if he ever mentioned her.

§ 21. Then Orestes went to the isle of Delos to speak with a priest of the temple of Apollo, and he gave him valuables and treasures aplenty in exchange for betraying Pyrrhus, and the priest betrayed Pyrrhus to Orestes and Orestes took the temple of Apollo from Pyrrhus, and Pyrrhus was killed there and Hermione wounded. And she was saved for love of her after her wounding, and moreover in order to carry her off, but she hacked at her own wound so that she died of it at once, since she preferred to die than to see herself the wife of her enemy.

§ 22. After that, Orestes was in the kingship of Greece for a long time until Aegisthus' son Aimpitir[351] seized the house from him, and Orestes was killed there and the nobles of his

[351] On the identity of 'Aimpitir' see below, p. 62.

muinn*t*i*r*i.[352] 7 rogab*h* Ai*m*pit*i*r rí*gh*i ta*r*a éis,[353] 7 rot*h*inóilset aes g*r*ádha Oirist i*ar*si*n* 7Teoc*hr*u*s* ma*c* Tailemoi*n*[354] co hAi*m*pit*i*r ma*c* Eig*h*ist, 7 rom*har*b*h*sat i*n*a m*h*oraire*ch*tu*s*[355] fé*in* é. 7 rogab*h* Teocr*us* ma*c* Tailemoin[356] rí*gh*i Gré*c* i*ar*si*n* co*n*ad*h* in*n*dí fu*air* bá[s]. *Con*ad*h* iat sin é*ch*ta 7 aig*h*ed*h*a Gré*c* i*ar* tog*h*ail na Troí. Finit.

[352] *aesa gradha* S.
[353] *tar eisi oirist* S.
[354] Length mark in manuscript.
[355] *mhordail airechtais* S.
[356] Length mark in manuscript.

household. And Aimpitir took the kingship in his place, but Orestes' retinue then joined with Teucer son of Telamon, against Aimpitir son of Aegisthus, and they killed him in his own great assembly. And Teucer son of Telamon then took the kingship of Greece and he died holding it. So these are the murderous deeds and violent deaths of the Greeks after the destruction of Troy. Finit

1.7 Notes to the Text

§ 2.

'*a thabart ... sin*'

This is a passage whose meaning depends upon the phrase 'Ar nir léicset cloinn doibh' whose subject is not made explicit in the text. 'Léicid ... do' often carries the meaning 'allow to', giving the reading that the subject is the gods and that therefore the sacrifice of Pelops is connected to Moesia's perception that they have not permitted that she and Tantalus might have offspring.[357] In this case, presumably, Moesia's test of the gods' divinity would depend upon an unspoken taboo against their consumption of human flesh as offerings – if they accepted Pelops' cooked flesh they would be proven not to be truly gods according to her reasoning. This rationale is supported the gods' refusal to consume him (except the careless Ceres) as a human being, as related in § 3. In addition, a conjugated form of 'léicid ... do' appears later in § 14 with the unambiguous meaning 'allow to' perhaps, though not necessarily, further supporting a preference for this meaning here.

However, 'léicid' can also mean 'leave' in the sense of 'abandon', opening up the possibility that the subject of the phrase might be the ancient Greeks in general, in which case it may refer to a perceived taboo against leaving one's own offspring – but not human beings in general – to the gods as sacrificial offerings.[358] Such a meaning relating to a taboo against kinslaying would be particularly apt in the context of *FCT* as a whole, the more so since in this case since the victim in question, Pelops, is not only Tantalus' son but Zeus' grandson, though the latter family relationship is not mentioned in *FCT*.

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[357] This reading is cautiously preferred by Byrne: 'The Parricides', pp. 16–17, especially p. 17, note 2.

[358] See DIL, pp. 424–5, for the semantic range of *léicid*. The usual Old Irish verb denoting sacrifice to the gods is *ad-opair*, of which the MI 3s. past passive form 'roidbradh', 'was sacrificed', is also used of Pelops in this paragraph. Furthermore, the verbal noun 'idhbart' is used to describe the sacrifice of children in another medieval Irish text, *Ranna an Aeir*, which, like *FCT*, relates versions of Classical narratives. This instance of 'idhbart' occurs in *Ranna an Aeir* as part of its description of an incident in which, akin to the Moesia / Pelops story in *FCT*, the twin sons of Athamas are sacrificed to the gods by his second wife Mica (named as the boys' stepmother, in the Irish text): Anderson, '*Ranna*', p. 410. This appears likely to be based on a version of one of the Classical stories in which one (or more) of Athamas' wives (none of whose names resembles 'Mica') attempts to cause the deaths of her stepchildren: Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, pp. 176–80.

Whichever meaning for 'léicid ... do' was intended here it seems likely that there was either an element of ambiguity in the source(s) for this passage concerning the purpose of the sacrifice of Pelops, or no mention of any reason at all for it.[359] Either of these situations would seem to offer an equally cogent explanation for the degree of confusion implicit at this point of *FCT*, whose author openly recognises the need for further elucidation of his text. His act of spelling out Moesia's rationale for her proposed divinity test for the gods represents an authorial interjection rare in *FCT* as is the case in medieval Irish literature in general.

§ 3.

'*Roberbhadh ... an mac*'

The description of Pelops as 'an mac', 'the boy' (or, perhaps less likely in this context, 'the son') may hint that the source for this narrative may have specified that he was a child when sacrificed. However, if 'mac' means 'boy' here this contradicts what has been related previously concerning Pelops' age in *FCT*, since Tantalus' son has been portrayed as being sufficiently mature in order to contemplate sex with women in § 1. In addition, he is described as 'gilla', 'youth', in § 2 implying that he is a teenager or slightly older. However, since the DIL quotes instances when the words 'mac' and 'gilla' are not used exclusively of boys and youths respectively, the situation may not be beyond question.[360] In translating 'mac' with 'lad' here I hope to have preserved a portion of this ambiguity. However, the use of the word 'mac' here to describe Pelops may be interpreted as representing what may have appeared as 'puer' or a synonym in any Latin source. If so, this suggests an authorial slip, indicating that the unique detail – Pelops' advanced sexual maturity – found elsewhere in *FCT* was a deliberate introduction made, it must be suspected, in order introduce the femme fatale, Moesia, and not merely as the result of deficient sources which failed to make Pelops' status clear.[361]

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[359] On the lack of a motive for Tantalus' killing of Pelops in Classical sources, see below, pp. 76–7.
[360] The respective DIL entries for 'mac' (p. 447) and 'gilla' (p. 361) suggest a degree of semantic crossover between the two words.
[361] On the relatively advanced age of Pelops at the time of his killing in the account in *FCT* see below, pp. 77–9.

§ 8.

'*aireg menman*'

This seems very likely to be a deliberate play on the gaelicised name 'Aigmemnon', used with an element of irony since the 'aireg menman', 'strategy', which is present in Clytemnestra's mind leads to the demise of the eponymous Argive overking. The etymologising of both place names and personal names in Irish (pseudo-) history was a particular interest of medieval Irish scholarship, as has been noted concerning both sagas as well as in openly explanatory works such as the late Middle Irish *Cóir Anmann*.[362] However, it appears that in making a subtle play on 'Aigmemnon' here the author is taking the art of this type of etymologising process to a higher and more self-conscious, level than that evident where the purpose of etymologising appears to be simply to explain a certain name. Unlike other medieval Irish writers who show an interest in proper names, the author of *FCT* does not openly make any connexion between 'aireg menman' and 'Aigmemnon'. He merely takes the opportunity to include the Irish term meaning 'strategy' in fairly close proximity to the Greek overking's name, relying on the reader or listener to make the connexion between them. The act of plundering of a Classical personal name for literary purposes via such a process serves to demonstrate a very high level of comfort with Classical material.

In addition to this, the use of a gaelicised form of Agamemnon's name ironically in the way described above both takes this level of comfort to a higher level and implies a somewhat playful approach to subject matter which is at times grim indeed. The author must have known that the name 'Agamemnon' was very unlikely to have meant the Greek equivalent of 'aireg menman', yet its gaelicised form seems to have struck him as sufficiently close to the Irish for Clytemnestra's 'strategy' to suggest its inclusion here. It may be coincidental, yet the similarity between Clytemnestra's own Greek name and the words for 'fame' and 'scheme' were not lost upon ancient authors.[363] If it is a coincidence that the author of *FCT*, as certain

[362] On the medieval Irish propensity to etymologise personal and place names see Baumgarten, 'Etymological Aetiology' and 'A Hiberno-Isidorean Etymology'. On the explanatory function of the etymologising of proper names in *Cóir Anmann* see Arbuthnot, *Cóir Anmann*, 1, p. 1; on the application of a similar process to headwords (not necessarily proper names) in early Irish glossaries see Russell, 'The Sounds of a Silence', pp. 16–19.

[363] Aeschylus, for example, makes Cassandra twice use forms of the verb 'μήδεται', 'scheme', in quick succession when referring to the imminent carrying out of Clytemnestra's plan to trap and kill Agamemnon: Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, p. 130, ll. 1100–2. This is likely to be a play on ''Κλυται-μήστρα' read as 'famous schemer'', as Sommerstein suggests: *Aeschylus* 2, p. 131, note 237.

of his Classical forbears had, chose to make a word-play on a name which sounded like an expression relating to Clytemnestra's 'scheme', he certainly fixed upon that aspect of her portrayal in doing so via the use of the term 'aireg menman' here.[364] There is one further example of a word-play on a gaelicised Classical name in *FCT*, yet 'aireg menman' is surely the more powerful and interesting of the two instances in the text.[365]

'*Tuc grádh ndermháir do Eighist*'

This is an echo of the words used to express Moesia's passion for Pelops, which begins *FCT*.[366]

§ 11.

'*dober ... tabairt*'

The meaning of this sentence is ambiguous. Following the Atridae's request for 'comairle', 'counsel', Helen complies, yet there is a caveat contained in the phrase '7 niruo cóir a tabairt', in which the initial conjunction carries an adversative sense, and may be translated 'though', giving 'though it was not proper to give it'. However, this reading still poses problems, since it is not clear whether the phrase which indicates that 'it was not proper' is an authorial comment or intended to be Helen's words as part of her answer to the Atridae.

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[364] Clytemnestra's scheming, as related in *FCT* (albeit via a different method to those evident in orthodox Classical sources) is present in very ancient accounts of her behaviour towards the returning Agamemnon. For example, in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* Clytemnestra causes her husband's demise by means of a scheme in which the king is induced to walk on fine materials (a privilege reserved for the gods, thereby Agamemnon commits an act of hubris): Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, pp. 104–111. Following this, she entraps and kills him in a shirt which she has made without a hole for the head expressly for this purpose: ibid., pp. 168–9, ll. 1379–84. Though there can be little question of a direct link between the following two literary instances, the devious making of net-like shirt by the adulterous Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' work might be compared with what is suggested as the correct behaviour of a wife towards a husband who returns, like Agamemnon, from a maritime journey, according to a medieval source, the Old English poem *Maxims* I. In this text, the Frisian Wife, it is related, should 'give him new clothes', 'him syleþ wæde niwe', upon her seagoing husband's return, an act which appears to be connected with the demand which appears shortly afterwards in the same work that 'A wife must keep faithful to her husband', 'Wif sceal wiþ wer wære gehealdan': Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom*, p. 68, ll. 28 and 30). Thus the act of making (properly-finished) new clothes for a husband appears to be closely connected to a wife's marital faithfulness in two texts far removed in both time and place of composition.

[365] On a further example of this phenomenon in *FCT*, the use of the phrase 'lár medhón' as a play on the gaelicised name of the Trojan patriarch Laomedon, see below, p. 50.

[366] On the apparent use of this verbal echo as a means to connect the respective lustful schemes of Moesia and Clytemnestra see below, p. 158.

Since the noun 'comairle' is feminine, the meaning of 'a tabairt' is also unclear, since it could refer either to Helen's act of giving the advice, with an implied object, 'though it was not proper for her to give [it]', or to the advice itself, 'though giving it was not proper'.
The ambiguity over this phrase could be deliberate, yet the strongly negative portrayal of instances of female counsel to males throughout *FCT* suggests that this phrase, occurring close to the centre of the entire work, might be a rare authorial interjection, rendering clear what is only implied elsewhere in the text.[367] With this in mind, the fact that 'comairle' is, as mentioned above, a feminine noun seems not to have escaped the notice of the *FCT* author. The word for 'counsel' is repeated three times in this short passage dealing with Helen's advice, and when this is given by Helen, she refers to it using the feminine pronoun 'sí' emphasising its femininity in both a grammatical sense and most likely also as a comment upon its moral status when it emanates from women. That the adjective 'cóir', 'proper', is also used three times in this passage also serves to emphasise the moral status of both the advice to which it refers and of the fact that it is given by Helen.[368]

§ 12.

'*for lár medhón an catha*'

The use of the term 'lár medhón' for the epicentre (of the battle) is very likely to be a play on the Classical personal name 'Laomedon', even though it refers here specifically to the duel between Agamemnon and Aegisthus. 'Laimedhon' is named shortly afterwards (correctly) in § 13 as the father of the Trojan princess Hesione, and therefore also of her brother Priam. This is a second example in *FCT* of the apparent willingness of the author to play with gaelicised Classical names. Just as in the aforementioned case of 'aireg menman' as a play on 'Aigmemnon', the second seemingly deliberate mention of an Irish expression 'lár medhón' in close proximity to a similar-sounding gaelicised Classical personal name has the effect of reinforcing the sense of a high level authorial comfort with the subject matter at hand. It also display's the author's playful wit.[369]

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[367] On the negative portrayal of female counsel throughout *FCT* see below, pp. 154–7.
[368] On the apparently deliberate use of the emphatic personal pronoun 3sf 'sí' in two places in *FCT* in order to highlight the femininity of a particular entity, see below, pp. 163–4.
[369] On the use of 'aireg menman' as a play on 'Aigmemnon' see above, pp. 48–9.

§ 14.

'*luirigh treabraid tredhúalaig*'

This description of Agamemnon's 'plaited, thrice-woven corslet' echoes the description of Aeneas' in *IA*. The Irish phrase appears to have been inspired by Virgil's 'trilicem loricam' (acc. sg.), and it is found in three further medieval Irish works, though the nature and direction of any possible borrowing between these is uncertain.[370]

1.8 Notes on Selected Personal Names

Moesia (§ 1)

This name occurs in several Classical and Late Antique literary sources as a Latinised form of the territory in Asia Minor which the Argive forces mistake for Troy before the siege proper, following which a force under Achilles fights against the Mysians. In *DETH*, there are several instances of forms of the place name 'Moesia', though it appears that various alternatives for the word exist across the text's manuscript tradition and that the spelling 'Moesia' occurs just once.[371] In *TTr*^{2}, the same territory is spelt once 'Máesia' and once 'Méssia'.[372] Whichever text(s) were the direct inspiration for the Moesia in *FCT*, it may have been the ancient connexion between Achilles and the place name Mysia which led to the Irish author's apparent choice for the name of the great warrior's otherwise unknown aunt (a family relationship specified in the text) and lustful stepmother of Pelops.

It is also possible that the author of *FCT* was influenced in his choice of Moesia as the personal name for his text's kinslaying stepmother which it relates by the child-killing actions of the similar-sounding Medea as recounted in, inter alia, each of *TTr*^{1} and *TTr*^{2}.[373] Both

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[370] Poppe, '*Imtheachta*', pp. 80–1; *FCT* does not appear among the three medieval Irish works quoted from the DIL by Poppe.

[371] Meister, *Daretis*, p. 27, l. 5. On the manuscript traditions of *DETH* see Faivre d'Arcier, *Histoire et Géographie*, pp. 33–108; on the suggestion, supported by the common spellings of certain personal names, of a shared Insular manuscript tradition for *DETH* see Poppe , 'Personal Names'.

[372] Stokes, *Togail*, pp. 31 and 52, ll. 1253, 1264; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, pp. 1096, ll. 32066 and 32077.

[373] Mac Eoin, 'Ein Text', p. 45, ll. 13–6; Stokes, *Togail*, p. 9, ll. 334–8; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1072, ll. 31151–5; Medea is absent from the version of the story of Jason found in *DETH*.

'Medea' and 'Moesia' are mentioned as place names in *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (*LG*), and the similarity between the medieval Irish forms of these two place names (and those of their respective peoples and languages) Medea and Moesia is evidenced by their juxtaposition in a verse contained in *LG*.[374] The case for the Classical character Medea as a likely inspiration for Moesia as a personal name appears, then, to be based upon more than sheer coincidence. However, it should be noted that despite the fact that both Medea's lust for Jason and consequent murders of her own children recounted in *TTr*^{2} are mirrored fairly closely in *FCT* by Moesia's lust for and murder of her stepson Pelops, the precise family circumstances behind each incident are not identical.[375]

Aiax (§ 1)

'Aiax' refers to Aeacus, generally accepted in both Classical and later accounts, including in *TTr*^{2}, as the father of Peleus who is in turn correctly identified here as the father of Achilles.[376] So far, then, *FCT* appears to follow the orthodox Classical version of Achilles' paternal ancestry. However, 'Aiax' is also specified here as 'mac Mirmedoin', 'son of Mirmedon' as opposed to merely being a leader of the people known as Myrmidons, whose military forces are described in Classical sources from Homer's *Iliad* onwards as being led by Achilles during the Trojan campaign.

Mirmedon (§ 1)

This personal name unlike the aforementioned Aeacus (his son in *FCT*) does not figure in accounts of the Trojan War known to have been available in medieval Ireland such as *DETH* or *TTr*^{2}, and it may be surmised that he is the invention either of the author of *FCT* or of that of one of his unknown sources. Possible candidates for such source texts are thin on the ground, although a figure with the name Myrmido or Myrmidon is mentioned from time to time in certain Classical and Late Antique sources, indicating that such a figure was

[374] 'Maisi, Media': Macalister, *Lebor*, 2, p. 88.

[375] The figure of Medea is associated with three separate instances of kinslaying in the Classical tradition. In addition to killing her own children (under varying circumstances), she is also reported to have caused the respective deaths of Pelias (by persuading his daughters to chop him up and boil him in a special cauldron in a manner not too dissimilar from Pelops' fate in *FCT*) and of her infant brother Aspyrtos, who is also cut into small pieces. On these Classical narratives see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, pp. 368–71, 367 and 363 respectively.

[376] In *TTr*^{2}, Achilles' father is called 'Pélias mac Aiacis': Stokes, *Togail*, p. 22, ll. 869–70; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1086, ll. 31682–3; however, neither the hero's father nor grandfather is mentioned in *DETH*.

occasionally associated with the origins of the eponymous people, even if he was not named as Aeacus' father, as he is in *FCT*.[377]

In the light of these albeit rare references which indicate that a personal name resembling Mirmedon is not unique to *FCT*, though others such as the aforementioned Moesia are, it is possible that the Irish author borrowed this character name for Achilles' great-grandfather from a source drawing upon a tradition which placed Myrmido(n) as an ur-patriarch of Achilles' people. However, since the detail that Achilles led the Myrmidons at Troy survived the Classical period, and is found inter alia in both *DETH* and vernacular adaptations thereof including TTr^2, this would have made the choice of 'Mirmedon' relatively straightforward for the author of *FCT*, in his search for an apt name for Aeacus' father – assuming that the latter detail was lacking in any available sources.

Whether invented or borrowed from a rare reference in an unknown source, the character name 'Mirmedon' in *FCT*, like his aforementioned niece 'Moesia', may be readily connected to details from the story of the Trojan War which were well-known in medieval Ireland and beyond. In particular, both 'Mirmedon' and 'Moesia' may be connected to the respective accounts of Achilles' role therein found in *DETH* and TTr^2.

Aichil Échtach (§ 1)

In TTr^2 (but not in TTr^1) Achilles is given the epithet 'échtach', 'murderous', as he is in *FCT* here, further supporting the aforementioned suggestion that these two texts exhibit signs of borrowing and / or shared sources, particularly in the case of certain personal names.[378] Notably, Achilles is not given this or any other epithet in either of the medieval Irish

[377] On Classical references to 'Myrmidon' as a personal name see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, p. 222; Isidore (*Etymologiae*, Book 1) refers to Eratosthenes as the source of one such root of the name of Achilles' followers: Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* 1, 9.2.75.

[378] This occurs in the list of the leading Greeks who joined Agamemnon's assault on Troy, in which Achilles is called 'Achil echtach': Stokes, *Togail*, p. 30, l. 1193; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1094, l. 32007; despite its position after Achilles' name in both *FCT* and TTr^2 'échtach', 'murderous' appears to be an epithet and not merely an adjective – in this list in TTr^2, each leading Argive has an epithet, which often alliterates, such as 'Agmemnon airdairc ... Menelús mormenmach': Stokes, *Togail*, p. 29, ll. 1164–6; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1093, ll. 31978–80. The use of the 'Échtach' with Achilles' name in *FCT* may be intended to chime with the word 'échta', 'murderous deeds', in its final sentence.

adaptations (one in verse, the other in prose) based upon Statius' *Achilleid*.[379]

Cirir (§ 3)

It may be of interest to note that whereas the author of *FCT* notes that 'Cirir', 'Ceres' is 'bandei na cruthaighechta', 'goddess of creation', some five hundred years earlier an Irish glossator on Priscian had noted, more accurately, that Ceres was 'bandea cruithnechta', 'goddess of wheat' in the St. Gall codex.[380] The 'r' ending in 'Cirir' replacing the Latin 's' is also of note, and may have implications for the identity of 'Pallor' (§ 4) behind whose gaelicised name may have been a Classical name which ended in 's'.[381]

Taithis (§ 4)

There are two obvious candidates for 'Taithis' – the Greek sea goddesses Tethys and Thetis – about whom confusion is hardly surprising, especially in Latin, post-Classical sources. Of the two, Byrne appears to prefer Thetis (not mentioning Tethys or any other possibility), pointing out that Thetis was the wife of Peleus and not Pelops.[382] It may be that, as Byrne suggests, the *FCT* author made a simple error, and inserted the name of Peleus' wife for that of Pelops' spouse (who is generally agreed elsewhere to be called Hippodamia). However, this must be an identification which is open to question, especially given that Peleus has already been placed in orthodox genealogical position between Aeacus and Achilles in *FCT* § 1, implying that the author was fully aware that these two characters whose names begin with 'Pel' were different figures, though the name of Peleus' wife is not mentioned either in this account of Achilles' ancestry or elsewhere in *FCT*. It should be noted that Thetis is named as Peleus' wife in *TTr*.[2] where the father of Achilles is said to have married 'Tithidis ingin Nerei 7 Doridis (.i. nimphae)', with no mention of 'Pallor', her father in *FCT*.[383] Thetis is also correctly named as Peleus' wife in both versions of the medieval Irish story of Achilles, in

[379] Editions of these texts are found in Ó hAodha, 'The Irish Version'. The use of such an epithet may be an example of gaelicisation, as such a practice is fairly common in medieval Irish texts whose focus is not on Classical subject. Examples of such characters with epithets found in *TBC* include Cormac Cond Longas and Lóegaire Búadach: O' Rahilly, *TBC from the Book of Leinster*, pp. 9 and 121, ll. 299 and 4386 respectively.
[380] Ó Cuív, 'Medieval Irish', p. 246.
[381] See below, pp. 56–7.
[382] Byrne, 'The Parricides', p. 19, note 2.
[383] Stokes, *Togail*, p. 22, l. 870; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1086, l. 31683.

which her name is spelt 'Tithis', 'Tichir', 'Thicis', 'Ticis' or 'Tichis', and she is specified as Nereus' daughter in these texts as in *TTr*^{2}, and not 'ingen Palloir' as in *FCT*.[384]

Moreover, as noted in the discussion of 'Pallor' below, there are several plausible candidates for this figure, one of whom is Tellus, the Roman equivalent of Gaia, the Greek earth goddess who is given in Hesiod's *Theogony* as the mother of Tethys.[385] This parent-child relationship between both pairs, Tellus and Tethys (Classical) and Pallor and Taithis (*FCT*) may be coincidental, if indeed Pallor is to be equated with Tellus, yet it need not be assumed that the most likely cause for the appearance of both Taithis as wife of Pelops and of other unorthodox personal names in *FCT* is simple error. If the author was unaware that the orthodox name for Pelops' wife was Hippodamia, yet felt the need to name her (especially as her twin sons Atreus and Thyestes play a significant role in arguably the most terrible instance of *fingal* in *FCT*) the Irish author is likely to have been unafraid to improvise – this is clear from the entrance of 'Moesia' into the narrative concerning Tantalus and Pelops in § 1. The choice of the somewhat obscure (in medieval western terms) Tethys, if 'Taithis' refers to this figure, may well have served a particular purpose. The insertion of the name of a primaeval Greek sea goddess into the text in the role of the perhaps unknown Hippodamia may have been deliberately arcane in order to demonstrate a high level of Classical knowledge. It seems very unlikely that the author might have risked being contradicted concerning the identity of 'Taithis', if by this name he meant Tethys or another figure with a similar name who was not Achilles' mother. Few contemporary members of the audience / readership of *FCT* might have been expected to have heard either of Tethys or of any daughters of Pallor (or of Pallor himself) whereas Thetis, as Achilles' mother, would doubtless have been better, if hardly universally, known.[386]

At present, then, it seems that any link between the the uncertain Taithis of *FCT* and the male line of the euhemerised Saturn whose earliest members are related in *TTr*^{2} must remain a mystery, as must her identity, though Tethys makes at least as much sense as Thetis, for the reasons mentioned above.

Pallor mac Pic (§ 4)

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[384] Ó hAodha, 'The Irish Version', p. 136.
[385] Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, p. 10.
[386] Thetis appears (as 'Tithis') in the *Banshenchus*, for example, in her orthodox roles as Peleus' wife and Achilles' mother: Dobbs, 'The *Ban-Shenchus*', *Revue Celtique* 48, p. 166.

'Pallor' and his *FCT* father 'Pic' are very likely to be identified with their namesakes who are both found in *IA* and in TTr^{2+3}, in all of which they are said to be paternal ancestors of the euhemerised king Saturn.[387] Myrick notes with reference to the presence in TTr^2 of a version of the family tree of Saturn which includes both figures, is similar but not identical to that found in all three recensions of *Lebor Bretnach* (*LB*), yet it is not found in that work's main model text *Historia Brittonum*.[388] The direction of any possible borrowing between *IA*, TTr^2, TTr^3 and *FCT* in the case of these and other personal names found in *FCT* is uncertain as is the possibility of shared sources. In any event, from the presence of 'Pallor mac Pic' in his work, the author of *FCT* appears to have either known at least one of *IA*, TTr^2 and TTr^3, or to have shared certain sources with at least one of these texts.

The name 'Pic' seems to be a fairly straightforward gaelicised form of 'Picus', a Roman deity, generally believed (where his lineage is mentioned) to be a son of Saturn, apart from in TTr^2 alone among published texts, in which he is said to be the latter's grandfather.[389] Myrick strongly suggests that the name 'Pollor' ('Pallois' in the genitive form in *LB*) as it appears in TTr^2, is likely to be a corrupt form of the 'Latin cosmogonic' figure 'Tellus', with the 'r' ending in the Irish text caused by confusion with the genitive form 'Telluris', and the initial 'P' for 'T' influenced, if not caused, by an Irish fondness for alliterative triads.[390] This lineage for Saturn, Myrick suggests, seems to have been ultimately borrowed from Byzantine sources, with the *Chronicle* by John Malalas (6th century A.D) being among the most likely of these especially, as Myrick notes, since a Latin translation of part of this work appears to

[387] Calder, *Imtheachta*, pp. 92–3, l. 1479 in which 'Pallor' is translated 'Apollo(?)' by Calder; Stokes, *Togail*, p. 1 l. 2; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1063, l. 30821; TTr^3 is as yet inedited, yet at least one of its two manuscript versions contains the genealogy of Saturn at its beginning: RIA D iv 2 24 rb; in anticipation of a forthcoming edition of TTr^3, I shall confine my comments to TTr^2, even though it seems that TTr^3 shares a great deal of material with it, as this example of the genealogy of Saturn exemplifies. The character 'Pollor' / 'Pallor' 'mac Pic(c)' in TTr^{2+3} is not to be confused with 'Pallair mac Rinnail' / 'Palloir mac Rindail', Argonaut and king of Thrace, found in the same texts: Stokes, *Togail*, p. 9, l. 345; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1072, l. 31162 ; RIA D iv 2 28ra. Neither a son of Picus nor a son of Rinnal appears in TTr^1, in the case of the former 'Pollor' because no genealogy of Saturn is present, and in the case of the latter there is no mention of any such Argonaut who catches a ball of enchanted thread thrown by Medea in order to prevent Jason's departure: MacEoin, 'Ein Text', p. 45.

[388] Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, pp. 169–70.

[389] Stokes, *Togail*, p. 1, l. 2; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1063, l. 30821.

[390] Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, pp. 171–2.

have been known in Canterbury in the seventh century.[391]

That Tellus is an alternative name for the female deity Terra, the earth, in Roman mythology and therefore an unlikely son of Picus or of anyone else is not an insurmountable obstacle for Myrick's suggestion that Tellus equals the Pollor / Pallor found in Irish texts.[392] It would be perfectly understandable that a medieval reader confronted with the genitive form 'Telluris' (or 'Polluris') might have known neither what the name's nominative form should be nor what sex the character being described was. The situation is hardly helped by the likelihood of understandable confusion between the letters 'r' and 's' in certain scripts. In addition, given the likely uncertainty surrounding the identity of the parent in any phrase such as 'x Telluris filius' or 'x Polluris filius' it is at least understandable that the assumption was made that Tellus / Pollus was a man.[393]

However, it should be noted that the Late Antique mythographer Fulgentius is the earliest extant author to refer to a character whose name looks like it is ultimately to be equated with that the 'Pollor' / 'Pallor' of respectively *TTr*[2] and *FCT*. Fulgentius calls Saturn 'Polluris filius', in which he seems to be followed some centuries later by both the First and Second Vatican Mythographers, implying the belief in the existence of an otherwise unknown figure 'Pollus', conceivably out of confusion with Pollux, brother of Castor, Helen and Clytemnestra.[394] The situation concerning a putative link between 'Tellus' / 'Pollus' and the Irish forms 'Pollor' and 'Pallor' is not made clearer by the appearance of the form 'Telepia' for Thyestes' daughter known elsewhere as Pelopia later in *FCT* (§ 6), which supports the

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[391] Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, pp. 165–72, especially p. 165, note 26. Latin translations of excerpts from Malalas' *Chronicle* (which contains a great deal of Classical lore) appear in the *Laterculus Malalianus*, which may be dated to either the seventh or eighth century. On a possible connexion between this text and Theodore of Canterbury, see Stevenson, 'Malalas in Latin'. Of particular note concerning the putative Insular origins of the *Laterculus Malalianus* is, Stevenson, notes, 'that the author goes out of his way, on two separate occasions, to be rude about the Irish ...The peevish tone of these comments is interestingly comparable with Aldhelm's gibes at Irish scholarship': 'Malalas in Latin', p. 291. This is especially noteworthy with regard to Aldhelm's apparent knowledge and opinion of Irish interest in the story of Hermione and Orestes which appears in *FCT*, §§ 20–1, as discussed below, pp. 125–6.

[392] On Tellus and Terra as Roman reflexes of the Earth-Mother see Ferguson, *The Religions*, p. 25.

[393] Names with matronymics are rare in medieval Irish literature, two exceptions are Cú Chulainn, who is occasionally known as 'mac Deichtire', in *TBC*, for example: O' Rahilly, *TBC from the Book of Leinster*, p. 19, l. 682 (in the genitive form 'Meicc Deichtire'); and Conchobar, who is sometimes called 'mac Nesa', as in *Longes macc nUislenn*: Hull, *Longes*, p. 48, l. 217.

[394] Helm, *Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii*, p. 17, l. 10; Zorzetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p. 60; Kulcsár, *Mythographi*, p. 97, especially note 3 in which the possible connexions between 'Pollus' and either Tellus or Pollux are also mentioned.

notion of confusion over 'P' / 'T' among certain medieval Irish men of letters, especially when alliteration is the result, though in this case as half of a duo rather than one of a triad.

Whatever the ultimate odentity of 'Pallor', the situation surrounding likely sources for both this figure in *FCT* and his father Pic is clearer than that surrounding the aforementioned Taithis. The fact that Pallor is specified as the son of Pic in the following texts alone appears to suggest that there is a connexion, either via shared sources, or direct borrowing, between *FCT* and TTr^2 or TTr^3. That two of the three extant witnesses of TTr^3 are found along with *FCT* in both RIA D iv 2 and in KIL 12, may be of significance. At present it is sufficient to note that the characters Pallor and his father Pic, as well as certain other of the more obscure characters found in *FCT* also appear in TTr^2 but neither in *DETH*, nor TTr^1, nor in other Classical-tradition texts known to have been known in medieval Ireland, such as the major epic poems of Virgil and Statius.[395]

Eilleann Leghda (§ 7)

Helen is referred to as 'Leghda', 'Ledan', throughout *FCT*. This is a feature of several medieval Irish references to her, including both adaptations based on Statius' *Achilleid*.[396] However, that he gave Helen this epithet does not necessarily indicate that a medieval author believed that her mother was named Leda, seduced by Zeus in the guise of a swan according to some accounts. Evidence that this maternal connexion was not always inferred is found in another Middle Irish text, *Ranna an Aeir*, in which a similar Irish version of the epithet 'Ledan' is used of Helen by an author who nevertheless seems to believe that her mother was named 'Nemis' or 'Neimis', probably a reference to the alternative Classical tradition that Helen's mother was Nemesis.[397] In at least one version of the *Banshenchus* (a twelfth-century text), there is a reference to 'Ledha' as the correct name for the mother of Helen; in another witness of the *Banshenchus* she is also called 'Ellend Lega' without any direct mention of her mother.[398] Leda's maternity of Helen, and of Castor and Pollux, is mentioned in both TTr^1

[395] On the relationship between TTr^{1+2}, see MacEoin, 'Das Verbalsystem', pp. 196–202.
[396] Ó hAodha, 'The Irish Version', p. 92, note 7.
[397] Anderson, '*Ranna*', p. 412; on Nemesis as an alternative to Leda as mother of Helen in Classical lore see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, pp. 319–21; how the author of *Ranna an Aeir* came by this arcane piece of Classical information is a question which warrants further investigation.
[398] Respectively Dublin RIA D 2. 1 (Leabhar Ua Maine) and The Book of Lecan: Dobbs, 'The *Ban-Shenchus*', *Revue Celtique* 48, pp. 165 and 203.

and *TTr*[2], though she is not given an Irish version of the epithet 'Ledan Helen' in either of these works.[399] However, Leda is unmentioned in *DETH*.

Poreth (§ 16)

The identity of 'Poreth mac Rinnail' must remain open to a degree of speculation, especially since the story of Helen's final abduction by him is unique to *FCT*. The most obvious candidate for 'Poreth' is perhaps, as Byrne suggests, Pirithous, who is however generally reported to be either the son of Ixion, king of Thessaly, or of Zeus himself, in both Classical and later works.[400] Byrne notes that it was Pirithous' companion Theseus and not the Thessalian prince who abducted Helen according to orthodox accounts, and that this event is said to have taken place before she married Menelaus, well before the Trojan Campaign, and not after it as stated in *FCT*.[401] On the other hand, Pirithous' gaelicised name is spelt 'Periotus' in the only firm medieval Irish reference to him (in company with 'Teis', i.e. Theseus, but not in the context of the abduction of Helen or anyone else), which occurs in the prose adaptation of Statius' *Achilleid*.[402]

As with other instances of unorthodox or unique incidents related in *FCT*, the role of Pirithous, if 'Poreth' is indeed to be equated with him, as abductor of Helen may have been caused by the Irish author's use of incomplete or otherwise imprecise sources, or by his deliberate creative reworking. If the latter is true concerning this abduction mini-narrative, the author may have been inspired by Pirithous' role as helper in one or more of the aforementioned orthodox accounts of Theseus' carrying-off of Helen. Indeed, that it is Pirithous, and not Theseus, who abducts Helen at this late stage of *FCT* perhaps implies that the Irish author knew the story of Theseus' earlier actions towards the Spartan princess. If he did know a version of the Theseus / Helen narrative, it might well have made more sense to him to have Pirithous instead abduct her at this late stage. It may have appeared unwieldy to have Theseus abduct Helen again, if she needed to be abducted one more time for the purposes of the *FCT* author, and since Pirithous had form as an abductor in connexion with Theseus' earlier actions he may have been considered a plausible candidate to be the

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[399] Mac Eoin, 'Ein Text', p. 56, ll. 468–9; Stokes, *Togail*, p. 8, ll. 293–4 and p. 25, l. 1012; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1070, ll. 31110–1 and p. 1089, l. 31824.
[400] Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, pp. 288 and 720; these include references by Virgil, Lactantius Placidus, and the first two Vatican Mythographers.
[401] Byrne, 'The Parricides', p. 29, note 8.
[402] Ó hAodha, 'The Irish Version', p. 112, § 31 and note 85.

character who completed Helen's literary life of being carried off by men. If Poreth is to be equated with Pirithous this appears to be strong evidence that the *FCT* author knew the details of the story of Theseus' initial abduction of Helen well, and was engaged in a somewhat playful reworking process in his reintroduction of the Thessalian prince into the story as the abductor rather than as Theseus' assistant.

Rinnal (§ 16)

Rinnal is a name which also occurs twice in TTr^2, referring to two different figures.[403] Its origins in both medieval Irish adaptations based on Classical sources are unknown. Myrick, who does not mention the name's appearance in *FCT*, suggests that the two occurrences of 'Rinnal' in TTr^2 may have been borrowed from the Fir Bolg character 'Rindail' who is associated with the first use of spear-heads in Ireland, according to *LG*.[404] However, the fact that one of the two Rinnals in TTr^2 is specified as 'rí Tracia', 'king of Thrace', a territory bordering on Pirithous' legendary Thessalian homeland, may suggest that this Rinnal in TTr^2 is Greek, and not an Irish legendary king (albeit with Greek ancestry) as he appears in *LG*.[405] If the Rinnal of TTr^2 was believed to have been a king of Thrace at the time of the Argonauts, it is also credible that he might have been also acceptable to the author of *FCT* as a candidate to be the literary father of Poreth. The chronology and geography of the 'Rinnal rí Tracia' of TTr^2 are far from likely to have been considered insurmountable in the event that the name of Ixion, as the orthodox father of Pirithous, if 'Poreth' is indeed to be identified with this character, was unkown to the author of *FCT*. As with the aforementioned Taithis, the author of *FCT* was probably unlikely to have been open to a charge of ignorance or error by his contemporaries over such a detail as the name of Pirithous' father.

Further research concerning the respective 'Rinnals' in *FCT* and in TTr^2 is required, and at present their identities must remain open to speculation. Even so, it need not be assumed that such unorthodox personal names in *FCT* are simple inventions, or 'passe-partout' names as Myrick suggests of the counterparts of 'Pallor' who are found in TTr^2.[406] There seems little grounds for certainty at present over the origins of such names. However, simply because their origins are extremely difficult to identify does not mean that they cannot be gaelicised

[403] Stokes, *Togail*, p. 9, ll. 337 and 345; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1072, ll. 31154 and 31162.
[404] Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, p. 171, note 50; Macalister, *Lebor* 4, p. 32.
[405] Stokes, *Togail*, p. 9, l. 345; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1072, l. 31162.
[406] Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, p. 171, note 50.

forms of perhaps fairly obscure personal names which nevertheless do have genuine antecedents in either Latin or Byzantine Greek traditions, or in the little-understood middle ground where the two may have met – the transmission route between Malalas' *Chronicle* and *Lebor Bretnach*, evident from their aforementioned shared versions of the ancestry of Saturn including the character whom *FCT* calls 'Pallor', being one such place.[407]

Peris (§ 18)

It is not immediately clear which of the two witnesses is correct, calling into question both the identity of 'Peris' in *FCT* and whether he killed the Phocian king or was himself, like the latter, killed by Teucer.[408] However, the fact that the text states that the only noblemen to survive the battle were Teucer and Orestes would seem to imply that 'Peris' was killed in the battle and that therefore K is correct to include the abbreviation for 'ocus' which in turn leads to the conclusion that the author intended 'Peris' to be an ally of both Orestes and of the Phocian king. If 'Peris' is an ally of Orestes, the most obvious candidate is Pylades, the Phocian king's son who has been described (§ 17) as a close friend of the exiled prince, agreeing with several orthodox accounts of Orestes' life with the Phocians.[409] However, there are two reasons to question this identification: Firstly, the normal practice of the author of *FCT* is to name a character straight away, as opposed to what would be the case here if the Phocian king's unnamed son already referred to in § 17 is to be identified with 'Peris', i.e. Pylades. Perhaps in his attempt to fulfil the somewhat tricky task of producing or reworking an ending of the story of Orestes which both suited his purposes and was plausible, was guilty of a minor inconsistency in his own terms in failing to mention the name of the Phocian king's son when he first enters the narrative in § 17. Secondly, Pylades' gaelicised name appears in very different guises as 'Paladies' and 'Polideis' in manuscript versions of the Irish adaptation of Statius' *Achilleid*.[410] As in the aforementioned identification of 'Poreth' with 'Pirithous', then, if 'Peris' is a gaelicised form of 'Pylades' the version of the character's name in *FCT* is very different to that in the medieval Irish versions of the *Achilleid*.

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[407] On one possible early medieval conduit of Malalas' work to the British Isles see above, p. 57, note 391.
[408] On the two manuscript readings see above, pp. 40–1, notes 314 and 332.
[409] A list of such analogous accounts of this narrative is found below, pp. 113–4.
[410] Ó hAodha, 'The Irish Version', p. 112 and note 86.

Despite these reservations, if 'Peris' is not to be identified with Pylades it is difficult to suggest an alternative candidate. In particular, it seems highly unlikely that the character whose name is closest to 'Peris', i.e. Paris, is intended here, since not only has the author of *FCT* has already named Priam's son 'Alaxandair' several times in the text but it would be incongruous, even by the standards of an author willing to portray Teucer as not having fought at Troy, to have Paris fighting on either side in the battle between Orestes and Aegisthus. Moreover, if the K text is correct and 'Peris' is killed along with the Phocian king by Teucer (presumably) it seems most probable that 'Peris' is also a Phocian or a Phocian ally in *FCT*, and not a main player in the Trojan War. If S is correct and the Phocian king either killed 'Peris' or was killed by him, it becomes still more difficult to suggest a plausible candidate for 'Peris'.

Aimpitir (§ 22)

This character's role in the struggle for the post-Agamemnon Greek kingship seems to be an authorial innovation, in a sub-narrative whose entire content shares few details with other sources.[411] The inspiration for the name 'Aimpitir' may be one of the sons of Laomedon, the Trojan patriarch, named in *TTr*^{2} as 'Ampiter'.[412] The origins of this character are in turn also far from clear, and the name may be a gaelicised form of 'Amphitryon', a figure associated with Heracles, even though he was bore no relationship to Laomedon. In any event, Amphitryon would be at least two generations older than Orestes and the suspicion must be that 'Aimpitir' has been brought into *FCT* for its author's purposes, with the name alone inspired by or borrowed from an entirely different figure found only in *TTr*^{2}.

[411] Though Orestes does contend with one Aletes son of Aegisthus in one Classical source; On this incident, and the unique account in *FCT* of the fate of the Greek kingship, after Orestes, see below, pp. 134–6.
[412] Stokes, *Togail*, p. 17, l. 655; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1079, l. 31438.

2. THE CLASSICAL CONTEXT OF *FINGAL CHLAINNE TANNTAIL*

2.1 Introduction

It is apparent from the action of *FCT* that the text consists of a series of medieval Irish versions of Classical stories of kinslaying through several generations of the royal dynasty of Tantalus.[413] Each account of an instance of *fingal* within this royal family might stand alone as a separate episode in *FCT*, even though common strands of plot and theme run through the whole work. Much of the Classical material contained in the episodes of *FCT* is also widely represented in literature composed from the Homeric period onwards, inviting comparison between each episode of *FCT* and these analogues. Since the Irish adaptation offers no direct clue concerning the likeliest sources for its constituent narratives, such a comparative study offers the likeliest, if not the only, way to identify them. A comparative study will also establish material which is likely to be unique to *FCT* in the extant record.

There are only a small number of examples of previous comparative studies of medieval Irish adaptations of Classical narratives. Where they have been conducted, such studies have tended to focus on very small groups of analogues or likely source texts for the Irish work in question, even in cases, just as in that of *FCT*, where no known single Latin model exists for the vernacular text. Comparative studies on this 'unknown model(s)' type of medieval Irish adaptation of a Classical narrative include R.T. Meyer's and Peters' respective studies concerning stories of Alexander the Great in medieval Irish literature and, more recently, Miles' study of a medieval Irish tale concerning the House of Thebes, *RIM*.[414] Each of these comparative studies is justifiably restricted to a small number of analogues. Research into the medieval Irish accounts of Alexander has the benefit of internal references to authors such as Orosius as sources in places, even though this situation – a known source text – applies to only a small proportion of these Irish adaptations of Alexander material. In the case of Miles' work, by comparing the opening sections of *RIM* with Statius' version of essentially parallel narratives in his *Thebaid*, he is able to demonstrate that the opening section of this medieval Irish adaptation is very probably based on that Latin epic and / or its scholarly tradition, even though in this case the poet himself is not mentioned by name in *RIM*. However, in contrast

[413] These episodes are listed below, p. 69.
[414] R. T. Meyer, 'The Sources'; Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', pp. 71–86 ; Miles, '*Riss*'.

with the situations which prevail for both the Alexander material and for *RIM*, no work by a known Latin author such as Orosius or Statius can be safely proposed a priori as likely sources for *FCT*. This lack of an obvious reference point necessitates a wider comparative study, encompassing more analogues than those presented in Meyer's, Peters' and Miles' respective studies. Another advantage of performing such a broad study is that it will increase confidence in the uniqueness of any material found in *FCT* but in no analogue.

2.2 Aims and Scope

From an initial survey of the Classical material in *FCT*, there appears to be no extant single work which contains a version (however brief) of every narrative it retells, which suggests that the Irish tale's Classical content is the product of multiple sources, unless its author gleaned his information from a single unknown source. The single text which comes closest to offering a version of every Classical narrative found in *FCT* is Euripides' *Orestes*, at the beginning of which Electra gives a resumé of the House of Tantalus' terrible history up to and including Orestes' murder of their mother Clytemnestra and subsequent madness, while at the end of the play both Orestes' marriage to Hermione and kingship over Argos are prophesised / pronounced by Apollo, who also mentions Neoptolemus' (a.k.a. Pyrrhus') conflicting interest in Hermione, all of which are also present in *FCT*.[415] There are significant differences in the details of these narratives between the versions in *Orestes* and in *FCT*, yet they refer to the same literary incidents despite the cultural, linguistic and literary leaps required to get them from fifth-century-BC Greece to Ireland, c. 1200 A.D. Allusions to many of the narratives of which there are versions in *FCT* are also found in each of Seneca's *Agamemnon* and his *Thyestes*, especially in their respective opening Acts, in which the contexts of the crimes to follow are related; yet since these Senecan references are generally cryptic without offering such details as the names of those involved, it appears extremely unlikely that they could have led directly to any part of *FCT*.[416]

With this in mind, it seems clear that, as with the aforementioned studies concerning respectively the medieval Irish Alexander material and *RIM*, the relationship between the sources of *FCT* and the text itself is far less evident than is the case in adaptations, such as *IA*, whose main model, Virgil's *Aeneid*, is a known Latin work. Even in the case of *IA*, the

[415] Kovacs, *Euripides* 5, pp. 412–417, ll. 5–45, and pp. 600–1, ll. 1653–63.
[416] Fitch, *Seneca*: *Tragedies* 2, pp. 126–30 (*Agamemnon*) and pp. 230–8 (*Thyestes*).

relationship between model and adaptation is not entirely straightforward.[417] Nonetheless, in this latter type of adaptation, namely one based upon a known source, it is possible to mark specific points of correspondence between the Irish text and the model in question, as for example Calder does in his edition of *Togail na Tebe* between it and Statius' *Thebaid*.[418] Such a process may illustrate both the Irish author's method and perhaps also his purpose to a significant degree.This is far more difficult for texts such as the aforementioned Irish Alexander material and for *RIM*, where there are good reasons to suppose that parts of the Irish adaptation might be based on the work and / or tradition of an author such as Orosius or Statius, yet there can be little prospect of identifying the precise line number of any extant model text. Even to reach this latter, lower, level of precsion concerning the sources of *FCT* is a remote prospect; a more realistic goal is to establish the types of sources which could have both inspired and assisted its composition.

In the light of the above observations concerning the unknown relationship between *FCT* and its Classical-tradition sources, it is accepted that to demonstrate significant borrowing from specific sources is unlikely to be possible. The following comparative analysis may instead offer the opportunity to make more general informed suggestions concerning the types of both texts and traditions which are most likely to have been drawn upon by this particular medieval Irish author. This process may also demonstrate, as mentioned above, which material is unique to *FCT* in the record, and perhaps therefore what was deliberately introduced into this Classically-inspired narrative by its medieval Irish creator. Establishing which *FCT* material is present in which other texts and traditions, and which is unique to the medieval Irish text in the extant record will therefore shed some light upon the likeliest types of sources used by the *FCT* author, as well as his most probable methods and preoccupations.

However, before undertaking any, especially broad, comparative analysis in order to achieve these goals, it must be recognised that this approach entails important methodological problems. Perhaps the greatest of these is limiting the scope of the analysis by selecting analogues to be the Irish text's foils, a process which must be subjective to a degree. In the aforementioned focused comparative studies undertaken respectively by Meyer and Miles, likely analogues / sources for their respective Irish adaptations are selected without any mention that the entire corpus of works containing references to the narratives in question has

[417] Poppe, *A New Introduction*, pp. 17–30.
[418] Calder, *Togail*.

been searched; this type of approach is harder to justify for any comparative analysis of *FCT*. The sheer obscurity of many of this Irish adaptation's Classical narratives, in terms of our current knowledge of which potential sources were known in Ireland at the time of its composition, militates against the use of any comparative method whose focus is confined to but a few possible source texts. In any event, in the case of *FCT*, unlike that of the Alexander material and *RIM* we simply do not know where to look for the likeliest model texts and analogues.

To restrict the scope of any comparative evaluation of *FCT*'s content to a mere handful of potential source texts would therefore run the risk of missing important evidence perhaps to be found in unexpected places. It would also increase uncertainty concerning the uniqueness or otherwise of certain of the narrative details of *FCT*, significantly reducing the power of any conclusions to be drawn from the likely introduction of these unique (in the extant record) details by the tale's medieval Irish author.

However, the comparative analysis of *FCT* cannot be comprehensive, since to include in the study all analogous references present in works known to have been composed before *FCT*, would also present severe methodological problems. Chief among these, perhaps, is the fact that the number of Classical references alone to what were to become the medieval Irish tale's main characters and narrative events is very considerable, and the number of post-Classical, pre-*FCT* references to these same characters and narratives is also numerous, albeit far more difficult to quantify with any degree of certainty in advance.[419]

Since methodological constraints demand that the corpus of analogous references to the narratives of *FCT* be refined, it seems best to set the limits for the comparative analysis which follows within the bounds of the most likely source types for such a medieval Irish work, and so this analysis will include only works from within what I shall call the 'Latin tradition', composed up to c. 1200.[420] Despite the name 'Latin tradition', however, it should be noted that analogues taken from both primary and secondary Classical Greek texts are

[419] Several reference works detail Classical instances of the narratives retold in *FCT*. The main one used here is Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*. However, no such reference work exists at present for post-Classical accounts of these narratives, increasing the possibility of omission when considering these later sources.

[420] It appears that there are no Western non-Latin vernacular works containing analogues to the episodes of *FCT*, with the exception of other Irish works such as *Togail na Tebe*, whose author's claim to rely upon a tale entitled 'Fingal Chlaindi Tanntail' for these references is discussed below, pp. 94–6.

included.[421] A reason for the inclusion of analogues taken from Classical Greek texts is that they may be considered likely to have informed and influenced early Latin authors and scholarship concerning those Classical narratives (versions of) which are also found in *FCT*, even if it is accepted that no Classical Greek work is likely to have been available to a medieval Irish author.

However, because any possible significant connexion between post-Classical Greek works and the Latin tradition of Classical literature known to have been known in medieval Ireland (and the West in general) has yet to be established, Byzantine Greek source texts have not been included in this analysis, though it should not be concluded from their absence that it is assumed to be absolutely impossible that any such work might be part of the tradition which informed *FCT*.[422] It certainly appears probable that European political events of the twelfth-century, especially the Crusades, fostered an increase in levels of interest in Classical narratives in the West, via the twin mechanisms of increased availability through contacts (which were not always peaceful) between the Latin West and Byzantium and the obvious parallels between the literary-historical siege of Troy and the then current western siege of

[421] Mainly tragedies and mythographic works. All quotations taken from Greek works are given in translation only.

[422] Although there remains a fair amount of uncertainty concerning scholarly links between Byzantium and the Latin West, it is clear that there were circumstances in which such contact might have taken place, for example as the result of marriages such as that between Otto, Holy Roman Emperor, and the Byzantine princess Theophano in 969. This marriage was preceded by the appointment of the Liudprand of Cremona to Constantinople as ambassador. However, despite the fact that both Theophano and Liudprand were well educated, it is far from certain that any significant cultural transfer between east and west took place as a result of their respective relocations. On Theophano's education see Herrin,'Theophano'; on Liudprand's career see Sutherland, *Liudprand of Cremona* and Rentschler, *Liudprand von Cremona*, pp. 1–30; on the interaction between Byzantine and Ottonian learning see McKitterick, 'Ottonian intellectual culture', who notes of the Ottonian book lists c. 1000 that 'The almost total absence of any manuscripts that can be associated directly with Byzantium, or which contain Greek, moreover, is striking.': 'Ottonian intellectual culture', p. 181. It may be that whatever Greek learning Theophano brought west with her did not circulate. On the other hand, the book lists show that Theophano's son, Otto III, who had a Byzantine tutor, had access to works by authors such as Livy and Seneca (though not the latter's tragedies), as well as historical works which may demonstrate at least an interest in Classical authors: McKitterick, 'Ottonian intellectual culture', pp. 177–8.

another eastern city, Jerusalem.[423]

2.3 Method

The method followed below is to compare the finer, non-ubiquitous, details of the narrative of each episode of *FCT* with extant analogues from the 'Latin tradition', as defined above.[424] In order to both aid comparison with *FCT* and to distil the quantity of information, only full analogues of each narrative have been included in the Tables which form the basis for the analysis which follows. 'Full analogues' are here distinguished from other references to these narratives in that only a full analogue contains *all* the principal elements of a particular narrative as it appears in *FCT*. For example, in the case of the story of Tantalus and Pelops (*FCT* Episode 1 below) only versions of the story with all three main elements as it appears in the Irish tale – Pelops' sacrifice by Tantalus his father, Pelops' resurrection, and Tantalus' punishment by the gods – are considered to be full analogues, whereas references to just one or two of these three elements of this story are considered partial analogues and do not appear in the Tables below. However, attention is paid to some of these partial analogues in the analysis which follows the Tables, and it is not assumed that only full analogues are capable of representing the kinds of sources used by the author of *FCT*.

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[423] In the twelfth century, diplomatic, as well as military, journeys east were undertaken by western aristocrats in connexion with especially the Second Crusade. As in the aforementioned tenth-century example of Otto andTheophano, the resulting contact included marriage, such as that between the Byzantine Emperor Manuel and Bertha von Sulzbach, for whom a précis account of the *Iliad* was composed in verse by John Tzetzes in 1146: Jeffreys, 'The Commenian Background', pp. 472–3. It may be the case that such contacts, as well as the idea of a western expeditionary force seeking to capture a major eastern city, rekindled interest among both sets of Christians in literary Romance focusing on Troy: Jeffreys, 'The Commenian Background'. With this in mind, it is notable that the author of *TTr*[2] describes the second assault on Troy in the following terms, no doubt highly resonant in the minds of a contemporary audience, even if Irish crusaders do not appear in the known ranks of those who joined the twelfth-century European host: 'Is cuit péne cach rafăc dí slúag na Eurpa uili na rachomraic immon oenchomairli seo. Cona rigaib ⁊ laithib ⁊ tuathaib ⁊ tuisechaib ⁊ acmib ⁊ ilchenélaib do thecht in tsluagaidsin', 'A painful lot had every one who was left of the host of the whole of Europe who did not join at this one council, with its kings and champions and tribes and chieftains and races and many stocks, to go on that expedition': Stokes, *Togail*, pp. 28 and 92, ll. 1141–4; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1093, ll. 31955–7; (Stokes' trans.). A more direct connexion between the Troy story and the Third Crusade was made by Joseph of Exeter who dedicated his (c. 1184) Anglo-Latin adaptation of *DETH* to Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had recently taken up the cross, with the words, '... da maxime vati, Ire iter inceptum, troiamque aperire iacentum, Te sacre assument acies, diuinque bella': Jusserand, *De Josepho Exoniensi*, p. 108, '... do you now, o mighty one, grant your poet to travel the path he has entered on and to reveal the fall of Troy. Soon the sacred ranks and the holy war will take you.', trans. Roberts: *The Iliad*, p. 4. Around the time of the Third Crusade, and probably throughout the Crusading era, the parallels between the respective sieges of Troy and Jerusalem appear not to have been missed by European men of letters.

[424] A list of the works containing analogues to the episodes of *FCT* appears below, pp. 70–1.

Data concerning particular narrative details, the points of dispute between analogues, are arranged in the Tables below, followed by a critical comparative analysis. These discrepancies between analogues indicate the (occasionally near-simultaneous) existence of a multiplicity of traditions concerning a particular story. On the other hand, the Tables also demonstrate that at certain times and in particular places extant Classical accounts are silent concerning even their major characters' biographical details, such as a hero's age, motivation for action and manner of death. It can be shown to be highly probable that this innocent (as opposed to ignorant) silence on the part of some Classical authors concerning biographical information which proved to be of great interest to later writers invited, or perhaps necessitated, authorial input by the latter. This is the case most especially in the medieval period, when it may be assumed that the Classical stories found in *FCT* were at or close to their most arcane in the Latin West.[425] The occurrence of such a process, i.e. that Classical authors' collective detail-deficiency concerning a particular narrative is 'corrected' by later writers will become clear in the comparative analysis which follows.

The Episodes of *FCT*

1. The attempted sacrifice of Pelops by his father Tantalus (§§ 1–3)
2. The vengeance of Atreus against his brother Thyestes (§§ 4–5)
3. The begetting of Aegisthus, and his killing of Pelops (§ 6)
4. Aegisthus' marriage to Clytemnestra and taking of the kingship while Agamemnon is at Troy (§§ 7–9)
5. The death of Agamemnon, and its immediate aftermath (§§ 10–16)
6. The vengeance of Orestes against his mother and Aegisthus, and his descent into madness (§§ 17–19)
7. Orestes and Hermione, and the post-Aegisthus succession to the kingship of Greece (§§ 20–2)

[425] Referring to 'the classical tradition', Reynolds states that 'as it expands and contracts in its course from Antiquity to the end of the Renaissance ... in its crude and essential form it appears to the imagination to follow the traditional lines of the hourglass': *Texts and Transmission*, p. xiii. Although the 'waist' of this tradition, akin to that of a 'wasp' according to Reynolds, is envisaged to correspond to 'the years c. 550 to c. 750', works such as Seneca's tragedies (in particular *Thyestes* and *Agamemnon*) which between them contain much of the Classical information also found in *FCT*, only begin to appear in the West outside of what is now Italy around the turn of the thirteenth century: *Texts and Transmission*, pp. xvi–xvii and 378–81.

Works containing Analogues to the Episodes of *FCT*

[5th c. B.C. Greek]	Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*[426]
[5th c. B.C. Greek]	Aeschylus, *The Libation-Bearers*[427]
[5th c. B.C. Greek]	Aeschylus, *Eumenides*[428]
[5th c. B.C. Greek]	Euripides, *Andromache*[429]
[5th c. B.C. Greek]	Euripides, *Electra*[430]
[5th c. B.C. Greek]	Euripides, *Helen*[431]
[5th c. B.C. Greek]	Euripides, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*[432]
[5th c. B.C. Greek]	Euripides, *Orestes*[433]
[3rd c. B.C. Greek]	Lycophron, *Alexandra*[434]
[1st c. A.D. Greek][435]	Apollodorus, *The Library*[436]
[1st c. A.D. Latin]	Seneca, *Thyestes*[437]
[1st c. A.D. Latin]	Ovid, *Metamorphoses*[438]
[1st c. A.D. Latin]	Hyginus, *Fabulae*[439]
[4th c. A.D. Latin]	Servius, *Commentary* on Virgil's *Georgics*[440]
[4th c. A. D. Latin]	Servius, *Commentary* on Virgil's *Aeneid*[441]
[5th c. A.D. Latin]	Dracontius, *Orestis Tragoedia*[442]

[426] Edition cited: Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, pp. 1–205.
[427] Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, pp. 206–351.
[428] Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, pp. 352–485.
[429] Kovacs, *Euripides* 2, pp. 267–387.
[430] Kovacs, *Euripides* 3, pp. 141–299.
[431] Kovacs, *Euripides* 5, pp. 1–199.
[432] Kovacs, *Euripides* 4, pp. 152–311.
[433] Kovacs, *Euripides* 5, pp. 399–605.
[434] Lambin, *Alexandra*.
[435] On the uncertainty surrounding this date, see Smith & Trzascoma, *Apollodorus' Library*, pp. xxix–xxx.
[436] Frazer, *Apollodorus*.
[437] Fitch, *Seneca*: *Tragedies* 2, pp. 215–323.
[438] Miller, *Ovid*: *Metamorphoses*.
[439] Marshall, *Hygini Fabulae*.
[440] Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui ferentur in Virgili carmina commentarii* 3, pp. 128–360.
[441] Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui ferentur in Virgili carmina commentarii* 1 and 2.

[5th c. A. D. Latin]	Lactantius Placidus, *Commentary* on Statius' *Thebaid*[443]
[c. 900 A.D. Latin]	Remi of Auxerre, *Glosses* on Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*[444]
[c.10th c. A.D. Latin]	Anon., *The First Vatican Mythographer*[445]
[c.11th c. A.D. Latin]	Anon., *The* Second *Vatican Mythographer*[446]
[c. 1100 A.D. Latin]	Anon., *Vita Ædwardi Regis*[447]
[c.12th c. A.D. Latin]	Anon., *The Third Vatican Mythographer*[448]
[c. 1200 A. D. Irish]	Anon., *Togail na Tebe*[449]

2.4 The Comparative Analysis

Episode 1:- The attempted sacrifice of Pelops by his father Tantalus (*FCT* §§ 1–3)

1. (i) *Background*

There are eleven full analogues of the opening episode of *FCT*, which range in time and place of composition from Euripides in late fifth-century-B.C. Greece to The Third Vatican Mythographer, who wrote at an unknown location probably in the West, perhaps in the late twelfth century A.D.[450] It appears from the extant record that the Tantalus / Pelops filicide story enjoyed just two discrete periods before the composition of *FCT* in which it formed part of primary works of literature: firstly, in Greek Tragedy (most fully in Euripides' works); secondly, in Latin literature of the first century A. D. (Seneca's Tragedy, and Ovid's Epic Poetry). From the third century B.C., at the latest, Tantalus' punishment was a popular

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[442] Bouquet, *La Tragédie*.
[443] Sweeney, *Lactantii Placidi in Statii Thebaida Commentum* 1.
[444] Bolton, 'The Study', pp. 60–78.
[445] Zorzetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*.
[446] Kulcsár, *Mythographi*, pp. 93–292.
[447] Barlow, *The Life of King Edward*.
[448] Dain, *Mythographe* III.
[449] Calder, *Togail*.
[450] On the authorship of *TVM*, see Zorzetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p. x.

subject for mythographers and other scholiasts.[451] The story of Pelops' special shoulder-blade is less well represented in ancient sources, yet it is mentioned as early as Pindar, in whose *Olympian* the complete narrative of Tantalus' murder of his son and punishment is recounted only to be refuted.[452] Just as in the cases of most of the other Classical narratives related in *FCT*, the approximately four hundred year gap between the Late Antique references of Servius and the Boethian glosses by the Carolingian scholar Remi of Auxerre is the only apparently silent period of any note for 'full' versions of this story since the time of Euripides.[453]

FCT is notably the only extant composition between the time of Ovid and the fifteenth century which includes the Tantalus / Pelops story within a primary work of literature. Other accounts of this narrative during this period appear either as précis within a Classical compendium, exemplified by the mythographies of Apollodorus and Hyginus and later by those of the three Vatican Mythographers, or as extended glosses within a commentary upon another primary work, such as the respective analogous references to this narrative by Servius and later by Remi of Auxerre. Many secondary works, from ancient times down to the twelfth century, typically offer only limited exegesis in addition to their renderings of the Tantalus / Pelops story. However, later medieval writers' references both to this and to other Classical narratives become increasingly allegorical, down to the versions contained respectively within the verse and prose versions of the *Ovide Moralisé*, whose title betrays

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[451] The punishment of Tantalus (but not the sacrifice of Pelops) is also referred to in several other ancient sources, notably:- Homer, *Odyssey* 11: Murray, *Homer*: *The Odyssey* 1, p. 442, ll. 582–92; Horace, *Satires* I.1.2: Alexander, *The Complete Odes*, p. 193; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4: Miller, *Ovid*: *Metamorphoses* 1, p. 210, ll. 458–9; Tantalus' punishment is also related by the Late Antique mythographer Fulgentius in his *Mitologiae* 2.15: Helm, *Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii*, p. 57, ll. 1–14.

[452] Pindar's version envisages both that Poseidon was responsible for Pelops' temporary disappearance, and that Tantalus' punishment was for his greed and not for any act of kinslaying: Race, *Pindar* 1, pp. 48–53, ll. 28–66. The shoulder blade of Pelops is also the subject of a legend told by Pausanias in his *Description of Greece*, 2.5.8., in which it is buried on account of wonder at its great size: Jones, *Pausanias*, 2, p. 453. The burial in Pausanias' account may be linked to the idea present in *FCT*, and elsewhere, that Ceres (generally considered to be the Roman equivalent of the Greek Demeter, earth goddess) ate Pelops' shoulder. Nearly a millennium after Pausanias, and composed far to the north-west, the arm of Pelops is said to have been replaced with one of ivory by 'concordia'– perhaps an allegorical reference to the goddess Ceres – in *Vita Ædwardi Regis*, an anonymous Life of Edward The Confessor, in which Pelops' murder appears to be conflated with the gruesome feast prepared by Atreus for his brother Thyestes. However, important details of the story of Pelops' death and resuscitation as it appears elsewhere, such as the role of Tantalus in his son's murder, are not mentioned: Barlow, *The Life*, pp. 59–60; see below, p. 85, note 489.

[453] Remi is described by one modern editor of his mythological glosses as 'the most popular of the early commentators' [on Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosphiae*]: Bolton, 'The Study' pp. 36–7. The story of Tantalus' act of parricide against Pelops is mentioned by Orosius in the fifth century A.D., yet the other two main elements of the story as it appears in *FCT*, Tantalus' punishment and Pelops' resuscitation, do not appear in Orosius' account: Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose*, 1, pp. 59–60.

both authorial method and purpose.[454] This increasing tendency to allegorise among the medieval accounts of this Classical narrative is already evident in the analogues composed before *FCT*, especially in the Second and Third Vatican Mythographers' works. Given what appears to be occurring elsewhere in Europe in the treatment of this and other Classical narratives, the account in *FCT* is remarkably non-allegorical given its likely date of composition. Also of note is the fact that *FCT* is the only post-Classical vernacular work which retells a 'full' version of the Tantalus / Pelops story before the fifteenth century.

1. (ii) *The Analogues of FCT, Episode 1*

Euripides, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, 386–9, and *Helen*, 388–9 (*Eur.*)[455]

Lycophron, *Alexandra*, 152–6 (*Ale.*)

Apollodorus, *The Library*, Epitome 2. 3 (*Lib.*)

Seneca, *Thyestes*, 1–20 and 147–76 (*Thy.*)

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4. 458–9; 6. 403–11; 10. 41–2 (*Met.*)

Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 83 (*Fab.*)

Servius, *Commentary on Virgil's Georgics*, 3.7.3.3–4 (*Georg.*)

Remi of Auxerre, *Glosses on Boethius' The Consolation of Philosophy*, 3.12.37.1–2 (*Remi*)

The First Vatican Mythographer, 1.12 (*FVM*)

The Second Vatican Mythographer, 124 (*SVM*)

The Third Vatican Mythographer, 6.21 (*TVM*)

1. (iii) *Tables showing Variations between Analogues*

All versions: The main characters are Tantalus, his son Pelops and the

[454] De Boer, *Ovide Moralisé* 2, pp. 334–5, ll. 2078–2182; de Boer, *Ovide Moralisé en Prose*, p. 195. Each work's respective author presents the story as a cautionary tale against both vanity and love of wealth.

[455] These abbreviations in brackets refer to the specific passage of the quoted work, and are used in the Tables, Commentary and Analysis sections below, pp. 74–84, all of which relate to *FCT* Episode 1 and its analogues. Similar abbreviations are used in the discussions of each of the other episodes which follow, where they also relate to the specific passages from each respective quoted work.

unnamed Greek gods.[456] Pelops is first killed by, or at the behest of, his father, then prepared and served at a feast for the gods, then restored to life by the gods in an altered form.[457]

Variations:

Table 1.1 Additional named characters

	Eur.	*Ale.*	*Lib.*	*Thy.*	*Met.*	*Fab.*	*Georg.*	*Remi*	*FVM.*	*SVM.*	*TVM*	*FCT*
Ceres / Demeter		*				*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mercury										*	*	
Moesia (stepmother)												*

Table 1.2 Pelops' age when killed and sacrificed

	Eur.	*Ale.*	*Lib.*	*Thy.*	*Met.*	*Fab.*	*Georg.*	*Remi*	*FVM.*	*SVM.*	*TVM*	*FCT*
Not given			*			*	*	*	*	*	*	
Boy	*	*		*	*							
Youth / Young Man												*

Table 1.3 Reason(s) for Pelops' killing and sacrifice

	Eur.	*Ale.*	*Lib.*	*Thy.*	*Met.*	*Fab.*	*Georg.*	*Remi*	*FVM.*	*SVM.*	*TVM*	*FCT*
Not given	*	*	*	*	*	*						
Divinity Test							*	*	*	*	*	*
Food is scarce										*	*	
Punishment												*

[456] Tantalus is not mentioned in *Alexandra*, and Lycophron refers to Demeter using her byname 'Ennaia', i.e. the goddess associated with Enna, Sicily, Lambin, *Alexandra*, p. 59, note 75; Pelops is not mentioned by name in the passage in question of *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, but Tantalus is, and the reverse situation is true in the verses of *Helen* which deal with this literary filicide. It is clear from the action of these, however, that Euripides is referring to the same incident in both plays.

[457] The accounts in both Euripidean works are somewhat lacking in detail, yet the outline of the story is clearly the same as that found in the other analogues, especially when the information contained in both plays is combined.

Table 1.4 Pelops' altered state after resuscitation

	Eur.	*Ale.*[458]	*Lib.*	*Thy.*	*Met.*	*Fab.*	*Georg.*	*Remi*	*FVM.*	*SVM.*	*TVM*	*FCT*
No mention	*			*				*				
More beautiful			*									
Ivory upper limb / joint		*			*	*	*		*	*	*	*
Myth rationalised							*		*	*	*	

Table 1.5 Tantalus' punishment

	Eur.	*Ale.*	*Lib.*	*Thy.*	*Met.*	*Fab.*	*Georg.*	*Remi*	*FVM.*	*SVM.*	*TVM*	*FCT*
Unspecified	*	*					*					
Tantalised 1[459]			*			*						
Tantalised 2[460]				*				*	*	*	*	
Tantalised 3[461]					*							
Violent Death												*
Myth rationalised								*		*	*	

1. (iv) *Commentary on Variations between Analogues*

(a) Tantalus' motive(s) for the murder of Pelops

It can be seen from Table 1.1 above that *FCT* is alone in including a stepmother who acts as the direct cause of Pelops' killing. The otherwise unknown 'Moesia', given primacy in the Irish adaptation's opening sentence, also orders the *fingal*, though Tantalus (in all other versions the prime mover in his son's murder) is complicit.[462] It seems likely from the uniqueness of this situation among accounts of the Tantalus / Pelops narrative that the lustful

[458] In Lycophron's account, Ennaia (=Demeter) consumes Pelops' elbow instead of his shoulder, and although it is not stated that he receives another of ivory (or of any other substance) he is described as 'twice young', implying that he was revived: Lambin, *Alexandra*, p. 59. The mention of his elbow having been consumed may also suggest that Pelops received a replacement limb, see Lambin, *Alexandra*, p. 59, note 77.

[459] Forced to suffer eternal hunger and thirst as punishment for revealing the gods' secrets to men.

[460] Forced to suffer eternal hunger and thirst as punishment for the killing of Pelops.

[461] Forced to suffer eternal hunger and thirst, but reason not specified.

[462] "Aderim', ar sí, 'a coscairt ⁊ áidhedha do dhenamh dhe, ⁊ a brúith ⁊ a thabairt dona déibh...'', "I pronounce', said she, 'that he be slaughtered and dismembered, and crushed up into pieces, and be given to the gods...'': *FCT*, § 2.

and vengeful stepmother is an introduction by the author of *FCT*. This may reflect either the complete lack of any motive in any putative source(s) of the Irish tale, or a perceived need or desire for a particular motive for a father's murder of a son different from those present in any source(s).[463]

The author of *FCT* may not have been the first post-Classical writer to add a new motive to this narrative. In no full Classical analogue is *any* motive mentioned for Tantalus' filicide, and it is Servius who seems to begin the process of rationalising Tantalus' act of kinslaying, by mentioning that Pelops' murder serves as a 'divinity test' for the gods.[464] The fact that it was relatively late before any motive at all became part of the story, as we have it, may be because either this detail of Tantalus' reasoning (whatever it was) was so well-known in Classical times that there was no need for it to be made explicit or, contrastingly, that knowledge concerning Tantalus' murder of Pelops was already so uncertain that no extant Classical writer knew why Tantalus was envisaged as having committed so heinous a crime. Pindar's rejection – as early as the fifth century B.C. – of the entire narrative of kinslaying and resuscitation confirms that at least one Classical author found this narrative unsatisfactory.[465] The former explanation for the lack of any motive for Tantalus' filicide in Classical sources is more likely because we may generally be sure that Classical authors knew more of an incident than they included in a given account of it. This belief is supported by known instances in which fine details of a narrative are spread over multiple Classical works, yet the exact reason(s) why no motive whatsoever for Tantalus' crime appears in the extant Classical accounts must remain speculative.[466]

Furthermore, it is noticeable that at least one further medieval author appears to have felt the need to provide a motive for Tantalus' filicide. The author of *SVM* (who appears to have been followed here by the author of *TVM*) seems, like his fellow medieval westerner the author of

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[463] On possible inspirations for the personal name 'Moesia' see above, p. 46. It is Moesia who suggests this divinity test in *FCT*, andTantalus is notable for his uniquely passive role in the Irish account, allowing his wife to pass sentence on his son: *FCT*, § 2; Tantalus' wife (not called Moesia) has no such role in Pelops' death in any analogue; on the importance of the otherwise-unknown Moesia's role in *FCT* see below, pp. 150–1.

[464] Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui ferentur in Virgili carmina commentarii* 3, p. 273.

[465] See above, p. 72, note 452.

[466] A lack of detail about an incident in a given Classical work does not necessarily mean that its author did not know more, as is shown with reference to Pelops' age in the two Euripidean references to his murder, see below, p. 78, note 471.

FCT, to have felt the need to augment the aforementioned 'divinity test' motive. In both later Vatican Mythographies only, the additional reason given for the filicide is that Pelops was killed in order to be offered up to the gods because other types of food were scarce.[467] The later three, i.e. those who wrote after *FVM*, medieval Western authorities who offer full versions of this story, therefore, appear to feel that the 'Servian' motivation for Tantalus' act of filicide is insufficient, whereas no extant Classical writer offers any rationale whatsoever, even if Tantalus' reasoning was well known to them.

Although it appears very probable, therefore, that the Irish author borrowed from a post-Classical (perhaps ultimately Servian) source, for the divinity test which he relates as one motivation for Pelops' sacrifice, by far the more powerful direct cause of this initial *fingal* in *FCT* is the unique introduction of a lustful and vindictive stepmother into the narrative. That this novel motive for Tantalus' terrible crime takes the form of a false, would-be incestuous and adulterous woman in *FCT* may assist in understanding its Irish author's interests and purposes. From the point of view of inspiration for this female-driven motive for an act of filicide by a king in *FCT*, Moesia's role closely resembles that of the stepmother figure 'ingen Echdach' in the only other extant medieval Irish tale whose title contains the word *fingal*, *Fingal Rónáin* (*FR*).[468] Thus, the composer of *FCT*, who was clearly both well-versed and interested in Classical narratives, may also have been influenced by a version of the Phaedra / Hippolytus story, whose similarities with elements of *FR* have long been noted by commentators on that Irish work.[469]

A further noteworthy difference between Episode 1 of *FCT* and its analogues which may be connected to the stepmother element, and hence to Tantalus' motivation, is Pelops' age at the time of his murder. Although this detail is not stated outright in *FCT*, it is clear from Moesia's sexual desire for Pelops and from his response to her overtures that he is a post-

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[467] It is intriguing that both apparently novel medieval reasons for the killing of Pelops, i.e. a stepmother's intervention (*FCT*) and lack of food (*SVM* and *TVM*) bear some resemblance to narratives of the 'Hansel and Gretel' type, in which a father attempts to cause his own children's death.

[468] The edition cited is Greene, '*Fingal*'; on the similarities between these two medieval Irish literary lustful stepmothers, and other examples, see below, pp. 140–4. The title of a medieval Irish poem concerning parricide, *Fingala Clainde Cerbaill*, was apparently bestowed by its first modern editor, Kuno Meyer, and does not appear as a title in the manuscript: Meyer, 'Miscellanea', p. 392; O' Grady, et al., *Catalogue* 2, p. 314.

[469] On the possibility of Classical influences on *FR* see below, pp. 142–4.

pubescent youth or young man.[470] This is in stark contrast to four of the Classical analogues in which he is explicitly described as a child. Moreover, the fact that Pelops' age is not mentioned in the other three Classical analogues need not mean that there was any doubt in ancient times that Pelops was envisaged to have been a minor at the time of his murder. Euripides, for example, refers to Tantalus' sacrificed son as a boy in his *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, but not in *Helen*, demonstrating that failure to mention a biographical detail in a particular work does not always equal authorial ignorance.[471] In any event, Euripides' mention in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* alone that Pelops was a minor when killed appears to be an instance of the mention of a particular detail in a primary work for a particular purpose. This situation found in this Euripidean work seems to be echoed in the respective accounts in primary Latin works by Seneca and Ovid, which also envisage Pelops to be a young boy. It seems that, in all three cases, the mention of Pelops' boyhood serves to heighten a sense of pathos at his murder by his own father.

However, despite its presence in primary works by Euripides, Seneca and Ovid, both extant Classical mythographic accounts to mention this mini-narrative appear to exhibit a lack of interest in Pelops' status as a minor, for neither Apollodorus nor Hyginus mentions it. All in all, then, it appears that in Classical times this information – the presentation of Pelops as a young boy at the time of his murder by Tantalus – was not considered important to the compilers of extant mythographic accounts at least, yet it is mentioned in most primary works which mention the story at all, in both Greek and Latin. Pelops' boyhood must therefore be understood to have been a well-known feature of the story, even if it is not present in the respective works of either Hyginus or Apollodorus.

Ironically, it may have been the fact that Pelops' infancy at the time of his killing was so well known in their own times and places that the extant Classical-era mythographers did not feel

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[470] Pelops' rejection of Moesia makes it clear that he is a sexually mature youth or young man, "dia mbeidis mná an talman a cóemthach m'hathar uili, ní édraidhfinn én mhnai dibh, ɣ ní dhingninn míréir m'hathar.", "Even if all the women of the world were my father's lovers I should not interfere with a solitary woman of them, and I should not act against the will of my father.": *FCT*, § 1.

[471] Pelops' status as a boy in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* depends upon the word 'παιδὸς' (l. 388), the genitive of *παις*, which generally means 'boy', though like Irish *mac* can also mean 'son': Kovacs, *Euripides* 4, pp. 186–7, ll. 387–8. Pelops is described as 'ἄῃθεος','unmarried', but not necessarily a minor at the time of his attempted murder in *Helen*: Kovacs, *Euripides* 5, pp. 52–3, l. 389 (Kovacs' trans.), though Kovacs calls him a 'boy' at the time of his restoration to life in a footnote to this incident: ibid., pp. 52–3, note 14.

compelled to include it in their respective accounts of this incident.[472] Even so, its collective omission by writers such as Apollodorus and Hyginus may well have led to the loss of this detail by the time analogues of the story first came to be composed in the early medieval West, during the centuries when the works of Euripides were very probably unknown in this area, and the relevant primary texts of Ovid and Seneca are likely to have been at best difficult to access outside of what is now Italy.[473]

The uniquely advanced age of the Pelops of *FCT* appears to indicate, then, that mythographic works lacking particular details may have been drawn upon by the author of *FCT* for the Tantalus / Pelops narrative. From the evidence of Episode 1, if any such sources lacked, as the extant Classical mythographies do, the kind of biographical and motivational details required or desired by an author of a medieval primary work such as *FCT*, he appears to have introduced them. The absence of information concerning Pelops' age in every post-Classical, pre-medieval analogue of this sub-narrative suggests that the Classical knowledge of Tantalus' sacrificial son as a minor was not in wide circulation in the West during this long expanse of time, even though certain writers knew the story in general terms. Apparently making a virtue of necessity, the creator of *FCT* seems to have filled the void in his source(s), and to have portrayed Pelops as old enough at least to be the object of a stepmother's desire. It is uncertain whether the author of *FCT* was influenced in this either by *FR* or by a similar story of the Phaedra / Hippolytus type. Whatever the inspiration for his apparent stepmother innovation, he produced at the same time a more detailed, and more emotionally-charged, motivation for Tantalus to order such a terrible act as filicide than those presented in every other extant analogue.

(b) Classical deities

Ceres, the Roman goddess of growing plants, especially of cereals, who is named as 'the goddess of creation' in *FCT* § 3, appears to have been connected with Pelops' story since at least as far back as the time of Lycophron (3rd century B.C.), in which (Greek) source she is

[472] However, Aristotle claimed (*Poetics* 9) that 'adherence to the traditional plots of tragedy should not be sought at all costs. Indeed, to seek this is absurd, since even the familiar subjects are familiar only to a minority': Halliwell, *Aristotle: Poetics*, pp. 60–1 (Halliwell's trans.).

[473] On the scarcity of Seneca's *Thyestes* in the medieval West before the thirteenth century, see above, p. 69, note 425: on the slightly earlier dissemination of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* outside of what is now Italy see Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, pp. 278–80.

referred to using a byname for Ceres' Greek counterpart, Demeter.[474] Ceres is not mentioned in either of the Latin analogues Seneca's *Thystes* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but this may have been because her presence was considered neither necessary nor useful to the surrounding narrative of either primary work, rather than necessarily because neither author knew the goddess to be associated with the story of Pelops' revival. The Latin mythographer Hyginus, a near contemporary of both Seneca and Ovid, does include Ceres in his account of the story, perhaps influenced in this by Greek legends concerning the burial and excavation of Pelops' outsized shoulder-blade.[475]

By extension from the Latin examples, therefore, the earlier silence concerning Demeter in both Euripidean references to this narrative is not conclusive proof that her connexion with Pelops' resuscitation was not part of this story in Athens in the fifth century B.C. Euripides' references to this incident are of course contained in Tragedies whose mentions of this narrative centre upon the killing of the boy Pelops by his father, rather than on any Demeter-inspired or other resurrection, even if that element was then known to be present in (what may have been considered to be another part of) Pelops' story. Whether called Demeter or Ceres, the goddess' association with the renewal of Pelops' shoulder – natural, perhaps, given her role in especially Roman mythology in regrowth of cultivated plants – is Classical. In later times, the presence of the figure of Ceres in this story offered fertile ground to Christian allegorists who rationalised both her as the earth, and Pelops' replacement ivory shoulder as an example of a bone left unconsumed therein after burial.[476]

Bearing this in mind, it is noteworthy that the author of *FCT* includes Ceres in the story of Pelops' revival but, alone amongst the post-Classical analogues which include her, *FCT* does not here equate the goddess with the earth, though it does retain her Roman role as goddess of growing things.[477] The equation of Ceres with the earth itself as an attempted rationalisation of the myth of Pelops' restoration to life appears to begin with Servius, a pagan, yet the

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[474] 'Cirir .i. bandei na chruthaighechta', 'Ceres i.e. the goddess of creation': *FCT*, § 3; on Lycophron's use of 'Ennaia' as a byname for Demeter see above, p.74, note 456.

[475] On Pausanias' account of the burial of Pelops' shoulder-blade in his *Description of Greece* see above, p. 72, note 452; on Hyginus' Greek sources see Cameron, *Greek Mythographer*, pp. 35–43.

[476] The practices of rationalistion and allegorisation of myth began well before medieval Christian commentators. On the application of such approaches to Homer's work by Greek writers in both the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. see Richardson, 'Aristotle's Reading', pp. 31–2.

[477] Ceres is even rationalised as the earth in the account in *FVM*, the surrounding text of which rarely includes such treatment of Classical figures.

allegorical possibilities in this story were followed up with gusto by several other medieval Christian writers, yet not by the author of *FCT*.[478]

The difference between the Irish author's agreement with Classical sources that Ceres is the goddess of creation and the attempts of later writers, perhaps beginning with Servius, to rationalise her as the earth poses some questions about likely sources for this episode of *FCT*. The lack of this equation of Ceres with the earth in *FCT* may simply reflect a more general non-allegorical, non-explanatory approach to Classical characters taken by its Irish author, and so may not necessarily imply that any source text(s) for this episode did not contain, for example, a gloss such as Servius' 'Ceres, ipse est terra'.[479] It is therefore difficult to assign any significance with regard to potential sources to this lack of rationalising of Ceres in *FCT*. On the other hand, the gloss on Ceres which is present in *FCT*, that she is the goddess of creation, does suggest that the Irish author's sources here preserved elements of authentic Classical lore not found in the other post-Classical analogues of this episode.

In contrast with that of Ceres, Mercury's role in the Tantalus / Pelops story, as mentioned in the latest two medieval analogues (*SVM* and *TVM*), but not in any extant Classical, Late Antique or early medieval source, was introduced into this narrative only from the eleventh century. Indeed, Mercury seems to owe his presence to the openly allegorising method employed by many medieval commentators, in this case by the Second and Third Vatican Mythographers.[480] The lack of any mention of Mercury in *FCT*, and the Irish tale's non-allegorising approach to Classical deities and narratives in general, are therefore more in keeping with the analogues composed by earlier commentators on this narrative, such as the early medieval Christian analogue-composers Remi of Auxerre and the First Vatican Mythographer, and indeed with pagan Classical authors of primary works.[481] This may suggest that the author of *FCT* borrowed here from texts composed within a tradition which is earlier than, or at least different from, the allegorising versions of this story being produced by Christian writers especially from the eleventh century onwards, represented here by *SVM* and *TVM*. The other possibility is that the Irish writer removed both Mercury and any allegorising of Classical deities from source material in which they were present. Again, it is

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[478] As in, for example, the account of this episode in *SVM*: Kulcsár, *Mythographi*, p. 191, ll. 8–9.
[479] Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui ferentur in Virgili carmina commentarii* 3, p. 273.
[480] In *SVM*, Mercury appears to be given the role as the reviver of Pelops because he is 'deus prudentie', 'the god of wisdom', and this rationalisation is repeated and expanded on in *TVM*, Kulcsár, *Mythographi*, p. 191, Dain, *Mythographe* 3, pp. 94–5.
[481] See Table 1. 1 above, p. 74.

difficult to infer which of these possibilities is more likely, yet it can be stated that *FCT* shares both the lack of Mercury's presence and the non-allegorising approach towards Classical gods with the works of much earlier Christian commentators, and with accounts in the primary Classical works which precede them.

(c) The punishment of Tantalus

It is noticeable from Table 1.5 above that *FCT* is alone in depicting Tantalus as having been punished by a quick violent death (via a thunderbolt) for the murder of his son.[482] This is a very different penalty from that which was envisaged for him in antiquity and known by many later commentators.[483] This most famous punishment, eternal hunger and thirst in the infernal river Eridan, its fruit and waters just out of reach, is first mentioned as long ago as Homer's *Odyssey*, and in terms of the full analogues to this episode of *FCT*, in Apollodorus' *The Library*.[484] However, this need not imply a single Classical tradition uniform in every detail, for there appears to have been some disagreement, for example, as to whether the extended 'tantalisation' punishment was ordered by the gods because of the king's grisly act of kinslaying, or for an apparently unrelated crime, because he had revealed their secrets to men.

In the medieval West, however, the only motive assigned by commentators to the gods for the punishment of Tantalus was the murder of his son, and the alternative, his revelation of divine secrets, was apparently moribund. The specific connexion between Tantalus' act of kinslaying and his punishment is first mentioned by Seneca among authors of the extant analogues, and it also occurs in both Remi of Auxerre's and in all three Vatican Mythographers' works. Significantly however, it is not mentioned by Servius, who is also unclear on the nature of Tantalus' punishment.[485] This may therefore indicate that the Irish author here borrowed from one such imprecise source from the Servian tradition, though it

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[482] *FCT*, § 3.

[483] In *FVM* 3. 1. 24, Tantalus is said to have fathered Pelops (and Niobe) with an otherwise-unknown woman named 'Sterope', whose name means 'lightning bolt' in Greek: Zorzetti and Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p. 112. This may be coincidental, and the name of Pelops' mother was far from universally known or agreed upon among ancient authorities (see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, p. 536) yet it is curious that Tantalus and Moesia should both suffer a fate with a connexion to the name of an earlier wife of Tantalus, at least according to one medieval source.

[484] See Table 1.5 above, p. 75.

[485] On the variations 'punito Tantalo' (in all bar one witness of Servius) and 'petente Tantalo' (in one Servian manuscript only, but apparently followed by the Vatican Mythographers) see Zorzetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p.8, note to the Latin text 1.12.3.

may simply be the case that he knew one or more 'tantalisation' punishment yet preferred to depict Tantalus (and Moesia) dying a swift, violent death for aesthetic reasons.

1. (v) *Analysis*

What light does the comparative analysis of this opening episode in *FCT* with its analogues shed upon the likely sources used by the author of *FCT*? As discussed above, three details concerning this filicide unique to the Irish account – Pelops' age (youth / adult), Tantalus' motivation (involving a lustful and vengeful stepmother) and the gods' violent punishment (death by thunderbolt) – may be the result of enforced building upon sources which were deficient in details, while providing an adequate base for the composition of a more expansive primary work such as *FCT*.

The process by which certain particular details of this narrative, probably generally fairly well-known in Classical times, became lost to the written record is visible by means of the comparative analysis performed above. Classical writers, it can be shown, did not always include direct statements about their characters' biographical details, such as Pelops' status as a minor, even when it is fairly safe to assume that they knew them. Thus when, in later epochs, a commentator attempted to produce a summary of a given Classical narrative (such as those present in the Vatican Mythographies, for example, or in the works of Servius and Remi of Auxerre) he may have omitted such details out of ignorance.

With this collective dearth of details within many post-Classical secondary accounts of this analogue in mind, it seems to have been the case that the apparent introduction by the author of *FCT* of motivational and biographical material (Moesia's role, Pelops' advanced age, and the mode of Tantalus' death) represents the fleshing out of one or more skeletal accounts of this sub-narrative. It seems probable that the author's own preoccupations lie behind the nature of these apparently unique details in the account in *FCT*.[486]

However, there is an alternative explanation to the theory that the author of *FCT* was compelled to rebuild from bare-bones, probably secondary, sources. It is possible that he instead possessed a very detailed account of this episode, perhaps drawn from multiple

[486] The presence and role of Moesia and the relatively advanced age of Pelops, which may be interrelated, appear to be part of a consistent pattern in *FCT* in which instances of *fingal* are presented as female-driven, see below, pp. 152–63.

sources, complete with 'orthodox' details including Pelops' youth, Tantalus' stepmotherless motivation and prolonged punishment, but chose to rewrite the story, altering, or editing out, these details for his own purposes. This explanation is difficult to discount completely, yet the simpler rationale, that the *FCT* author rebuilt this narrative from skeletal mythographic sources, has the benefit that several examples of these kinds of sources are extant, and were composed in the medieval West, whereas evidence that any very full, even composite, account of the Tantalus / Pelops narrative was in circulation in the likely milieu of the author of *FCT* is yet to be found.

Another result of the above analysis of Episode 1 is that, even if it is accepted that brief, mythographic accounts are likely to have been the *FCT* author's models for it, attempting to isolate individual texts as potential sources is highly problematic. The analogue which best fits the information contained in Episode 1 is Servius' Commentary on Virgil's *Georgics*, since it is the only full analogue of this sub-narrative which fails to offer any information concerning Pelops' age / status, Tantalus' motivation aside from the divinity test, and punishment. Since these details are lacking, Servius' work would have offered some scope for any would-be medieval adaptor to produce a version of the Tantalus / Pelops narrative similar to that contained in *FCT*, without requiring him either to ignore or deliberately change details as they appear in the model. However, the Irish account does not follow *Georg.* in allegorising the resuscitation of Pelops, and so its account is not in complete agreement with its Servian predecessor's. Indeed, *FCT* does not agree with any individual extant analogue source concerning every detail of this episode.

The active process (however detailed any sources may have been) which appears to be at work in creating this narrative which opens *FCT* makes any attempt to identify individual source texts highly problematic. Trying to estimate the amount of editing performed here by the Irish author would be unacceptably speculative. However, the evidence from the above comparative analysis of Episode 1 strongly suggests a medieval Irish writer at great ease with ancient material, willing both to rewrite a Classical narrative without interpreting it in a quasi mechanical fashion as allegory, as his fellow medieval (and some later) writers tended to do, and to apparently introduce new elements to this narrative where they may have been perceived to be absent or deficient in the extant analogues.

Episode 2:- The vengeance of Atreus against his brother Thyestes (*FCT* §§ 4–5)

2. (i) *Background*

There are twelve full analogues to this episode of *FCT* beginning with those found in Greek Tragedy. In an earlier epoch, Homer suggests (in Book 2 of his *Iliad*) the prior existence of a contrastingly non-violent tradition concerning the succession from Atreus to Thyestes, in which it is also not certain that the two were brothers.[487] However, from the fifth century B.C. down to the time of the composition of *FCT*, it is noticeable that the episode's main elements are narrated more or less consistently:- a political power struggle between two sons of Pelops turns tragic, an adulterous liaison takes place between the wife (Aerope) and brother (Thyestes) of Atreus, king of Mycenae, and when this becomes known Atreus takes his grim revenge by killing Thyestes' son(s) and feeding him / them to him at a feast.[488]

The story of the deadly feud and gruesome feast of Atreus and Thyestes is, in common with several of the other episodes of *FCT*, the subject matter for Greek and Latin Tragedy. Similarly, it is also the subject of gloss and summary by mythographers from early times, and becomes the subject of primary works of literature in the West chiefly only after the fifteenth-century Renaissance. Interestingly, all three primary works of literature composed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries which contain this story, a Life of Edward the Confessor, *FCT* itself, and *Togail na Tebe*, an Irish vernacular adaptation of Statius' *Thebaid*, all have Insular connexions. In the other two medieval accounts it seems that the story of Atreus and Thyestes is included simply in order to reflect on different instances of dispute between notable pairs of royal brothers.[489]

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[487] Referring to a sceptre, made by Hephaestus, which carries the sovereignty of Argos, Homer states: 'Pelops in turn gave it to Atreus ... and Atreus at his death left it to Thyestes': Murray, *Homer*: *Iliad* 1, p. 69 (Murray's trans.). On other Classical representations of the story of the dispute between Atreus and Thyestes see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, pp. 545–50.

[488] Aerope ('Eoraip' in *FCT*) is also a foreigner to Argos, which Euripides appears to connects to her behaviour, calling her 'Cretan Aerope...crafty woman': Kovacs, *Euripides* p. 523, ll. 1009–10 (Kovacs' trans.). Aerope's origins are not mentioned in *FCT* or in other post-Classical sources.

[489] In *Vita Ædwardi Regis* the story is intended to reflect upon the relationship between the historical Godwinssons Harold and Tostig, and to warn against intra-familial strife. The same account also refers, perhaps because of authorial confusion, to the replacement of Pelops' arm – though it does not mention enough further details of this story for it to be called an analogue of *FCT* Episode 1– and to the dispute between the Theban royal brothers Polynices and Eteocles: Barlow, *The Life*, pp. 58–61. This fraternal feud in the House of Thebes is related in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, followed by Statius' *Thebaid* and its tradition, which includes medieval vernacular adaptations, and parts of the aforementioned Irish adaptation, *RIM*. On the relationship between *Togail na Tebe* and Statius' epic, see R. T. Meyer, 'The Middle Irish version', and R. Harris, *Adaptations*, pp. 161–99.

2. (ii) *The Analogues of FCT, Episode 2* (*FCT* §§ 4–5)

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1583–1602 (*Aga.*)

Euripides, *Orestes*, 811–2, 998–1010 (*Ore.*)

Apollodorus, *The Library*, Epitome 2. 10–13 (*Lib.*)

Seneca, *Thyestes*, 190–1112 (*Thy.*)

Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 86, 88, 246 (*Fab.*)

Servius, *Commentary on Virgil's* Aeneid 11. 262 (*Aen.*)

Lactantius Placidus, *Commentary on Statius'* Thebaid, 4. 306–8 (*Theb.*)

The First Vatican Mythographer, 1.22 (*FVM*)

The Second Vatican Mythographer, 170 (*SVM*)

Vita Ædwardi Regis, (ed. Barlow, pp. 37–40) (*Edw.*)

The Third Vatican Mythographer, 7.16 (*TVM*)

Togail na Tebe, 1569–77 (*Tebe*)

2. (iii) *Tables showing Variations between Analogues*

All versions: Pelops' sons, Atreus and Thyestes, dispute the kingship of their patrimony.[490] During this struggle, Thyestes seduces his brother's wife Aerope. Atreus discovers this, and takes a grisly revenge on Thyestes, killing his son(s) and serving him / them to him as food.[491]

Variations:

[490] Mycenae or Argos, though this is stated neither in *FCT* nor in most analogues, and it may be considered unlikely that the author of *FCT* knew the geographical name of the disputed kingdom.

[491] In several sources, including in *FCT*, Atreus crowns his spiteful act by informing Thyestes of the nature of the fare he has just consumed.

Table 2.1 Atreus' plan to take revenge on Thyestes

	Aga.	*Ore.*	*Lib.*	*Thy.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Theb.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*Edw.*	*TVM.*	*Tebe*	*FCT*
Atreus feigns reconciliation[492]	*		*	*	*		*	*	*		*		*
Thyestes is in exile[493]	*		*	*	*		*	*	*				

Table 2.2 Number of Thyestes' sons killed

	Aga.	*Ore.*	*Lib.*	*Thy.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Theb.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*Edw.*	*TVM.*	*Tebe*	*FCT*
Uncertain (>1)	*	*				*	*						
One										*	*	*	
Two					*			*	*				
Three			*	*									
Fifty													*

Table 2.3 Reaction of the heavens to Atreus' crimes

	Aga.	*Ore.*	*Lib.*	*Thy.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Theb.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*Edw.*[494]	*TVM.*	*Tebe*	*FCT*
None mentioned	*					*		*					*
Sun changes course[495]		*	*		*		*		*	*		*	
Other celestial event				*							*		

[492] The explicit formation in Atreus' mind of the plan to lure Thyestes to a grisly feast in which the latter is unknowingly to eat his own son(s). Those analogues without this detail all agree that the action took place at a feast held by Atreus, but do not specifically say that this feast was arranged with the premeditated purpose of feeding Thyestes with his offspring's flesh. In *TVM*, both Atreus and Thyestes feign reconciliation concerning their political dispute, and it is only then that Thyestes seduces Aerope, with tragic consequences. This is quite similar to the sequence of events as described in *FCT*.

[493] In these analogues, exile is Thyestes' initial punishment by Atreus for political reasons and / or for adultery with the latter's wife, Aerope.

[494] 'et pariter celum nigra fuligine tectum, conscia ne tanti sceleris sint', 'As well the heavens, draped with black, lest they should countenance a crime so dire.': Barlow, *The Life*, p. 39 (Barlow's trans.). This description may refer to a solar eclipse.

[495] In *Ore.* and *Lib.* only, the sun changes course *before* Atreus' crimes, and this solar event is connected to Thyestes' claim to the throne.

Table 2.4 The sovereignty of Mycenae /Argos at the time of Atreus' and Thyestes' dispute

	Aga.	*Ore.*	*Lib.*[496]	*Thy.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Theb.*[497]	*FVM*	*SVM*[498]	*Edw.*	*TVM.*	*Tebe*	*FCT*
Linked to a golden ovine[499]		*	*	*				*	*				
Alternates between the brothers							*	*	*				

2. (iv) *Commentary on Variations between Analogues*

(a) The premeditated nature of Atreus' acts of *fingal.*

As Table 2.1 above shows, almost every analogue is in agreement concerning the detail that Atreus feigns reconciliation with Thyestes in order to pursue a particular kinslaying and cannibalistic revenge on the latter. The fact that some analogues lack this detail, however, does not necessarily indicate the existence of a separate tradition in which Atreus' killings occur without premeditation rendering them slightly less horrific, for it is apparent that the accounts of this episode which do not mention Atreus' plans are all considerably briefer in general than those which do contain this detail. Authors of analogues which consist of gloss or précis accounts may be perhaps forgiven for not delving too deeply into their characters' innermost motives, even in the extreme case of Atreus.

In stark contrast to these shorter accounts, the meticulously scheming element of Atreus' revenge is given a great deal of attention in the analogues which are generally most detail-rich, most notably in Seneca's *Thyestes*, in which the crazed, yet cold-blooded, Atreus

[496] Here a golden lamb, which Atreus refuses to sacrifice to the gods but kills to keep for himself, causes envy between the brothers, but does not in itself denote the sovereignty. This is probably a somewhat clearer version of the equivalent story told in the same author's *Orestes*.

[497] Atreus kills more than one nephew according to Lactantius Placidus, but the exact number is not specified: 'Atreus fratri filios suos apposuit epulandos...': Sweeney, *Lactantii Placidi in Statii Thebaida Commentum*, p. 275. If Lactantius was the originator of the tradition, later found only in *FVM* and *SVM*, that Atreus and Thyestes reigned in turn this may be connected to the situation of Polynices and Eteocles, who governed in turn in Statius' *Thebaid*, the text upon which Lactantius is here in the act of glossing.

[498] On the question of the alternating kingship in this analogue see Dain, *Mythographe* 2, p. 202, note 1.

[499] Possession of which, according to some analogues, denotes the monarch (in place of the Hephaestus-forged sceptre mentioned by Homer, see above, p. 85 note 487).

ruminates at length before deciding on a cannibalistic feast of his nephews' flesh.[500] *FCT*, which has several other kinslaying stories to tell in a far shorter work, offers a terser version of Atreus' decision-making process than *Thyestes* does. Even so, it is clear that over a millennium after Seneca's work the medieval Irish author, alone among composers of full analogues, creates a portrayal of the nephew-slayer which is comparably complex and psychological to that by the Latin dramatist. At this stage of the action in *FCT*, as in *Thyestes*, the king is portrayed as torn apart by an inner furious sexual jealousy yet at the same time projecting a calm countenance in the presence of his court. In the Irish account alone, Atreus even goes so far as to specify to his household that the feast in honour of Thyestes should resemble a wedding banquet, a deft authorial touch since it is doubtless intended to reflect somewhat sardonically on the adultery between Atreus' wife and brother.[501]

This portrayal of Atreus' state of mind in *FCT* as he carefully plans a twisted, yet to him fitting, revenge is very much in keeping with the portrayal in *Thyestes*, in which the jealous Mycenaean is likewise concerned that his vengeance should contain an element of (warped) poetic justice. The intention of Atreus in Seneca's work is not merely that his brother's sons be killed (thus ending Thyestes' dynastic line) but that he receive an equivalent torture to Atreus' own. To the man unhinged by jealousy, that Thyestes may be made to connive unknowingly in his own punishment by eating his own sons' flesh is equated to Atreus' own fear that the sons he thought were his are in fact his brother's biological offspring.[502]
Yet another parallel between the equivalent point in Seneca's drama and this episode of *FCT* which is unique to the pair among extant accounts is the openly gloating justification of his

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[500] Especially *Thyestes* ll. 242–280, in which Atreus recalls the respective kinslaying-related feasts of his own grandfather Tantalus and of the sisters Procne and Philomela. He considers that prepared by the latter to be 'bene', 'good', and 'abunde', 'ample', for his purposes because, like Tereus, Thyestes is to be unwittingly complicit in it: Fitch, *Seneca*: *Tragedies* 2, pp. 254–5 (Fitch's trans.).

[501] 'Rohinnised sin do Aidir ⁊ dogabh ferg mór ⁊ éd adhbhal é uime, ⁊ tucadh a æs grádha ⁊ a muinter cuigi ⁊ adbert friu, 'Rop áil lim–sa', ar se, 'torgnum fledhe móire dom bráthair, ⁊ a denam feib is dech doronadh fledh bainsecdha riam.'' 'This was told to Atreus and he became very angry and greatly jealous about it, and his retinue and household were brought before him and he said to them, 'I would like', he said, 'to hold a great feast for my brother, and to do it in the best manner that a wedding feast has ever been prepared': *FCT*, § 5.

[502] In *Thy.*, Atreus refers to a grim parody of fraternal sharing in the feast which is to follow, echoing the sharing of Aerope which leads him to desire a fitting revenge, 'dignum est Thyeste facinus et dignum Atreo: uterque faciat!', 'The deed is worthy of Thyestes and worthy of Atreus: let each perform it!': Fitch, *Seneca*: *Tragedies* 2, pp. 252–3, ll. 271–2 (Fitch's trans.). Atreus' fears concerning the biological paternity of his sons (Agamemnon and Menelaus) are later expounded, and the paranoid Atreus states that he will look for signs of disloyalty in them as they help to carry out the murders of their cousins: 'Quid enim necesse est liberos sceleri meo inserere?... Si bella abnuunt et gerere nolunt odia, si patruum vocant, pater est', 'What need is there to involve my children in my crime?... If they refuse to engage in this war of hatred, if they call him uncle, he is their father': ibid., pp. 258–9, ll. 322–30 (Fitch's trans.).

grisly crimes made by Atreus to Thyestes after the latter has consumed his own sons. This takes the form of the somewhat pathetic attempt by Atreus to equate his gruesome acts with the adultery between Thyestes and Aerope. In Seneca's play, when Thyestes protests against his brother's grim crimes with an oath to the 'gods who protect the righteous', Atreus retorts, 'What about the gods of marriage?'.[503] A strongly reminiscent equation between the two types of offence within the family, adultery and kinslaying, is also made by Atreus in *FCT*. When Thyestes protests here that what his brother has done is evil, Atreus' response refers to Thyestes' sexual relationship with Aerope as an equivalent crime against him:- ''Niruo ferr duit-si, mo conugud-sa fom sheitidh', 'It was not better for you to inflict a severe wound on me through my wife'.[504]

There exists, therefore, an interesting degree of similarity between Seneca's tragedy and *FCT* in their representations of Atreus at this point in the story of the grisly feast. These two accounts offer by far the fullest levels of insight, among extant versions, into the meticulous planning taking place in the mind of Atreus the vengeful cuckold, immediately prior to his decision to invite his brother to the gory feast. *FCT* and *Thyestes* also offer by far the fullest revelations of Atreus' twisted motivation for his peculiarly gruesome acts of kinslaying and the cannibalism which follows, acts which he justifies in similar ways in both account when gloating over his agonised brother afterwards.

However, even these apparently close parallels between *FCT* and Seneca's *Thyestes* over such a precise detail as Atreus' mental state at this point in the narrative need not imply that the author of *FCT* here borrowed either directly from this account of Atreus' bloody revenge, or from another account which was based on the tragedy, such as a (non-extant) commentary. It may well be the case instead that whichever sources were drawn upon by the author of *FCT* included enough similar elements of this story to allow the medieval Irish writer to recapture this element of scheming on Atreus' part. That he chose to include such a psychological portrayal is interesting, whether or not any direct mention of it was made in any source material.

Even if any putative sources for this story as it appears in *FCT* were terse (for example,

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[503] [Thyestes:] ''Piorum praesides testor deos.' [Atreus:] 'Quid coniugales?'': Fitch, *Seneca: Tragedies* 2, pp. 322–3, ll. 1102–3 (Fitch's trans.).
[504] *FCT*, § 5.

mythographical, accounts of this grisly narrative, similar to those present in Servius and in the Vatican Mythographers) it is likely that in the act of adapting them into a primary work the author of *FCT* would have needed to reinvent an inner life for Atreus as a misguided justification for the latter's *fingala* (in *FCT* there are fifty). Just as with the aforementioned sub-narrative concerning Tantalus and Pelops, it seems likely that the author of *FCT*, in reworking the Classical narrative into part of a primary text, may have added a particular motivation for a main character's terrible deeds, if any source(s) were perceived (justifiably, from the evidence of extant examples) to be lacking in these. Even if the high degree of similarity between the respective portrayals of Atreus in *FCT* and in Seneca's *Thyestes* is coincidental, that this closeness exists is of interest in that it points to a medieval Irish writer with a similar approach to or understanding of his subject matter to that of his Classical counterpart.

(b) Thyestes in exile

It is possible to make the case using the aforementioned examples from Episode 1 that the author of *FCT* is likely to have welded some of his own narrative details, especially those concerning characters' motivations, onto sources which may have lacked these. This process of rebuilding from brief sources may even be held to have been at work in of details such as the above example of the complex depiction of Atreus in *FCT* which show a marked similarity to a primary Classical author's version of the narrative in question, though borrowing between either *Thyestes* or its tradition and *FCT* cannot be completely ruled out. However, not every individual case of difference between *FCT* and the analogues over a detail necessitates that the Irish work's sources were lacking in detail. There are occasions where the reverse may be true, i.e. that his sources may well have contained details which were unsuited to the Irish author's purposes, and / or which might have been considered by him (with justification) to be unnecessary, confusing or even contradictory, and were therefore omitted.

An example of this may be the detail of Thyestes' status as an exile before he is invited take an unwitting part in his brother's malicious plan to take revenge upon him. This exile status is not specified in *FCT*, a situation which contrasts with that in Seneca's *Thyestes* and with those in almost every analogue found in a secondary work, with the notable exception of that

by Servius.[505]Although messengers are sent by Atreus to Thyestes in *FCT* (§ 5), perhaps suggesting that the latter is at least at some distance away from his brother's home and hence perhaps in exile, we are left uncertain as to whether he is in the same kingdom or not, and it is not stated in the medieval Irish text (as it is everywhere else, other than in Servius) that Thyestes is in exile.

This lack of any direct mention of Thyestes' exile may be because this detail was lacking in the source(s) used by the author of *FCT*, which here might imply a connexion with Servius or with a source in the Servian tradition, or a lost account also lacking this detail. However, an alternative explanation is that this may be an example of editing out by the author of *FCT*, perhaps because Thyestes' exile, were it to have been present in any putative (even brief mythographic) source(s), was considered unnecessary by the Irish writer.[506] It seems from the account in *FCT* that what matters to its author at this point in the narrative is not to create a dramatic effect by elongating Thyestes' ill-fated return, nor to focus on Thyestes' political status. Instead the author of the Irish text relates the cruel and devious mechanism which Atreus concocts in order to gain revenge on his brother.[507] It is Atreus the jealous, furious, scheming, parricidal man who appears from the tale's action to be the main focus of the author's attention in this instance, and Thyestes' political status is close to irrelevant. Furthermore, it may have appeared inefficient or even inconsistent to the medieval Irish writer if he read in any source text(s) that Thyestes was first sentenced to exile only to be recalled by Atreus for an entirely different and far more severe further punishment for the same perceived offence(s), a scenario which occurs in several analogues.

Further to this, is noticeable that in some of the analogues which do specify Thyestes' exile, in contrast with the situation in *FCT*, its rationale is unclear. The two reasons given are his political insurgency and his adultery with Aerope. In some analogues both are given, connected by means of a golden lamb or ram which Atreus holds and Thyestes hopes to obtain with Aerope's help. The inclusion of two reasons for Thyestes' exile may indicate a

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[505] That Thyestes and his (here three) sons were in exile in Seneca's play is evident from, for example, Thyestes' own references to it: Fitch, *Seneca: Tragedies* 2, page 264, l. 405 and page 306, l. 924.

[506] The accounts of this narrative in medieval mythographies such as *FVM* include the element of Thyestes' exile: Zanetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p.13. It is likely that such accounts ultimately depend upon Classical dramatic works, which explains the presence of the exile motif in them, yet its lack in *FCT* may suggest a more active reworking process taking place in the medieval Irish retelling.

[507] The extensive treatment in *FCT* of Atreus' machinations in devising his grim parody of a wedding feast is discussed above, pp. 88–90.

degree of confusion among the respective authors who included both, and / or their recognition that one of these motives alone was too weak to justify the savagery which follows Thyestes' eventual return. With this situation in mind, it may be that the author of *FCT*, drawing on one or more such ambiguous source, or even multiple conflicting sources, preferred simply to omit the specific mention of Thyestes' exile for reasons of clarity.

This situation therefore illustrates a difficulty in using the comparative method in order to isolate the most likely sources for the sub-narratives which form *FCT*. Because Servius' account of this narrative is the only one, apart from that in *FCT*, not to mention Thyestes' exile, it is tempting to point to this text or one from its tradition as the most probable source for the Irish account. On the other hand, Thyestes' exile is a detail which might have been perceived to be unnecessary, or even contrary, to narrative clarity by the author of *FCT*, if it was present in any sources. The Servian-source explanation is simpler for it requires the least intervention on the part of the author of *FCT*. Even so, the situation is far from conclusive on the basis of this narrative detail alone.

(c) The one, two, three, several or fifty sons of Thyestes

Table 2.2 shows an example of the inconsistency among authors concerning certain details even in a story such as that of Atreus and Thyestes in which the central narrative is generally represented fairly consistently across versions. It is clear that, from the fifth century B.C. for over 1,500 years, where this story was known it was understood that Atreus killed more than one nephew, yet neither of the two extant analogues from the narrative's earliest extant stratum state exactly how many died at their uncle's hand.[508] Some centuries after the time of Euripides, the earliest extant Greek mythographical source, Apollodorus, states that three were killed, as does Seneca, yet both writers' near contemporary Hyginus envisages just two.

Whether because their Classical sources were unclear or not, the Late Antique commentators on this episode, Lactantius Placidus and Servius, do not specify how many boys were killed by Atreus, yet both agree that there are more than one since they use plural nouns.[509] Of medieval secondary authors, the First Vatican Mythographer, perhaps following Hyginus at this point, gives the precise number of victims as two, and this seems to be followed by the

[508] On the ambiguous nature of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, ll. 1605–6 see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, p. 549.
[509] Sweeney, *Lactantii Placidi in Statii Thebaida Commentum*, p. 275, l. 796; Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui ferentur in Virgili carmina commentarii* 2, p. 509, l. 5.

Second Vatican Mythographer, yet the twelfth- and thirteenth-century sources, including the Third Vatican Mythogrpaher, envisage just one murdered nephew. The texts in which but one boy is killed and eaten include *Togail na Tebe*, despite the fact that this Irish tale also specifies, as has been noted above, that this part of its narrative is borrowed from a text which it calls '*Fingal Claindi Tantail*' – in the extant *FCT* alone Atreus' slaughter extends to fifty sons.[510]

Whatever the reason for the general gradual decline over time in the number of Thyestes' sons envisaged to have been killed (at least until *FCT*) it seems that this is not of critical importance to the story. After all, even one such murder of a nephew combined with unwitting paternal cannibalism would doubtless be considered serious and shocking enough. Whether the author of *FCT* intended to increase the dramatic effect of Atreus' actions by making the number of victims as large as fifty, or simply observed that the flesh of but one or two sons would not have made much of a 'wedding banquet' for Thyestes, it is interesting that the two medieval Irish accounts of this episode, those in *FCT* and *Togail na Tebe* – the latter of which claiming to be based on the former – differ so markedly on this detail. An additional result of making the number of Thyestes' sons as great as fifty in *FCT* is that he appears to be the more sexually licentious, for it is difficult to imagine this number of offspring being born except via multiple wives and concubines. Perhaps the portrayal of the Trojan king Priam found in, inter alia, *TTr*[2], widely held to have had fifty sons (and fifty daughters) by many women, may have influenced the author of *FCT* here.[511]

(d) Mythological and other details present elsewhere but absent from *FCT*

As noted above with reference to *FCT* Episode 1 and its analogues, the author of the Irish text appears to have little aversion to the inclusion of established pagan mythological figures in a given narrative, and *FCT* shows no propensity either to rationalise pagan deities, or to introduce them for the purpose of allegory.[512] Thus it would appear that in failing to mention any solar or heavenly reaction to Atreus' dreadful deeds the author of *FCT* is merely

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[510] Calder, *Togail*, p. 100, ll. 1571–2; *FCT*, § 5. However, it is possible that the phrase in *Togail na Tebe*, 'amal indister ar fingail claindi Tantail' does not refer to a specific text called *FCT* but to 'what is told concerning the kinslaying activity of the Tantalus family'. That a text with the title *FCT* exists would seem to make this latter possibility subject to a fair degree of coincidence, and it is therefore my view that the author of *Togail na Tebe* refers to *FCT* itself at this point, even if he is not accurate concerning the text's content.

[511] Stokes, *Togail*, p. 18, l. 719; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1082, l. 31533. Priam's offspring are listed in Hyginus' *Fabula* 90: Marshall, *Hygini Fabulae*, p. 84.

[512] See above, pp. 79–82, with particular reference to Ceres and Mercury.

faithfully following one or more of the several sources which do not mention any such eclipse or stellar movement.

However, a possible, more complex, alternative to this rationale for the lack of a celestial reaction to Atreus' crimes in *FCT* may be suggested by the fact that the other medieval Irish analogue, *Togail na Tebe* does in fact mention a solar reversal at this point in the narrative.[513] It seems likely, therefore, that, more than one version of this story was available to twelfth- or thirteenth-century writers in Ireland and that the author of *Togail na Tebe* did not get this particular detail from *FCT* in anything like our text's extant form. Alternatively, a solar or celestial element was present in *FCT* but was lost at some stage in textual transmission prior to the production of the two extant fifteenth-century manuscript witnesses, perhaps through deliberate scribal omission.

In this particular instance I suggest that the most likely scenario is that the author of *Togail na Tebe* borrowed the solar movement part of this narrative not from an Irish source called 'Fingal Claindi Tantail' as he claims, but from the allusion to this narrative in the corresponding part of Statius' *Thebaid* – the Latin model text that he was adapting into Irish. In this latter account it is related that the Greek host (in their battle against Thebes) are not helped by Mycenaean forces because this warfare takes place at the same time as 'the deadly battle and the sun's midday retreat' took place there.'[514] Any mis-attribution to *FCT* on the part of the author of *Togail na Tebe* may simply be because he was not actually borrowing from a version close to the extant *FCT*, but had rather a loose knowledge of the content of that Irish tale's account of this incident, and related it to the above Statian reference. Such an explanation may also account for the aforementioned discrepancy between the single son of Thyestes murdered, according to *Togail na Tebe*, versus the fifty killed in the account in *FCT*.

If this is the case, it would allow the suggestion that the author of *FCT* did not borrow in this instance from sources which contained the tradition of a solar or stellar reaction to Atreus' crimes. The Latin analogues which do not contain a reference to celestial disapproval of Atreus' bloody acts of *fingal* are contained within the respective secondary works by

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[513] 'indister cor–inta grian fair a rrith', 'it is related that the sun turned upon its course': Calder, *Togail*, pp. 100–1, l. 1573.

[514] 'funerae tunc namque dapes mediique recursus Solis': Bailey, *Statius*: *Thebaid* 2 pp. 228–9, ll. 307–8 (Bailey's trans.).

Servius, Lactantius Placidus and the First Vatican Mythographer, and so its absence from *FCT* may indicate the use of one or more such source here (or of one or more from their respective traditions). Thus, the lack of any pagan mythological or celestial reference in *FCT* at this point in its narrative might simply be the result of the brief nature of available source material, rather than implying deliberate omission by the Irish author, though the latter possibility is difficult to rule out, especially since the sun's disapproval of Atreus' crimes is not strictly necessary. Just as in the aforementioned case of Thyestes' exile, it may be suspected from the fact that generally well-established details (such as the sun's reaction to Atreus' crimes) were left out of the account of a given incident in *FCT* is because they were not considered important by the author, not because he did not know them. If the author of *Togail na Tebe* knew this particular detail it is difficult to hold that there is any good reason why the author of *FCT* might not also have known it.

(e) Issues connected with the disputed sovereignty of Mycenae

As Table 2.4 above shows, several accounts of the dispute between Atreus and Thyestes concerning the sovereignty of Mycenae include at least one rationale by which the kingship is conferred on a particular brother. Euripides apparently introduces the notion of a golden lamb into the story in his *Orestes*, and in later times this motif develops into a means by which the kingship is conferred, as instanced in both Seneca's *Thyestes* and in Apollodorus' mythographic account. It is interesting that this detail eludes the extant Late Antique analogues, reappearing in the record as a golden ram in the First Vatican Mythographer's work (apparently followed here by the Second Vatican Mythographer). Where this early medieval writer gleaned this detail is unknown, and this seems to be an instance of a lost means of transmission between the Classical era and the medieval West. Neither Late Antique commentator, Servius nor Lactantius Placidus, mentions a golden ovine at the equivalent point in his account, which is especially interesting in the latter case since it is Lactantius' account which forms the basis for much of the remainder of the First Vatican Mythographer's version of this narrative, and therefore for *SVM* too.[515]

The motif of a golden ovine is present neither in *FCT* nor in several other medieval accounts. Absent too is the idea of an alternating kingship in *FCT* and in some other medieval sources,

[515] Zorzetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p. 13, note 58.

as it is in all extant Classical accounts – both medieval mentions of such an arrangement seem to depend upon Lactantius Placidus' apparent transfer of this motif from the parallel situation between the fraternal rivals Polynices and Eteocles, as instanced in Statius' *Thebaid*. This flickering presence of the detail of the alternating kingship in just three analogues of the ancient story of Atreus and Thyestes demonstrates the kind of process which may lead to divergent traditions, perhaps occurring especially in times and places such as the medieval West, in which primary and other detailed accounts of such narratives may have been thin on the ground.

The lack of these two narrative details in the account in *FCT* may point to a source such as Servius' work (which likewise contains neither) as the likeliest type used in the composition of the medieval Irish account. However, it is far from certain that either rationale for the sovereignty would have survived in *FCT* even if its author had access to sources containing one or both (a golden ovine and alternating kingship). Neither detail is strictly necessary to the story as told in *FCT* especially since the fact that, uniquely in the medieval Irish tale, Aegisthus later returns to kill Pelops, Atreus' and Thyestes' father, suggests that the Irish author simply did not consider the question of the kingship at this point because he believed Pelops still to be sovereign (understandably, since his death is nowhere related in the analogues).

In any event, for the medieval Irish author it is a sexual misdemeanour within the family (just as in the case of Moesia's in Episode 1) Thyestes' adultery with Aerope, Atreus' wife, which bears much of the causal weight for the terrible events which follow – the rest appears to be borne by Atreus' scheming. As such, there may have been ample thematic reason for the author of *FCT* to have ignored any perceived distraction in the guise of politics or golden ovine in any putative source(s). It is the case that the Irish author appears to take great pains to portray adulterous desires and behaviour, especially those of women, as the main reasons which trigger the tale's litany of *fingala*, committed by men. This is true of the female characters Clytemnestra and Hermione, as will be evidenced in the analysis of later episodes in *FCT*, as well as of Aerope here and of Moesia, her predecessor in Episode 1.[516]

2. (v) *Analysis*

[516] On the strongly negative opinion of women expressed particularly in the unique elements of *FCT* see below, pp. 152–65.

From the evidence of the above comparative analysis it may seem that the author of *FCT* drew only on very skeletal sources, such as Servius' account, for this narrative. This would explain why fairly widespread details such as Thyestes' exile and the sovereignty issue are not present in the medieval Irish version. However, it should not be overlooked that both exile and sovereignty are political issues and the author of *FCT* appears to present personal motivations consistently for the terrible family crimes he relates. In this episode, as in its predecessor in the Irish tale, this seems to be manifested in a focus on emotional and sexual over other types of motivation for the *fingala* in question. Demonstrating the process of editing out by the author of such a text is difficult to achieve, yet it must at least be considered possible that *FCT* was composed both by building upon skeletal accounts, such as that of Servius in the case of this episode, perhaps, and by eliminating details which were unnecessary or undesirable as far as the Irish author's purposes were concerned.

If widely-attested details such as Thyestes' exile, and the disputed sovereignty as represented elsewhere by a golden ovine, may have been either omitted or at least not made explicit by the author of *FCT*, the more atypical details which *are* present in this episode of *FCT* invite further attention. Therefore, that *FCT* stands alone, as described above, with Seneca's *Thyestes* in its detailed description of Atreus' mental state as he plans his version of a fitting revenge against his brother, is highly likely to be of significance when considering the question of the medieval Irish author's purposes. The pains taken by Atreus, in the version in *FCT*, but in no other analogue apart from Seneca's, to concoct his twisted scheme, seem to imply a greater degree of authorial interest in the moral and psychologicalal reasons for Atreus' gruesome actions than is apparent from the briefer analogues. The latter typically mention the Mycenaean's feigned reconciliation, cold-blooded plotting and bitter gloating only in passing, if at all. The same situation applies to Atreus' warped equation of his own crimes with the adultery of Thyestes. Even if the author of *FCT* had no direct knowledge of Classical works such as *Thyestes*, his extensive focus on the moral and psychological aspects of this episode in *FCT* appears to be especially more in keeping with its primary Senecan counterpart than with the extant secondary analogues.[517]

If *FCT* is a work composed, as seems likely a priori, with limited if any direct knowledge of

[517] Atreus' premeditated cruelty is highlighted in *FCT* by the statement '...rosmuainedh comairle ainngidh úathmar ag Aídir ina menmain', 'Atreus conceived a terrifying, wicked plan in his mind': *FCT*, § 5; this includes a rare (both in *FCT*, and in secular–themed medieval Irish writing in general) authorial comment on the morality of a character's action or intention.

Classical tragedy, from the evidence of the above comparative analysis of this episode its author seems to have possessed the imaginative powers to reinvent certain moral and psychological elements present in one such work, Seneca's *Thyestes*. In doing so, he is alone among authors of the extant analogues. At the same time, the Irish author seems either to ignore or make light of other, more widely-attested, political details such as Thyestes' exile, if they were present in his source material, as is at least possible judging from the widespread presence of this detail in the extant record. From the cumulative evidence of the unique and therefore probably innovative material in Episodes 1 and 2, the author of *FCT* seems to have been concerned more with the personal, moral reasons behind the litany of *fingala* were committed by prominent members of the Tantalus clan than he was with relating them as either mythographical or (pseudo-) historical information.[518]

Episode 3:- The begetting of Aegisthus, and his killing of Pelops[519] (*FCT* § 6)

3. (i) *Background*

In contrast to the opening two episodes of *FCT*, a major part of this narrative is more thinly represented in surviving sources, namely that which concerns Aegisthus' conception and birth. There are only five extant analogues to this episode in its entirety, i.e. which include both Aegisthus' conception / birth-tale and his taking revenge on behalf of his father Thyestes. None of these five is to be found in a primary text, hence *FCT* is the earliest Western account of this entire narrative which does not occur within a secondary work. The earliest extant full analogue is found in Apollodorus' *The Library*, because its brief account, though it offers broadly the same narrative as that related in both *FCT* and in the other 'late' analogues, is in sharp dispute with the two earlier extant earlier references to Thyestes, Atreus and Aegisthus as a trio. These occur in fifth-century-BC Greek tragedy, and in Homer in whose works Aegisthus' role is confined to the seduction of Clytemnestra

[518] This is very different to the historical focus evident in other medieval Irish adaptations from Classical sources. For example, Poppe notes of *IA* that 'A reading of *Imtheachta Aeniasa* on the metaphorical or on the ideological level would be difficult to sustain': *A New Introduction*, p. 14.

[519] Aegisthus' killing of his grandfather Pelops is unique to *FCT*, and occurs before Thyestes' son fulfils his mission of vengeance by killing Atreus (§ 9).

and murder of Agamemnon.[520] However, despite the respective words of Homer and certain tragedians, there are at least two suggestions of a parallel ancient tradition which is later represented in Apollodorus and in later accounts including *FCT*– these latter works all connect the conception of a son called Aegisthus with Thyestes' exile. The two hints that this anti-Homeric tradition concerning Aegisthus' role in pre-Trojan War politics may date from the fifth century B.C. are: the known title of a lost play by Sophocles, *Thyestes in Sicyon*, with Sicyon corresponding to the location of Aegisthus' conception and birth later envisaged by Hyginus, indicating that the Latin mythographer knew a version of this story. In addition, there is a scene depicted on a fourth-century- B.C. krater, Boston 1987.53 (Fig. 1 below, p. 101) in which all three figures – Aegisthus (as an infant), his mother Pelopia and Thyestes – occur together; this may have been drawn from the aforementioned lost Sophoclean drama. [521]

This latter tradition appears to inform the plot of the Aegisthus conception narrative as it appears in the five mythographical analogues and in *FCT* § 6. At some stage between the fifth century B.C. and Apollodorus' time, Aegisthus' biography was established as follows: he was conceived through incest, exposed at birth, suckled by goats, and lived to become Thyestes' avenger, before going on to become embroiled with Clytemnestra and at least complicit in the murder of Agamemnon.[522] This tradition is broadly represented in *FCT*, yet

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[520] Homer's *Iliad* indicates that its author did not envisage any dispute between Atreus and Thyestes, hence there is need for Homer to mention any avenger such as Aegisthus – the latter kills Agamemnon alone of the Tantalus clan according to Homer, see above, p. 85, note 487; In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Aegisthus is already an infant at the time of Atreus' grisly murders of his brothers, and the boy goes into exile along with Thyestes afterwards; Aegisthus' incestuous conception in order that Thyestes might be avenged is therefore not envisaged by Aeschylus, at least not in his *Agamemnon*: Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, p.194, ll. 1605–6.

[521] See Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, p. 550.

[522] Aegisthus' own name, connected by Hyginus and others (but not in *FCT*) to the Greek word for she-goat, *aega*, gave credence to the notion that he was suckled by goats, and from this, perhaps, that he had been exposed as an infant. As to the justification for his exposure, this must be speculative, yet it is plausible that his mother Pelopia was portrayed as having done this because Aegisthus' conception had taken place under socially unacceptable circumstances, with the name of his mother suggesting membership of the Pelops clan, and hence incest. The process may have occurred the other way round, with incest driving both the infant's exposure and name. In any event, the story seems to have been established by the first century A.D., for Hyginus, the author of the earliest firm reference to Aegisthus' suckling by she-goats, lists him as one of eleven figures 'WhoWere Suckled By Wild Animals', 'Qui Lacte Ferino Nutriti Sunt', in *Fabula* 252, a catalogue which naturally also includes Romulus and Remus: Marshall, *Hygini Fabulae*, p. 183. This is immediately followed by another list (*Fabula* 253) in which Pelopia and Thyestes feature among fifteen couples 'Who Committed Incest', 'Quae Contra Fas Concuberunt'. Heading Hyginus' list of incestuous figures are Jocasta and Oedipus of Thebes, with the latter's exposure as an infant another example of an ancient connexion between literary incest and this practice – even though, as Hyginus relates in *Fabula* 66, Oedipus' exposure was not because of his incestuous conception, but because his father Laius had received a prophecy that his son would kill him. In the case of Oedipus, his exposure inadvertently causes the incest in question; Aegisthus, on the other hand, is exposed as an infant precisely because his mother is aware that he is the product of incest. Despite this difference, both cases exemplify Classical literary association between exposure (a form of *fingal*) and incest. This is not so very far away from the pattern found in *FCT*.

there are subtle differences of content and emphasis in the Irish author's account.

Fig.1 Krater (4th century BC) illustrating the exposure of Aegisthus[523]



3. (ii) *The Analogues of FCT, Episode 3*

Apollodorus, *The Library*, Epitome 2. 14 (*Lib.*)

Hyginus, *Fabulae* 87, 88 (*Fab.*)

Lactantius Placidus, *Commentarii in Statii Thebaida* 4. 306–8 (*Theb.*)

The First Vatican Mythographer 1.22 (*FVM*)

The Second Vatican Mythographer 170 (*SVM*)

[523] Boston 1987.53 (all figures are named).

3. (iii) *Tables showing Variations between Analogues*

All versions: Thyestes is advised either by a deity or by the oracles that he will get revenge on Atreus if he begets a son on his own daughter. He commits incest with her, and the resultant son, Aegisthus, does indeed kill Atreus.[524]

Variations:

Table 3.1- Thyestes' initial reaction to Atreus' murder of his son(s)

	Lib.	*Fab.*	*Theb.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*FCT*
Practical[525]	*	*	*	*		
Emotional (Grief)					*	
Emotional (Anger)						*

Table 3.2- The kingship following Aegisthus' act of revenge

	Lib.	*Fab.*	*Theb.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*FCT*
Thyestes becomes king	*					
Aegisthus becomes king						*
Unclear / joint kingship[526]		*				
Not mentioned			*	*	*	

[524] But only after Aegisthus has, in *FCT* alone, also killed Pelops, his grandfather. As mentioned above, p. 99, note 519, Aegisthus' killing of Atreus occurs later in *FCT* (§ 9).

[525] The search for a way to get revenge; it is implicit in these accounts that Thyestes lacks the military force to overpower Atreus, a detail which is, however, explicitly stated in *FCT*, 'cinco raibhe cumacc a dhíghalta lais do cétaib nó do curadhaibh inn amus sin tuc a bráthair fair', 'though he did not have the force of troops or warriors to avenge the attack which his brother had made on him': *FCT*, § 6.

[526] Hyginus states at the end of *Fabula* 88 that 'Aegisthus ... returned with his father, Thyestes, to the ancestral throne.', 'Aegisthus ... cum patre Thyeste in regnum auitum redit': Marshall, *Hygini Fabulae*, p. 83.

3. (iv) *Commentary on Variations between Analogues*

(a) Thyestes' anger at Atreus' crimes

It is noticeable that, although all accounts including that in *FCT* agree that Thyestes took practical steps towards saving his own life and / or gaining revenge following Atreus' foul deeds against his son(s) and himself, four out of six are silent concerning the unfortunate father's *internal* reaction to the horrific slaughter of his son(s), and to his own unknowing consumption of their flesh. Apollodorus, Lactantius Placidus and The First Vatican Mythographer, having detailed Atreus' crimes, focus on Thyestes' desire for a practical way to get vengeance, and Hyginus alone focuses on Thyestes' need to escape from personal danger at the hands of his brother, leading (uniquely in this case) to his adventures in Sicyon. None of these accounts mention that Thyestes was affected emotionally by what he had experienced, rather they are laconic in relating Thyestes' behaviour upon learning of the horrific fate of his son(s).[527]

The haste with which Thyestes acts to consult the oracles and from there to commit incest with his daughter is highlighted only by the Christian authors Lacatantius Placidus and the first two Vatican Mythographers, whereas both Classical commentators fail to indicate that Thyestes actions took place hurriedly.[528] The mention of speed, and therefore perhaps rashness, on Thyestes' part in these accounts may be its precursor, yet it is only in the two latest accounts, *SVM* and *FCT* itself, in which any emotional reaction on Thyestes' part is made explicit. It appears, then, that the extant accounts of Thyestes' actions after the murder of his sons become less matter-of-fact and more emotionally charged over time between the Classical period and *FCT*. The Irish text places the greatest emphasis on Thyestes' emotional reaction, and the strongest reaction is also found here.

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[527] As are Apollodorus and Hyginus in their respective descriptions of Tereus, who eats an equivalent grisly meal, as related separately in *The Library* 3. 193–5 and *Fabulae* 45. These are in stark contrast to Ovid's account of the same incident in *Metamorphoses* 6, ll. 650–72, in which Tereus' reaction to discovering that he has eaten his own son is highly emotional, described by Ovid thus, 'ille dolore suo poenaeque cupidine velox', 'he [Tereus], swift in pursuit because of his grief and eager desire for vengeance': Miller, *Ovid: Metamorphoses* 1, pp. 334–5, l. 671 (Miller's trans.).

[528] In the Latin examples *Theb.*, *FVM* and *SVM* this is indicated by the use of the word 'cito', 'straight away', whereas neither Hyginus nor Apollodorus report Thyestes' actions towards Pelopia with such an indication of haste. It may be inferred that the Christian commentators who included the word 'cito' viewed Thyestes' actions as more rash and therefore perhaps more blameworthy than their Classical counterparts did. The force of the word 'iarsin', 'then', where Latin accounts have 'cito' is difficult to gauge.

Two things stand out here: firstly, that this emotional reaction is more violent in *FCT* (in which it is one of anger or rage, 'Rofergaigedh Teist') than it is in *SVM*, in which it is one of grief;[529] secondly, it is noticeable that in both cases it is this emotional response on Thyestes' part which leads directly to his immediate consultation with the oracles / Apollo, and thence to the hurried act of incest with his daughter. Whereas in the other four analogues Thyestes is not presented as responding irrationally (even if swiftly in both Lactantius Placidus' account and in *FVM*) both *FCT* and *SVM* suggest that Thyestes' consultation with the divine is to be associated with an emotional loss of self-control, and by extension that the advice received from the oracles must be connected with the irrational part of the self. The action of this episode demonstrates that this emotional loss of self-control, which occurs in the *FCT* and *SVM* accounts alone, followed by consultation with the gods, is connected with crimes against one's own close family. This takes the form of the ensuing incest and kinslaying which are, in both cases, the result of immediate steps taken by an emotional Thyestes to execute the plan recommended by Apollo.[530] For the author of *FCT*, Thyestes' loss of self-control takes the form of anger, whereas in *SVM* it is associated with grief.

(b) The kingship after the death of Atreus

Once Aegisthus has been conceived and born to avenge his father and half-brothers, the six accounts of this narrative offer somewhat differing versions of events. In Apollodorus' account, Aegisthus kills Atreus, and Thyestes becomes king. This is the only version of this story which includes both of these incidents, and it is difficult to assess exactly when this idea became introduced to the narrative. As mentioned above, according to Homer's *Iliad*, the only other extant source to mention Thyestes becoming king, the sceptre of sovereignty in Mycenae was passed from Atreus to him without the mention of violence.[531] In all four Latin analogues, although Atreus is likewise killed by Aegisthus, it is not stated who benefits politically from this act of regicide. Hyginus comes closest of these to doing so, but his final words concerning this narrative in *Fabula* 88 are far from unambiguous concerning the kingship.[532]

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[529] *FCT*, § 6; 'Hoc motus dolore', 'Moved by this grief': Kulcsár, *Mythographi*, p. 230, l. 13.
[530] On the theme of escalating anger in *FCT* see below, pp. 165–7.
[531] See above, p. 85, note 487.
[532] 'occidit et cum patre Thyeste in regnum auitum redit', '[Aegisthus] killed [Atreus] and returned with his father, Thyestes, to the ancestral throne': Marshall, *Hygini Fabulae*, p. 83, ll. 46–7.

FCT is alone among the versions of this story in specifying that Aegisthus himself becomes king; moreover, this is as the result of his killing of Pelops, his own grandfather. The implication is that it is Pelops, not Atreus as in all other sources, whom the *FCT* author envisaged as king throughout the struggle between Atreus and Thyestes.[533] Thus, when reading *FCT* § 4 in particular, it must be assumed that its author imagined that Atreus and Thyestes fought over their patrimony whilst their father was still alive.[534]

3. (v) *Analysis*

Episode 3 of *FCT* consists of one short passage which, in agreement with its five mythographic analogues, contains information concerning the conception, birth and early violent deeds of Aegisthus. He is a figure of some importance in *FCT*, as he fulfills the useful narrative function of linking the Tantalus clan in the time of Pelops, Atreus and Thyestes with its famous participants in the Trojan War narratives, Agamemnon and Menelaus. It is noteworthy that *FCT* is unique in being a work which draws the history of the kinslaying-prone and incestuous Tantalus clan into a single narrative, though the family's trans-generational crimes had been referred to in Classical tragedy, especially in Euripdes' *Orestes* and in Seneca's *Agamemnon* and *Thyestes*.[535]

The story of Aegisthus' conception and birth is remarkably consistent in terms of narrative content from Apollodorus' account down to that of The First Vatican Mythographer. Furthermore, all five mythographic analogues are in general agreement concerning the consequences of Aegisthus' birth and boyhood: he kills Atreus, as he was conceived to do. Unfortunately, however, from the point of view of an author such as, it seems, that of *FCT*, with an eye on biographical information concerning his main characters, no extant analogue mentions the manner of Pelops' death, and only one (Apollodorus) gives specific information concerning the sovereignty after Thyestes has been avenged. These details seem to have been important to the Irish author, for *FCT* makes reference to both, even going so far as to produce a narrative which interrupts the story of Aegisthus' revenge on Atreus (on behalf of Thyestes, following the latter's consultation with Apollo) in order to do so. Part of this

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[533] *FCT*, §§ 4–5.

[534] 'Rofhás olc adhbhal ⁊ cogad cathardha eterra araen iardain um ferann a n–athar, gur roladh ár fer catorra', 'Great ill–feeling and civil war developed between them afterwards concerning their patrimony, and a slaughter of men occurred among them': *FCT*, § 4.

[535] On these references in Euripides' and Seneca's respective works see above, p. 64, notes 415 and 416.

interruption of the 'orthodox' narrative concerns the act of kinslaying by Aegisthus which is unique to *FCT*, that of his grandfather, Pelops. Moreover, this killing, unlike that of Atreus, appears to be unconnected with Aegisthus' mission to avenge Thyestes since we are not told that Pelops had committed any injury against Aegisthus' father – or against Aegisthus himself. Indeed, from the final line of § 6, 'is eiside rogabh ríghi Gréce, .i. romarb Peloip', 'it is he who seized the kingship of the Greeks, i.e. killed Pelops', it seems that Aegisthus' motive was political self-interest.[536]

The Irish author appears, then, to be again engaged in filling in a perceived gap in the narrative here, in this case in order to complete the biography of Pelops, including his death, which – aptly enough in *FCT* – takes the form of another *fingal*. The apparently politically -motivated killing of Pelops by his grandson Aegisthus also adds a degree of amorality to the latter's actions. If Aegisthus were to have killed only Atreus, the situation which occurs in orthodox accounts, Thyestes' son's behaviour in this matter might be considered at least understandable, in the light of Atreus' terrible crimes. Of course, it is possible that an unknown source for the account in *FCT* also contained these two most unusual elements – Aegisthus' murder of Pelops and his becoming king well before becoming embroiled with Clytemnestra – yet the above comparative analysis casts doubt on that possibility. Since there is no positive evidence that any other work containing either of these details were ever conceived, except in *FCT* itself, there is little reason to doubt that they were introduced by the medieval Irish author in order to augment his own narrative.

However, there is also the possibility that the Pelops referred to at this point in the text might have been intended to be an entirely different character, i.e. a young son of Agamemnon and Cassandra, also called Pelops, whom Aegisthus kills around the same time as the Mycenean king and Cassandra according to Pausanias and a small number of other accounts.[537] If the author intended that the Pelops killed should be this boy victim of Aegisthus, then the words '.i. athair Aidir' which appear after 'Pealoip' in *FCT* § 6 are an erroneous gloss demonstrating perhaps how the text may have developed before reaching its extant form. If

[536] In taking the sovereignty directly from Pelops, Aegisthus would have usurped not only Atreus but his own father Thyestes as well, if the latter were still alive, assuming a primogenitive succession model.

[537] Pausanias' mention of the boy Pelops is in his *Description of Greece*, 2. 16. 6: Jones, *Pausanias*, 1, pp. 330–1; as Gantz mentions concerning this far from well-known Pelops and his brother, 'The notion that Kassandra had time to conceive and bear twins after the fall of Troy is puzzling to say the least': *Early Greek Myth*, p. 675; it would certainly be of no little interest if this reference to Pelops in *FCT* could be shown to refer to the boy mentioned by Pausanias, and not to Pelops the grandfather of Aegisthus.

this is the case, and the author intended the younger, less well-known Pelops to be Aegisthus' victim here it would be unusual in the context of the text as a whole, since characters are almost always introduced, with some genealogical information, before they enter the action proper. It may be that the younger Pelops was introduced as such in earlier versions of the text, yet no such information is found in *FCT* as we have it. In both witnesses, Aegisthus' victim is specified as his own grandfather, Pelops. Furthermore, the boy Pelops who is killed by Aegisthus according to Pausanias is a son of Agamemnon, and not part of the Atreus / Thyestes story to which it appears to belong in *FCT*. Although it may seem out of place in *FCT* § 6 for Aegisthus to kill the elder Pelops before taking revenge on Atreus for Thyestes, the Irish author goes on to specify (§ 8) that Aegisthus was king before Agamemnon, which suggests that his version of the story made internal sense, in that Aegisthus first usurped Pelops or Atreus, depending on who was king when he killed Pelops, before himself being dethroned by Agamemnon. All in all, therefore, the text as it stands makes as much sense as any theory that the words '.i. athair Aídir' are a later accretion and that the Pelops mentioned might have been intended by the Irish author to be the young son of Agamemnon who is mentioned by Pausanias.

Besides these narrative details, also of special interest to the author of *FCT* seems to be the element of Thyestes' extreme emotional reaction to his sons' murder. Only another medieval analogue, *SVM*, mentions any such emotional reaction, yet where the Irish account places great store by Thyestes' anger, *SVM* envisages him to be grief-stricken. Again, it seems that both are instances of medieval western authors feeling that the story as presented in then -available accounts lacked a necessary or desirable detail – the lack of emotional reaction by Thyestes to his own unwitting consumption of his sons' flesh might well fall into this category – leading to the apparently separate introductions of different emotional responses in *SVM* and *FCT*.[538] Furthermore, it is interesting that in both medieval works it is this emotional reaction by Thyestes which precipitates his consultation with Apollo. Given the nature of Apollo's counsel, it may be inferred that each of the respective authors of *SVM* and *FCT* associated Thyestes' uncontrolled emotion with a loss of behavioural self-control. Thus, failure to regulate the emotions when the victim of a kinslaying is shown to lead to another

[538] This situation – the apparent separate introduction of unique details into a Classical narrative by the respective medieval authors of *SVM* and *FCT* where it appears to be clear that the extant mythographical accounts might reasonably be judged deficient – mirrors the aforementioned 'extra' motivations (respectively, famine and a lustful stepmother's scheme) offered by the same authors for Tantalus' act of attempted filicide, see above, pp. 76–7.

crime against the family, incest, to take place. Just as in the previous examples of kinslaying related in *FCT*, a member of the Tantalus clan commits a crime against his own family as the result of a loss of self-control in the form of anger;[539] in *SVM*, Thyestes' loss of self-control at this point in the narrative is expressed through grief.

Episode 4:- Aegisthus' marriage to Clytemnestra and taking of the kingship while Agamemnon is at Troy (*FCT* §§ 7–9)

This episode of *FCT* is the link between its two narratives concerning Aegisthus: firstly, as the avenger of his father Thyestes, and secondly as the adulterous usurper who kills his cousin Agamemnon upon the latter's return from Troy.[540] However, unlike the previous three episodes of *FCT*, it has no extant complete analogue, indeed there is no known account of how these two stories concerning Aegisthus became connected in antiquity. A possible explanation for this is that the narrative of Aegisthus as Thyestes' avenger may have been a later accretion to the story of Agamemnon's murder by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra as told in Homer's *Odyssey*. It has already been noted above that Homer does not refer to any feud or violence between Atreus and Thyestes, which suggests that the story of Thyestes' revenge against his brother via Aegisthus may represent an alternative, perhaps post-Homeric, tradition.[541]

When considering the two above narratives concerning Aegisthus as they appear in *FCT*, it is certainly noteworthy that the Irish author, uniquely among all extant accounts which concern Aegisthus, includes an extensive linking narrative, here Episode 4. This apparent innovation seems to demonstrate that the medieval Irish writer felt that the two narratives would benefit from a degree of elaboration in order to establish their connexion more securely. No such linking narrative is likely to have been offered in any source material, at least judging from the extant record. It also appears to be a possibility that the length and detailed nature of this particular narrative belie a particular interest on the part of the author of *FCT*, which may not have been a concern for authors of the other accounts which touch on Aegisthus' life and deeds. Even in the primary Classical texts in which the circumstances surrounding the murder of Agamemnon (Episode 5 in *FCT*, to be discussed below) are most thoroughly detailed –

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[539] On the theme of escalating anger in *FCT*, see below, pp . 165–7.
[540] *FCT* Episode 5 tells a version of the story of the death of Agamemnon; like Episode 4 it has no complete extant analogue in any Classical, Late Antique or Early Medieval sources.
[541] See above, p. 85, note 487.

the respective plays entitled *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus and Seneca – the establishment of a liaison between Clytemnestra and Aegisthus is presented as a fait accompli, and the action begins as the Greek overking returns to Mycenae victorious in war, but to his domestic doom.[542] No extant source except *FCT* gives any significant details of how the adulterous pair came together while Agamemnon was at Troy; nor does any extant source, *FCT* apart, indicate that Agamemnon received any bad news concerning either his father's death or his wife's adultery at a time when the Mycenaean monarch was still involved in the great siege.[543]

However, before telling the story of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, Episode 4 of *FCT* offers a version of the circumstances surrounding the beginning of the Trojan War (§ 7). This account in *FCT* is essentially a version of those found in respectively *DETH*, TTr^1 and TTr^2, though it is far briefer than the accounts therein, and notably different from other sources such as the *Excidium Troiae* (of uncertain date and place of composition) in which the abduction of Helen takes place somewhere other than on Cythera.[544] It is the account in *FCT* §§ 8–9, in particular, in which the story of the beginnings of the relationship between Aegisthus and Clytemnestra is related, which is unique and therefore unable to bear the type of comparison with analogues performed upon *FCT* Episodes 1–3 above, and Episodes 6–7 below.

Episode 5:- The death of Agamemnon, and its immediate aftermath (*FCT* §§ 10–16)

The account given of the death of Agamemnon in *FCT* (at far greater length than in any extant mythographic account) is very different to that found within a wide variety of texts

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[542] Clytemnestra's scheme to lure Agamemnon to his death (by persuading him to tread on the fine crimson cloth which should be reserved for deities only) near the beginning of Aeschylus' work makes it clear that she has already begun her liaison with Aegisthus, who appears later in the play: Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, pp. 104–12 ; Clytemnestra's speech at the beginning of Act 2 of Seneca's *Agamemnon*, makes the same romantic situation clear: Fitch, *Seneca*: *Tragedies* 2, p. 134, ll. 108–13.

[543] *FCT*, § 9. The exact timing of Aegisthus' killing of Atreus is not made clear in other sources, but where this murder is mentioned it is always as revenge for the grisly feast consumed by Thyestes – though it must have been imagined to have been around twenty years after Atreus' grim deeds, since Aegisthus had first to be conceived, born and to grow to manhood.

[544] Meister, *Daretis Phrygii*: *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, pp. 11–13; Mac Eoin, 'Ein Text', pp. 56–7, ll. 456–525; Stokes, *Togail*, pp. 25–6, ll. 1001–51; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, pp. 1089–90, ll. 31812–63; Atwood & Whitaker, *Excidium Troiae*, pp. xi–xx and 7–9;

from Homer onwards.[545] In *FCT* alone, the seagoing king is warned by his wife not to land (contrasting with other accounts in Classical primary texts in which she secretly seeks to trap and kill him at home upon his return) and, having rejected the wise, yet cowardly, counsel of none other than Helen herself, proceeds to lose the ensuing battle. In *FCT* alone, Agamemnon is eventually killed not by Aegisthus or Clytemnestra, but by Teucer son of Telamon, whose motive is also most anti-Homeric in that he seeks to 'avenge the siege of Troy' upon Agamemnon.[546] The battle itself is described at some length, and with some relish, by the author of *FCT*, who compares it to the Greeks' battle for Troy itself, both being fought 'ar ilcenélaib', 'against many races'.[547]

The account of Agamemnon's death in *FCT* encapsulates the somewhat puzzling elements of its author's apparent knowledge of this ancient narrative. A small number of orthodox elements of the Troy story, such as that the Greeks defeated a multinational alliance in the great siege, are interspersed with many more details which are unique to *FCT*, including that Teucer fought and killed Agamemnon upon the latter's return. That the unique outnumber the orthodox details by a healthy margin in this episode may indicate that where the Irish author includes an orthodox detail in this particular sub-narrative it is by his powers of deduction or imagination (it is possible that he guessed that the Greeks fought a multi-kingdom alliance at Troy, for example), and hence that the whole sub-narrative in *FCT* is more or less the author's own work alone. As it stands, it certainly could have been produced with the help of only a very sparse, perhaps mythographic, account which simply related that Agamemnon's death was caused by his wife and Aegisthus, without specifying whether or not it was a private murder, or other details which seem to have been of interest to the medieval Irish writer. He, uniquely among writers of accounts of this sub-narrative, appears to envisage his main characters' deaths to happen in battle as opposed to at home, a tendency also in

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[545] Agamemnon's murder at the hands of his wife and her lover (Clytemnestra and Aegisthus) upon his return from Troy is represented in primary works of literature from the time of Homer and Hesiod through the Classical Greek and Roman periods up to Dracontius in the fifth century A. D. In every such account the Greek king is set upon either by one or by both of the lovers, and either stabbed to death whilst trying to put on a shirt with no hole for his head (made for him by Clytemnestra) or killed in the bath (see Gantz, *Early Greek*, pp. 668–9, including references to works of art from the 7th century B.C. onwards in which both versions are represented). From Apollodorus' time through to the Second Vatican Mythographer, the story is also told by mythographers, but the 'shirt' version is preferred to that of the 'bath'. In every account of both types although small details are occasionally different, Agamemnon's murder is a private event committed within a house by one or two people, a far cry from the action of *FCT*.

[546] "dighélat-sa slúaiged na Troí fort", "I shall avenge the siege of Troy upon you", *FCT*, § 14.

[547] This comes in Helen's warning to Agamemnon not to engage since, "ní meinic berair dá choscar catha ar ilcenélaib diaid a ndiaidh", "two victories in battle are seldom won over many races one after another": *FCT*, § 11.

evidence in the manner of Orestes' revenge against his mother and Aegisthus in *FCT* Episode 6, as discussed below.[548]

FCT Episode 5 resembles its immediate predecessor, especially §§ 8–9, in that it has no extant full analogue and contains few details which are attested elsewhere. This middle part of the Irish narrative, Episodes 4 and 5, therefore, seems to represent either an otherwise unknown tradition or, perhaps more likely, the product of a fertile imagination building upon some extremely sketchy details concerning the death of Agamemnon. Thus, the entire unique middle section of the tale, *FCT* §§ 8-16, appears to be largely innovation, for which Classical-tradition sources are likely to be thinly-represented in the medieval West, judging by the lack of extant analogues, whereas the other approximately two thirds of *FCT* are, by contrast, at least comparable to several extant more or less full, as well as partial, analogues. Therefore, when considering *FCT* from a literary perspective, it seems pertinent to examine the content of this unique 'middle section' particularly closely. It seems that the Irish author felt that the narrative would benefit from the introduction of details which provide what is lacking in extant analogues, a link between Aegisthus as the avenger of Thyestes and Aegisthus as the lover of Clytemnestra. The particular form which the Irish author seems to have chosen for this linking narrative, with its emphasis upon female counsel, female adulterous passion and female scheming may reflect some of his major preoccupations.[549]

Episode 6:- The vengeance of Orestes against his mother and Aegisthus, and his descent into madness (*FCT* §§ 17–19):

6. (i) Background

There are eight extant 'full' analogues to this episode of *FCT* which are contained in works dating from those of Aeschylus and then Euripides (both 5th century B.C.) to that of the Second Vatican Mythographer (c. 1100), though intervening references to parts of undoubtedly the same underlying narrative are considerably more numerous.[550] In every full analogue, as in *FCT*, Orestes' killings both of his mother Clytemnestra and of her lover (his

[548] See below, p. 120.
[549] On the expanded roles for especially Clytemnestra's scheming, counsel and passion in *FCT* versus her portrayal in other sources see below, pp. 157–9.
[550] These eight analogues alone include both elements of the episode as told in *FCT*, ie. Orestes' acts of murder and his madness. The earliest reference to Orestes' matricide is in Hesiod's *Ehoiai* (7th century B.C.), see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, pp. 676–7.

second cousin) Aegisthus, are placed in the context of the victims' own murder of Agamemnon upon his return from Troy. There are also other ancient sources, notably Homer's *Odyssey*, in which part of an undoubtedly closely-related story is related, in which, although his act of matricide is not explicitly stated, Orestes' murderous revenge against Aegisthus is.[551]

Two aspects of the tradition of this story are particularly remarkable. Firstly, its principal elements show a high level of consistency over its near 2000-year history down to *FCT*: Orestes escapes from the kingdom (Mycenae, not named in *FCT*) following his father's murder, returns with Pylades whom he has befriended whilst in exile, kills both his mother and her lover, and loses his sanity, pursued by the Furies. Secondly, this story was not only a significant plotline within several Classical Greek and Latin Tragedies plus mythographic works from ancient times onwards, but it also forms the central part of a thinly-represented stratum of primary works, a Late Antique Latin epic poem, *Orestis Tragoedia*, written by the North African Christian writer Dracontius.[552] This in turn appears to be the ultimate source of a rare early medieval reference to the word 'tragoedia' in The First Vatican Mythographer's fullest of his two accounts of this episode. An intermediary between Dracontius and this latter work may have been Remi of Auxerre's commentary on Donatus' *Ars Maior*, and Remi's model for this entreprise is very likely to have been the Irishman Sedulius Scottus' commentary on the same grammatical text.[553]

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[551] Murray, *Homer*: *Odyssey* 1, p. 14, ll. 35–41 and p. 34, ll. 298–300. On the partial and full analogues of this episode, see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, p. 676. Homer's silence concerning Orestes' matricide may not indicate that he differed either from Hesiod or from later writers concerning this, since it is clear from the context within the *Odyssey* that its references to Orestes' action against Aegisthus are intended to shed light on Telemachus' growing sense of the need to act against his own mother's suitors on Ithaca. Since Penelope, unlike Clytemnestra, both remains unseduced and not contemplating the murder of her husband should he return, there is no requirement for Orestes' matricide to be raised in the *Odyssey*. However, Homer's Telemachus is informed by Athene that Penelope may, like Clytemnestra, remarry, the result of which would be that any future stepsiblings might deny him his patrimony: Murray, *Homer*: *Odyssey* 2, pp. 76–9, ll. 16–23. A similar, somewhat practical and political motivation for the murders of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus is also mentioned in some Greek tragic accounts – in Electra's chastisement of Clytemnestra in Sophocles' *Electra*, for example: 'pray explain why you are doing the most shameful thing of all, you who are sleeping with the guilty one ... and getting children by him, while you have cast out your earlier children': Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles* 1, p. 219 (Lloyd-Jones' trans.); and in Orestes' declamation in Aeschylus' *The Libation Bearers*: 'Many motives join together...the command of the god, my great grief for my father, being deprived of my property': Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, p. 251 (Sommerstein's trans.).Though this fear of being supplanted is not given as a motive for Orestes' murders in *FCT*, a direct link is made in the Irish text between Orestes' act of matricide as revenge for his father's murder and the political benefit to him personally which is its result, 'romarb Oirist dono a máthair a ndígail a athar, ⁊ rogab fēin righi na Gréce.', 'moreover Orestes slew his mother in revenge for his father, and took the kingship of Greece for himself.': *FCT*, § 18.

[552] On the authorship of *Orestis Tragoedia* see Bouquet, *La Tragédie*, p. 8.

[553] Zorzetti and Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, pp. 83–4, § 2.45, and note 431.

We may therefore be confident that the narrative of this particular episode of *FCT* was both well established and of interest at most times and places where Classical material in general was available and studied. The likely literary trail which links Donatus with The First Vatican Mythographer concerning this narrative also permits us a rare and precious insight into the complex interactions between primary texts, reference works whose authors plundered them for examples, and glossators, whose own work often depended at least as much upon earlier commentators as it did on primary authors. The precise sources of Sedulius Scottus' information concerning the underlying narrative of *Orestis Tragoedia* are unknown, yet his version of Agamemnon's death – killed by Aegsithus, having been fitted with a shirt with no hole for the head – agrees with Dracontius' account, shows that Sedulius knew this version of the story if not *Orestis Tragoedia* itself.[554]

The principal elements of the Orestes narrative show a high degree of consistency in all extant versions, including in *FCT*. However, perhaps undersatndably, of the eight extant analogues some are somewhat sketchy concerning certain details, a comment which applies particularly to the glossators and mythographers who are post-Classical (Apollodorus and Hyginus, in contrast, do offer very detailed accounts). The treatment by the author of *FCT* of especially those narrative details which are either lacking or unclear in post-Classical secondary analogues is an issue which merits close inspection, and will be examined below.

6. (ii) *The Analogues of FCT, Episode* 6 (*FCT* §§ 17–19)

Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides* (*Aesch.*)

Euripides, *Electra* (*Ele.*)[555]

Apollodorus, *The Library*, Epitome 6. 24–27 (*Lib.*)

Hyginus, *Fabulae* 117, 119, 120 (*Fab.*)

Servius, *Commentary on Virgil's Aeneid* 2.116, 4.471, 4.473 (*Aen.*)

Dracontius, *Orestis Tragoedia ll.* 515–861 (*Drac.*)

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[554] Brearley, *Commentum*, pp. 88–9; Bouquet, *La Tragédie*, pp. 98–100, ll. 211–14 and 254–62.

[555] Sophocles' play by the same name also tells a version of the story of Orestes' revenge, but it does not offer a complete analogue of the episode of *FCT* since it does not concern itself with the hero's madness following his act of matricide. Euripides, through the mouth of Castor, Clytemnestra's brother, at least foretells the madness which is to afflict Orestes, allowing the account in his *Electra* to be considered a full analogue of this episode of *FCT*: Kovacs, *Euripides* 3, p. 288, ll. 1252–3.

The First Vatican Mythographer 1.20, 1.22, 2.45 (*FVM*)

The Second Vatican Mythographer 245 (*SVM*)

6. (iii) *Tables showing Variations between Analogues*

All versions:[556] Orestes escapes from Mycenae after his father's murder, and is received by the Phocian king, whose son he befriends. He returns to kill his mother and Aegisthus, and becomes insane after committing matricide.

Variations:

Table 6.1- Orestes' age at the time of his escape to Phocis

	Aesch.[557]	*Ele.*	*Lib.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Drac.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*FCT*
Boy	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	
Not specified[558]							*		*

[556] In Aeschylus' *The Libation Bearers* alone, the boy Orestes may have been away from Mycenae at the time of his father's murder judging from his comments at the beginning of the play, and in this source alone it was Clytemnestra herself who ensured her son's safe conveyance into exile, as she reminds him to no avail as the action approaches its grim ending: Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, pp. 212–13, ll. 8–9, and pp. 328–9, l. 914. In Aeschylus' *The Libation Bearers*, then, the author portrays a Clytemnestra who may be viewed more sympathetically than those presented by other Greek tragedians. Aeschylus is also kinder to Clytemnestra than are Latin writers who came to the same subject in a later age. In the medieval period, both Vatican Mythographers who produced full analogues to this story failed to include Orestes' time in exile, though both mention Pylades as his helper in Orestes' vengeance upon his mother and her lover.

[557] Orestes' age at the time of the murder of his father is not stated outright in either of Aeschylus' plays, yet it appears from the action of *The Libation Bearers* that Orestes returns as a young man to the house and kingdom that he had left as a child. This is especially evident in Clytemnestra's vain attempts to remind Orestes of her care for him during his infancy at lines 895–916: Sommerstein, *Aeschylus* 2, pp. 326– 9.

[558] Although much of the account of Orestes' revenge in *SVM* appears to be based on that in *FVM*, the two extra words in the version in *SVM* 'cum adoleuisset', 'when he had grown up', demonstrate that its author both believed, and felt it important to specify, that Orestes had been a minor at the time of Agamemnon's murder; there is no reference to Orestes' age in the version in *FVM*, which is otherwise very similar to that in *SVM*: Zorzetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, 2.45, pp. 83–4; Kulcsár, *Mythographi*, p. 274, ll. 10–18.

Table 6.2- Orestes' helper(s) in his escape to Phocis

	Aesch.	*Ele.*	*Lib.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Drac.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*FCT*
Clytemnestra	*								
Electra[559]			*	*	*	*			
Iphigenia[560]									*
A household member[561]		*				*			
None mentioned							*	*	

Table 6.3- The circumstances surrounding Orestes' act of matricide

	Aesch.	*Ele.*	*Lib.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Drac.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*FCT*
Location not mentioned			*		*		*	*	
At the palace in Mycenae[562]	*	*		*		*			
During or after a battle									*

[559] Seneca's *Agamemnon*, which includes a version of the first part of the sub-narrative related at this point in *FCT*, also specifies Electra as Orestes' helper: Fitch, *Seneca: Tragedies* 2, p. 202, l. 931. On a possible relationship between Seneca's work and Dracontius' *Orestis Tragoedia*, see Bouquet, 'L'Orestis tragoedia', pp. 43–59, and Bright, *The Miniature Epic*, p. 204, note 115. Bright concludes that certain elements apparently unique to Dracontius' version 'are inventions of the poet himself', though Bright also acknowledges that unknown source material may temper such assertions, for 'argument from silence is always dangerous': *The Miniature Epic*, p. 204. Both of these comments suggest that the *Quellenforschung* of that work is comparably complex to that of *FCT*, the next primary work (at a gap of some c. 700 years) after that of Dracontius to be concerned with Orestes' matricide.

[560] She is unnamed in *FCT*, yet from its description of Orestes' guardian when in exile as 'a derbsiair baí a Sléiph Tuirc, .i. bansaccart do Dhean i sidhe', 'his sister who was on Mount Taurica, she was a priestess of Diana', it is clear that it is Iphigenia who is intended: *FCT*, § 17.

[561] 'The old servant who raised Agamemnon' in Euripides' play: Kovacs, *Euripides* 3, pp. 152–3, ll. 16–17; Orestes' unnamed servant in Sophocles' version, who acts here at the behest of his sister, presumably Electra: Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles* 1, pp 168–9, ll. 10–14. In Pindar's version of this story (which, like Sophocles' *Electra*, is not a complete analogue of the whole episode of *FCT* since both of these Greek versions finish at the point when Orestes completes his double murder) the servant who helps Orestes to flee is named as 'the nurse Arsinoa', Finglass, *Pindar*, l.18 (Finglass' trans.). In Dracontius' poem, Orestes is helped to escape by Electra, but a certain Dorylas, here his tutor, also assists by providing the untrue cover story that the prince has drowned: Bouquet, *La Tragédie*, pp. 104–6, ll. 350–81.

[562] In the building itself in *Lib.*, *Ore.*, *Ele.*, and in the *Electra* of Sophocles, but in *Drac.* the murder of Clytemnestra takes place at the tomb of Agamemnon: Bouquet, *La Tragédie*, pp. 121–2, ll. 761–94.

Table 6.4- Orestes' attempt to regain his sanity / escape the Furies after his matricide

	Aesch.	*Ele.*[563]	*Lib.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Drac.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*FCT*
Orestes consults the Delphic Oracle	*		*	*	*		*	*	
Orestes obtains a cultic image of Diana[564]			*	*		*	*	*	
Orestes obtains a cultic image of Athene	*	*							
Iphigenia is associated with human sacrifice			*	*	*	*	*	*	
Iphigenia is associated with human blood[565]					*	*	*	*	
Orestes kills Iphigenia and bathes in her blood									*

6. (iv) *Commentary on variations between analogues*

(a) Orestes' age at the time of his exile

From Table 6.1 above it is clear that, from the fifth century B.C. onwards, most versions of this story envisage Orestes as a minor (of a non-specific age) at the time of Agamemnon's murder by Clytemnestra and / or Aegisthus. This may contradict what we glean from Book 9 of Homer's *Iliad*, set around a year before Agamemnon's homecoming and murder, in which Orestes is already in his own father's mind at least of an age to allow him to be compared with Achilles.[566] It is possible that Greek tragedians chose to recast Orestes as a child for dramatic effect and, drawing on their works as opposed to Homer's, later composers both of primary works and of mythographies maintained Orestes' status as a minor. Whatever their direct sources, even though Aeschylus for one is somewhat imprecise concerning Orestes'

[563] Euripides offers an alternative account of this narrative in his *Orestes*: Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, p. 683.

[564] In *Lib.*, Epitome 6.26, it is not clear which deity's *xoanon* Orestes is to seek, yet as it stated here that Orestes is to obtain 'the *xoanon* that was in the land of the Taurians', it may safely be assumed to be that of Diana, since it is mentioned elsewhere in the same work by Apollodorus concerning Iphigenia that Artemis (the Greek equivalent of Diana) 'carried her off to the Taurians and appointed her to be their priestess': Frazer, *Apollodorus* 2, pp. 191 and 193 (Frazer's trans.).

[565] In the accounts in all three of *Aen.*, *FVM* and *SVM* it is said of Iphigenia that she 'appeased the god with human blood', 'humano sanguine numen placaret': Thilo & Hagen, *Servii*, I p. 237, l. 18; Zorzetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p. 12, § 6; Kulcsár, *Mythographi*, p. 274, ll. 22–3 (in *SVM*, 'deam humano sanguine placante'). The two Vatican Mythographers probably depend ultimately on Servius on this subject: Zorzetti and Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p. 12, note 49; Kulcsár, *Mythographi*, p. 274, note to ll. 21–35. In *Drac.*, Iphigenia is said to be involved in the process wherein 'the wretched stranger is prepared to be the knife's victim', 'miser aduena uictima ferri ducitur', implying very strongly that she was in this account held to be involved in bloody sacrifice: Bouquet, *La Tragédie*, p. 126, l. 868.

[566] Murray, *Homer*: *Iliad* 1, p. 404, ll. 142–3 and p. 414, ll. 284–5.

age when forced into exile, all composers except one of the full analogues to Episode 6 of *FCT* are united in making him a minor at this time.

The only exception to this among the full analogues is *FVM*, which resembles *FCT* in its lack of detail concerning Orestes' age at this point in the narrative. This perceived deficiency in *FVM* may have been corrected (in his view) by the Second Vatican Mythographer, who, writing at close to the same time as the author of *FCT*, does indeed indicate that Orestes had not yet reached maturity at this point.[567] In being non-specific at this point in the narrative, i.e. when Orestes is described as escaping into exile at the time of his father's murder, it appears that the Irish author is likely to have borrowed from a skeletal account akin to that in *FVM*, rather than one such as that in *SVM*, in which it is stated that Orestes is a minor.

However, even though he is non-specific at this point concerning Orestes' age, the Irish author goes on to suggest strongly at a later stage in the narrative that Agamemnon's son had been a young man at the time of his father's murder.[568] Thus Orestes' age when forced into exile seems to have returned to young adult in the medieval Irish version, as Homer had envisaged nearly two millennia before *FCT* was composed, though for much if not all of the intervening period of literary history the prince was portrayed as a minor at the relevant time.[569] This – almost certainly coincidental – agreement between the author of *FCT* and Homer concerning Orestes' age at the time of his father's murder may well be the result of the use of skeletal, imprecise source(s) by the Irishman for this narrative.

(b) The 'wrong' sister as Orestes' helper in *FCT*?

From Table 6.2 above it is clear that from Apollodorus to Servius the identity of the person by whose intervention Orestes escaped the clutches of his mother and stepfather, at least one of whom was surely intending him evil after his father's murder, was his sister

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[567] See above, p. 114, note 558.

[568] That he was then at least a youth must be inferred from the statement that, after his father's death, Orestes 'docuaidh ar techidh a mháthar coa derbsiair bai a Slèiph Tuirc', 'fled from his mother to his sister who was on MountTaurica', *FCT*, § 17. There is no mention of either a helper or escort in *FCT* until Orestes has reached his sister, the unnamed priestess of Diana, i.e. Iphigenia in other accounts.

[569] This is not to suggest that this 'return to Homer' is anything other than a coincidence. For a fuller discussion of this apparent instance of the *FCT* author choosing to portray a character as a young man rather than as a child see below, pp. 132–4.

Electra.[570] However, no medieval analogue author who offers an account, such as either Vatican Mythographer, mentions specific details on this matter, despite the likelihood that these writers depend ultimately upon Servius' account (in which Electra is named as Orestes' sister who 'took [him] away secretly') for their versions of the story of Orestes' eventual return and matricide.[571] When it comes to *FCT*, then, it is certainly of interest that it is alone among medieval accounts not only in offering a clear suggestion concerning the identity of Orestes' helper, but also in making that helper not Electra but a different sister, clearly to be equated with Iphigenia though she is unnamed in the Irish tale.

This evidence may therefore suggest that the author of *FCT* used a source or sources which, like Servius and his predecessors at least as far back as Apollodorus, mentioned the detail that Orestes' helper was his sister. However, judging from the text of *FCT*, it seems that this sister was unnamed in any available source(s), and the Irish author seems to have equated her with Iphigenia, assuming, perhaps, that she was Orestes' only sister.[572] Indeed, given that in every analogue from Apollodorus onwards, Orestes has some involvement with Iphigenia (whether named as such or not) in her role as priestess of Diana in his attempt to recover his sanity, it may well have made a certain kind of sense to the author of *FCT* that the initial aid to Orestes also be provided by the sister known elsewhere as Iphigenia, even if in any source(s) it was simply stated that he was helped into a safe exile by an unnamed sister.

Though this is an argument from silence, it appears that whichever sources lie behind *FCT* here, they did not include mention of what is the now perhaps one of the best-known example of a *fingal* by a member of the Tantalus clan, Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter

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[570] The earlier sources record that Orestes' helper was either a servant or nurse loyal to Agamemnon or, according to Aeschylus' *The Libation Bearers* only, Clytemnestra herself, see above, p. 113 note 543. On the threat faced at home by Orestes, the author of *FCT* states that his exile to Phocis was 'nac marbad a mháthair fēin hé', 'so that his own mother did not kill him': *FCT*, § 17. Other sources do not name either Clytemnestra or Aegisthus as threats to Orestes' life, and it may probably be inferred that the couple would act as one unit in their actions towards Orestes, as they do in the murder of Agamemnon – the obvious exception being Aeschylus' *The Libation Bearers*, in which Clytemnestra herself, as mentioned above, ensures that her son escapes, presumably because she believes that Aegisthus poses a danger to his life.

[571] Servius' commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid*, 4. 471: Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui ferentur in Virgili carmina commentarii* 1, pp. 549–50; 'Oresten Electra, soror eius, post occisum...subtraxit', 'Electra, his sister, took Orestes away secretly after the murder...': Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui ferentur in Virgili carmina commentarii* 1, p. 549, ll. 23–5.

[572] It is not in keeping with the remainder of *FCT* that Orestes' sister (and indeed the Phocian king and his son, Orestes' friend, called respectively Strophius and Pylades in every other analogue – though the latter may be the 'Peris' who may die in *FCT* § 18) should be unnamed. Almost every other character in *FCT* is introduced with not only details about parentage but also a name which typically follows this directly, e.g. in the case of Orestes, '[Ai]gmemnon trá forfácaib-sidhe mac maith, .i. Oirist mac Aighmemnoin', 'Agamemnon left a noble son, i.e. Orestes son of Agamemnon': *FCT*, § 17.

Iphigenia in order to gain a fair wind for the Greek fleet at Aulis. Some writers – typically those who present Agamemnon in the most favourable light, such as Dracontius – generally add that Iphigenia was saved by Diana and that a female animal took her place as the sacrifice.[573] Those who are more sympathetic towards Clytemnestra, such as Sophocles, place an emphasis upon this kinslaying by Agamemnon as a primary motivation for his eventual murder at the hands of his wife and Aegisthus.[574] From its absence in his text, the author of *FCT* may not have known of Agamemnon's act of *fingal* against Iphigenia. The intriguing alternative is that this particular kinslaying did not fit in with the author's purpose – it would have been difficult, for example, to connect it to a female-driven act of adultery or incest, as happens with *FCT*'s other *fingala* – and so it was omitted.

Wherever the Irish writer's information concerning the unnamed Iphigenia as Orestes' helper came from, there is no evidence from within *FCT* to suggest any authorial awareness of the existence of Electra, though her name forms the title to at least two of the most important Classical Greek primary works to touch upon this narrative. Notably, perhaps, the two Vatican Mythographers (the closest in date of composition of all the analogues to this episode of *FCT*) differ from Servius in that they are silent concerning Electra where he is not, and it appears that this daughter of Agamemnon, famous in Classical times, disappeared from (the admittedly few) western accounts of the story of the avenging of her father's murder at some point after Servius' work, not to reappear until the fifteenth-century Renaissance. It is scarcely a wonder, then, that if the source(s) of the author of *FCT* here referred to an unnamed sister as Orestes' helper, this medieval writer pictured Iphigenia and not Electra as that sister, gleaning this information, perhaps, from whichever sources he used for the final part of this episode, in which Iphigenia plays a significant part, according to all of the extant Latin sources and *FCT*, though she is again unnamed in the Irish tale.

In having Iphigenia present as helper both in Orestes' escape from Mycenae and his eventual attempt to recover his sanity, the Irish author appears to be grappling with source(s) for this episode which were not as complete and / or clear as he would have liked. The notable lack of names in this narrative in *FCT* for some three of its important characters Strophius, Pylades (at least initially, though he may be identified with 'Peris') and Iphigenia herself

[573] Bouquet, *La Tragédie*, p. 93, ll. 81–2; Dracontius is fulsome in his praise of Agamemnon both as a war leader and as a loving father: ibid., pp. 91–2, ll. 25–67.

[574] Sophocles makes the fact that Agamemnon ordered the sacrifice of Iphigenia the declared principal motive for Clytemnestra in her speech at ll. 516–551 of his *Electra*: Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles* 1, pp. 212 and 214.

appears to be further evidence in support of this notion of threadbare or imprecise source(s) for this episode.

(c) Death in battle

As in the death of Agamemnon in *FCT* Episode 5, it seems that the author of *FCT* prefers killings which happen in, or shortly after, battles, to private murders, offering here, as before, extensive additional information concerning how many divisions fought on either side, and who killed whom.[575]

While this apparent preference for deaths in battle may be the result of either contemporary cultural expectations or of personal literary taste, it is notable that, as in the case of the death of Agamemnon, certain ambiguities or gaps in analogous narratives may betray an important rationale for the apparent intervention here of the author of *FCT* (or, conceivably, of his source). Whilst the writers of the Classical Greek analogues, plus Hyginus and Dracontius, place Orestes' murders of Clytemnestra and of Aegisthus either inside the palace or within its grounds, other Latin sources, notably Servius and later the Vatican Mythographers, offer precious little information about their location.[576] If the author of *FCT* in this case relied upon sources which also lacked a particular murder-spot, he appears to have taken the opportunity presented by this deficiency to introduce (with some apparent relish) a battle-scene into the narrative here (§ 18), thereby also offering closure (description of death) to other characters, such as the unnamed Phocian king and 'Peris', whose name may be a gaelicised equivalent of the latter's son Pylades.[577] As in the case of Pelops, killed by Aegisthus uniquely in *FCT* (§ 6), and of the killing of the unnamed Iphigenia as discussed below, the Irish author may be engaged in filling a narrative vacuum concerning the deaths of significant characters in the case of the Phocian king.[578] Of course such deaths help to make the list of the 'échta 7 aighedha Gréc', 'murders and violent deaths of the Greeks', recounted in *FCT* longer than is found in orthodox sources which concern the same charcaters.[579]

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[575] The deaths of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra occur in *FCT*, § 18; the Irish author's apparent preference for death in battle to private murder is noted with reference to his portrayal of Agamemnon's demise, see above, p. 110.

[576] See Table 6. 3 above, p. 115.

[577] See above, pp. 61–2.

[578] The respective cases of Pelops' death (if the author meant Atreus' father, see above, pp. 105–7) and that of the unnamed Iphigenia (see below, pp. 121–2) are unorthodox instances of *fingal* in *FCT*.

[579] *FCT*, § 22.

(d) Orestes' extra act of kinslaying in *FCT*

From Table 6.4 above, it can be seen that *FCT* is unique in making Orestes the slayer not only of his mother (who is also his second cousin), but of his sister (the unnamed Iphigenia) too. The chilling irony of this extra Oresteian act of *fingal* is that we are told that 'adubairt an guth ris isin oidhchi', 'the voice in the night told him' to perform it in order to recover the sanity which he had lost as the result of his act of matricide, and so it is a further *fingal* committed in order to cure the effects of a *fingal*.[580]

A clue concerning a possible inspiration for this apparently novel narrative event – it is unique to *FCT* of all the extant accounts – may be in the detail, again unique to *FCT*, that Orestes must not only kill his sister (the unnamed Iphigenia) but also that he must bathe in her blood, in order to be cured.[581] Since several Latin analogues, but not *FCT*, include the information that Iphigenia, as Diana's priestess in the land of the Taurians, was herself involved in bloody human sacrifice, it does not require too great a leap of imagination to infer that the author of *FCT* may have adapted any similar such source(s) which mentioned human blood and sacrifice in connexion with Iphigenia to suit his or her own narrative, which does not shy away from bloody and graphically-described *fingala*.[582]

There is also the question as to the quality of any source(s) used by the Irish author for this episode. Since, unusually in *FCT*, as has been mentioned above, the significant characters Strophius and Iphigenia (and perhaps Pylades) are not named in the version of this narrative

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[580] *FCT*, § 19. It is not clear whether 'the voice in the night' refers to a symptom of Orestes' madness or to the more conventional medieval Christian idea that Satan operates aurally, a belief which may have begun with Saint Augustine of Hippo's comments (*De Genesi ad Litteram* 17. 34) concerning the events which led up to the Fall of Man,'in serpente ipse locutus est, utens eo velut organo', 'he [Satan] spoke through the serpent, using it as an instrument': Migne, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Opera* 3, col. 443. The case of 'the voice in the night' heard by Orestes in *FCT* is subtly different from the voice of Satan in Augustine since the former appears not to be corporeal. Nonetheless, it seems that this nocturnal voice should be understood as clearly malevolent, whether Satanic or a symptom of Orestes' insanity, or both. On medieval Christian attitudes towards the connexion between insanity and sin, and on the dreamer's responsibility for what occurs during sleep, see Neaman, *Suggestions of the Devil*, pp. 98–100.

[581] 'dia marbad a shiair ... ⁊ dia fothraicedh hé asa fuil robudh slán dia ghalar', 'if he were to slay his sister ... and if he would bathe in her blood he would recover from his sickness': *FCT*, § 19.

[582] The ultimate source for the analogues' authors' belief that Iphigenia performed human sacrifice may be Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, ll. 621–4. However, Bouquet notes that, between the Euripidean account and that of Dracontius, Iphigenia's role in the sacrifices has become more active: 'Chez Euripide, Iphigénie ne sacrifice pas elle-même les victimes, mais se contente de répandre sur elles l'eau lustrale avant de les remettre aux sacrificateurs.', 'In Euripides, Iphigenia does not sacrifice the victims herself, but restricts herself to sprinkling the purifying water onto them before handing them back to those who perform the sacrifices.': Bouquet, *Dracontius*, p. 126, note 637. Of course, the Irish author, or his source(s), makes a leap from the extant Latin analogues which is far greater than Dracontius', in making Iphigenia herself the *victim* of her brother's bloody attempt to recover his sanity.

in *FCT*, though they are in every other extant analogue, it may be that here the Irish author's source(s) simply lacked detail, or perhaps offered a confused account concerning who was sacrificed by whom on Mount Taurica. It may be that the Irish author's source(s) mentioned 'human blood' and 'his sister' in the context of Orestes' attempted cure, without offering enough specific detail, and this allowed enough leeway for the author of *FCT* to do what he appears to do elsewhere in the narrative, to fill a likely perceived gap with plausible and thematically consistent plot details. This must inevitably be speculative, yet in this case the evidence of the Latin analogues at least demonstrates that there may have been textual grounds for what looks at first sight like a total innovation on the medieval Irish author's part. In the case of his novel notion that Iphigenia's own blood was spilt and bathed in, the Irish author may have built upon the existing tradition which connected Iphigenia with human blood and sacrifice, even if the eventual edifice barely resembles the template. Whatever its cause, the presence of yet another *fingal* in the Tantalus clan's grim and bloody catalogue clearly suits the surrounding text, and may have been at least a conveniently reasonable interpretation of whichever perhaps sketchy source(s) were plundered for this episode.

6. (v) *Analysis*

Episode 6, unlike its two immediate predecessors, relates a version of its narrative which is recognisably similar to its Latin tradition counterparts. However, it is perhaps most apparent in this episode that the medieval Irish author was in possession of a skeletal account only (even if he had more than one source text). The lack of names for important, widely-attested characters such as Iphigenia and Strophius in this episode is unusual for *FCT* as a whole, and may indicate that source texts referred to them by their respective statuses as Orestes' sister and the Phocian king only.

The version of Orestes' escape to Phocis and later descent into madness after his matricide in *FCT* demonstrates how the Irish author may have been forced to innovate. Since he appears to have had no knowledge of Orestes' other sister, Electra, he seems to have assumed that the one sister known to him from another, later, part of the story (Iphigenia, though unnamed) was the same sister who helped the prince to escape and thereby nullify his mother's and Aegisthus' power to harm him. Again, because he seems to have been aware of part of the orthodox version of the story, which connected Orestes' attempted cure with Iphigenia,

known for her role in human sacrifice, the author of *FCT* seems to have welded these two details about Orestes' sister together. The medieval Irish result, that the prince kills the unnamed Iphigenia and bathes in her blood, also serves as another grisly *fingal* to add to the tale's list.

The apparent introduction of this extra kinslaying by Orestes in *FCT* may also be an example of the Irish author's apparent lack of fear in adding to the narrative as it had come down to him in order to achieve his literary purposes. Whether it is safe to conclude from its absence that Iphigenia's earlier sacrifice by her father Agamemnon was omitted by the Irish author from his catalogue of *fingala* for literary reasons also, or because he simply did not know of it, is difficult to gauge. The absence from *FCT* of this widely-attested act of *fingal* committed by a prominent member of the Tantalus dynasty is noteworthy.[583]

Episode 7:- Orestes and Hermione, and the post-Aegisthus succession to the kingship of Greece (*FCT* §§ 20–2)

7. (i) *Background*

This is the story of the contention between Orestes, Agamemnon's son, and Pyrrhus (= Achilles' son Neoptolemus) over the hand of Hermione, daughter of Menelaus and Helen.[584] Following Orestes' eventual triumph, *FCT* goes on to relate a unique (among extant sources) version of the succession to the kingship of Mycenae.

There are eight full extant analogues to this episode, ranging in date from Euripides (5th century B.C.) to the Second Vatican Mythographer (c. 1100 A.D.).[585] Although there is no extant primary work from the Classical Roman period which may be considered a full analogue, it is likely that Pacuvius' *Hermiona*, now known only from fragmentary references,

[583] The lack of any mention of Agamemnon's order that Iphigenia be sacrificed in *FCT* is consistent with its highly positive portrayal of the Argive overking, see below, pp. 158–9.

[584] A version of this struggle for the hand of Hermione is recounted in *TTr*[3], in which it is also the case that Menelaus' daughter was betrothed first to Orestes and then taken by force by Pyrrhus before being recaptured by Orestes, resulting in Pyrrhus' death. No mention of Hermione's volition is made in this version: Dublin, King's Inns' Library 12, 40 a14 – 40 b27.

[585] On these and other references to this story in the Classical tradition see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, pp. 690–3.

also told a version of a substantial part of the same story.[586] Since one of the analogues is contained within the final part of Dracontius' *Orestis Tragoedia*, therefore, the complete story (including both the marriage squabble over Hermione and issues surrounding Orestes' succession) was the subject of primary works in three times and places between the 5th centuries B.C and A.D.

As with the immediately preceding episode of *FCT*, it is quite striking that most of the narrative's main details appear to have survived this period intact despite, or perhaps because of, the attentions of mythographers such as Apollodorus, Hyginus and Servius. This high degree of consistency concerning this narrative over a long expanse of time is perhaps still more remarkable when the inconsistent nature of the two separate accounts of it by a single author, Euripides, its earliest extant descriptor within a primary work, is considered.[587]

In addition to the aforementioned full analogues to this episode, there are many other ancient literary references to the dispute between Orestes and Pyrrhus over Hermione. Of these partial analogous accounts, two are worth special mention here. Firstly, in Ovid's *Heroides* 8 Hermione cuts a figure whose portrayal resembles fairly closely that of the later stereotypical damsel in distress, as she entreats her lawful fiancé Orestes to rescue her from Pyrrhus' clutches.[588] Ovid's portrayal of the situation is noteworthy since apart from in Euripides' *Andromache* (and in *FCT* itself) the question of Hermione's preference between the two men does not arise in the full analogues, and in *Andromache* it barely does so since Hermione (here lawfully wedded to Neoptolemus) plays a passive role in her rescue or re-abduction by Orestes. Ovid's work, though not a complete analogue of the entire episode of *FCT* including the taking of the crown by Orestes, is the longest and fullest extant account of the rivalry between Orestes and Pyrrhus over Hermione. Despite the extensive nature of Ovid's version, and perhaps suggesting that this work was not his source here, the author of *FCT* portrays Hermione as having the opposite preference. In the Irish account, Menelaus' and Helen's

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[586] Pacuvius' work seems to have included an account of Neoptolemus' (= Pyrrhus') death at the hands of Orestes: Warmington, *Remains*, 2 pp. 228–33.

[587] Euripides' *Orestes* envisages Neoptolemus as Hermione's first fiancé, in contrast with the same author's *Andromache*, see below, p. 128, note 597. Another variation on the story is the suggestion in Dictys Cretensis' account that Orestes did not kill Neoptolemus (who is supposed, in this source, to have related this part of the story to Dictys) though Agamemnon's son is said to have taken Hermione back and to have returned with her to Mycenae, as in other accounts: Eisenhut, *Dictys Cretensis*, pp. 129–30.

[588] Ovid's Hermione resorts to exaggeration at least once (she and Orestes are cousins, not siblings) in order to emphasise the marital and kin relationships which should spur Orestes to rescue her from Pyrrhus,'uir, precor, uxori, frater, succurre sorori', 'Husband, I entreat, succour your wife: brother, your sister!': Showerman, *Ovid: Heroides*, p. 100, l. 29 (Showerman's trans.).

daughter resists Orestes' abduction (though she is said to have been his fiancée before being carried off by Pyrrhus in the account in *FCT*, as in most others) to the point of committing suicide in a particularly gory and painful way.[589]

Secondly, the central action of the same intrigue between Hermione and her two suitors is mentioned in connexion with Irish Classical scholarship as early as around the end of the seventh century A.D. This reference occurs in Aldhelm of Malmesbury's *Letter to Wihtfrith*, in which the Wessex writer implies that his contemporary Irish scholars expended rather too much of their energy on such profane matters, at the expense of the proper study of Christian texts.[590] Whether or not the Irish did possess such Classical information as the story of Hermione, Neoptolemus (as Aldhelm names him) and Orestes as early as Aldhelm's time may be open to some doubt, for it may be that the Malmesbury scholar was simply demonstrating to Wihtfrith that even somewhat arcane Classical learning (the other examples quoted by Aldhelm are the abduction of Prosperina, and the story of the priests of Lupercus) might also be acquired closer to home, from teachers such as Theodore at Canterbury.[591] Aldhelm also says that this particular story is contained in 'prisca ... opuscula', 'ancient ... short texts'.[592] Whether by this he intends works such as the Servian Commentary on Virgil, Malalas' *Chronicle* (perhaps in a Latin translation) or mythographical handbooks of uncertain

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[589] 'roleadair sisi féin a crécht guruo marbh dhé fo cetoir, uair dob ferr le a hoighidh inas a faicsin do mhnaí oca namhaid', 'she hacked at her own wound so that she died of it at once, since she preferred to die than to see herself the wife of her enemy': *FCT*, § 21; on certain similarities between this literary suicide and that of Deirdriu in the medieval Irish tale *Longes Macc nUisleann*, see below, pp. 146–8.

[590] Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 479. The reference to the story of Hermione, Neoptolemus and Orestes is contained in ll. 15–16.

[591] In Aldhelm's *Letter to Heahfrith*, he refers to the availability in Britain of 'dedasculi Argivi Romanive', 'Roman and Greek teachers' (though the choice of 'Argivi' rather than 'Graeci' perhaps suggests familiarity with secular Greek learning in addition to Christian teaching: Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 492, l. 11). Aldhelm goes on to name Theodore, pointing out that Irish students 'hemmed [Theodore] in ... like a savage boar checked by a snarling pack of hounds', 'truculentus molosorum catasta ringente vallatus' – the use of 'molosorum' here for (Molossian) 'hounds' may again be a deliberate attempt to demonstrate Aldhelm's own considerable Classical knowledge: Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 493, l. 5; trans. Lapidge & Herren, *Aldhelm*, p. 163. It is also interesting that an etymology the placename 'Molossia' comes from the belief stated in Isidore's *Etymologiae* 14, following, inter alia, Euripides' *Andromache*, that Neoptolemus' son Molossos founded that kingdom: Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* 2, 14.4.9.

[592] Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 479, l. 15; 'opusculum' is used by a number of early medieval Insular scholars to refer to a short work which comments upon an longer text: Latham & Howlett, *Dictionary* Fasciculus 8, pp. 2041–2, including an example taken from Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*.

detail and precision is open to debate.[593] It is Hermione's wanton fickleness (in his opinion) which is considered reprehensible by Aldhelm in his version of this incident, since here she, 'having changed her mind', marries Neoptolemus, having been 'engaged ... by right of dowry to Orestes'.[594]

For Aldhelm, then, just as for the author of *FCT*, Hermione was a willing participant in her marriage to Neoptolemus, yet Ovid's account in Book 8 of his *Heroides* is predicated on the opposite position.[595] All the other extant accounts present Neoptolemus' marriage to Hermione as a fait accompli, with no question of any bridal assent or otherwise, though her father Menelaus gives his permission in some accounts. It may be the lack of information on the subject of which suitor was preferred by Hermione in these Classical and later works, both primary and secondary, which allowed authors such as Ovid (for whom sexual love was a favourite topic), and Aldhelm, who also wrote about sex, albeit that his *De Virginitate* takes a different stance to that of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, to use the story in different guises for their own purposes.[596] The author of *FCT* may be somewhere between these two authors in terms of attitude to sex, but (dysfunctional) sexual relationships between the genders, with females typically at fault, are also a recurrent topos within the Irish text.

In all extant versions of this story, Orestes eventually triumphs over Neoptolemus / Pyrrhus and marries Hermione. It might seem obvious that Orestes should take the kingship of

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[593] On Aldhelm's acquaintance with Servius, see Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 186; on his study of Virgil, perhaps on Iona, see Lapidge, 'The Career', pp. 29–30; on his study under the hellenophone scholars Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury see Lapidge, 'The Career', pp. 31–4. It may well be that these two men, probably to be identified with Aldhelm's 'dedasculi Argivi', between them offered some Classical as well as Christian instruction. This may be considered even more probable if Stevenson's suggestion concerning Theodore's part in the translation of parts of Malalas' *Chronicle* into Latin is correct, see above, p. 57, note 391.

[594] 'despondebatur pridem iure dotis Oresti demumque sententia immutata Neoptolemeo nupsit': Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 479, ll. 15–16.

[595] See below, pp. 129–31.

[596] Ovid's manual of seduction includes the notion that women cannot resist the sexual advances of men, if these advances are framed correctly, 'cunctas posse capi', 'all women can be caught': Mozley, *Ovid: The Art of Love*, p. 30, ll. 269–70 Mozley's trans.). Aldhelm, contrastingly, appears especially at pains to praise the dogged resistance of female virgins to the sometimes forceful attentions of suitors and even of lawful fiancés, as in the case of Thecla (Aldhelm, *Prosa De Virginitate*, 46), of whom Aldhelm relates, ' nec maternis coacta blandimentis nec proci compulsa precibus ad tori contubernia et nuptial inclinator ... pretiosam uirginitatis stolam inter seueros leonum rugitus et feroces ursinae rapacitatis ... inuiolabilem conseruauit', 'she was not to be inclined to the companionship of marriage and the wedding feast, (even though) she was urged by her mother's coaxing and by her suitor's entreaties ... she kept the precious mantle of her virginity undestroyed among the fierce roaring of lions and the ferocious jaws of hungry bears': Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, pages 639 and 641, ll. 7–14; trans. Lapidge & Herren, *Aldhelm*, p. 113. Since Aldhelm's work also indicates a strong preference for chastity within lawful marriage to other forms of sexual union, it is far from surprising that he also considered Hermione's apparent lack of resistance to Pyrrhus in the Classical narrative worthy of condemnation.

Mycenae either at this point or even beforehand, as the prince has already disposed of Aegisthus, doubtless understood to have been Orestes' most powerful rival for the Mycenean throne. However, it appears from several of the analogues that the hero's political status following his marriage to Hermione was of little interest in ancient times, and neither his kingship nor death are treated at any length in either in Classical or post-Classical texts, except *FCT*. Orestes had, it seems already served the respective purposes of those who related his story, first as avenger and matricide, then as rival for the hand of Hermione. However, for the author of *FCT*, a greater degree of narrative closure seems to have been required than appears elsewhere, even if this means simply stating that Orestes did indeed become king of Mycenae following his marriage and stating the fact and manner of his death.

7. (ii) *The Analogues of FCT, Episode* 7

Euripides, *Andromache* 881–1150 (*And.*)

Euripides, *Orestes* (*Ore.*)

Apollodorus, *The Library* Epitome 6.14, 6.28 (*Lib.*)

Hyginus, *Fabulae* 122, 123, 124 (*Fab.*)

Servius, *Commentary on Virgil's* Aeneid 3.297 (*Aen.*)

Dracontius, *Orestis Tragoedia* 807 ff. (*Drac.*)

The First Vatican Mythographer 1.41, 2.38 (*FVM*)

The Second Vatican Mythographer 252 (*SVM*)

7. (iii) *Tables showing Variations between Analogues*

All versions: Orestes is betrothed to Menelaus and Helen's daughter, Hermione, while the Trojan campaign takes place. At some stage after the fall of the city, however, she is given in marriage to Achilles' son Pyrrhus (Neoptolemus). Orestes kills his rival at the site of the Delphic oracle, and takes Hermione as his wife.

Variations:

Table 7.1-Hermione's attitude towards her re-abduction by Orestes

	And.	*Ore.*[597]	*Lib.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Drac.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*FCT*
Willingly abducted	*								
Unwillingly abducted									*
Not mentioned		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	

Table 7.2- The Timing of Hermione's betrothal / marriage to Pyrrhus in Orestes' place

	And.	*Ore.*	*Lib.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Drac.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*FCT*
After Orestes kills Clytemnestra / Aegisthus	*	*	*			*			
Before Orestes kills Clytemnestra / Aegisthus									*
Not mentioned / unclear				*	*		*	*	

Table 7.3- The Kingship (of Mycenae) following Orestes' murder of Pyrrhus

	And.	*Ore.*	*Lib.*	*Fab.*	*Aen.*	*Drac.*	*FVM*	*SVM*	*FCT*
Orestes becomes king				*		*			*
A son of Aegisthus fights Orestes				*					*
Not mentioned	*	*	*		*		*	*	

7. (iv) *Commentary on variations between analogues*

(a) Hermione, an example of a 'woman who wants to be abducted'

It is noticeable that *FCT* differs from the only extant full analogues of this episode in that Hermione, once engaged or married to Orestes, is portrayed as a willing participant in her abduction by Pyrrhus. Although the Irish author does not state this explicitly, her suicide

[597] Many of the details of this story told by Euripides in *Orestes* are unique, and in stark contrast to the same author's account in his *Andromache*. In *Orestes*, the idea that Hermione is to be the wife of Orestes is Apollo's, and forms part of a reconciliation between the hero and Menelaus. Neoptolemus is the first to consider himself betrothed to Hermione: Kovacs, *Euripides* 5, pp. 600–1, ll. 1653–4. Hence Orestes is, in this source only, the latecomer in Menelaus' marriage plans for his daughter (though there is some confusion between the two accounts by Hyginus). In *Andromache*, however, Orestes tells Hermione 'You were mine to begin with' as he informs her of his plan to become her husband in place of Neoptolemus who, unusually, is alleged in this source to prefer the captive Andromache to his lawful wife Hermione, since the former has borne him a son (Molossos) whereas the latter is childless: Kovacs, *Euripides* 2, pp. 360–1, l. 966 (Kovacs' trans.).

following her capture or rescue by Orestes her indicates that she preferred the latecomer Pyrrhus to her first fiancé / husband.[598] Among the full analogues, all are completely silent about Hermione's volition or otherwise regarding Pyrrhus' action in taking her from Orestes, stating or implying that Menelaus gave her to him, and if she had any say on the matter we are not told. Only in Euripides' *Andromache* is Hermione explicitly content to be reabducted by Orestes, and that is because she fears that Neoptolemus will shun, or even use violence against, her for her own attempts to have both his mistress Andromache and son Molossos killed.[599] Ovid's reference to this incident instead makes Hermione yearn for Orestes' intervention for romantic, as opposed to personal safety reasons.[600] As discussed above (pp. 124–5) Aldhelm approaches Hermione's behaviour throughout this incident from a different perspective to that of Ovid.

If the author of *FCT* stands alone with Aldhelm in portraying Hermione as content to be abducted by Pyrrhus, if not as openly soliciting the attentions of Achilles' son, this may be because information concerning her motivation was lacking in any available source(s), as it is in all extant full analogues except Euripides' *Andromache*. This may have been the case for Aldhelm as much as it was for the *FCT* author, and it is of interest that both Insular medieval writers seem to have chosen, apparently independently, to portray Hermione as willing to be

[598] *FCT*, § 21.
[599] Kovacs, *Euripides* 2, pp. 356 and 358, ll. 920–8.
[600] Curiously, Ovid's Hermione compares her situation with that of her mother implying that Helen too had been abducted by force (by 'Dardanius', i.e. Paris): Showerman, *Ovid* : *Heroides*, p. 100, ll. 37–42.

abducted in the absence of any strong information to the contrary.[601] An important additional reason for the author of *FCT* to have done so appears to be that for Hermione to have preferred her abductor to her husband was perceived as fitting for her as daughter of Helen. This mother-daughter relationship is given special emphasis in the Irish adaptation, thereby emphasising the family connexion between Orestes' wife and Helen, the model in European writing for a willingly-abducted wife at all times at least from Homer onwards.[602]

It appears likely from the above, then, both that the source(s) for this sub-narrative of *FCT* did not contain any mention of Hermione's attitude towards the two rivals for her hand, and the Irish author felt at liberty to introduce the notion that she – daughter of Helen – preferred Pyrrhus to her lawful fiancé / husband Orestes. This is entirely consistent with the thematic pattern of *FCT*, whose structure is built upon the repetition of dysfunctional behaviours within Tantalus' family over time – in Hermione's case it would not have required a great leap of imagination for an author, searching for a motivation for the abduction of a fiancée / wife, to portray her in similarly faithless terms to her (in)famous mother.[603] What might be considered a deficiency in any matter-of-fact source, such as a mythographic handbook, may have been improved upon here, in his eyes, by the medieval Irish author. Hermione's

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[601] That a woman is likely to have been a willing participant in extramarital sexual activity, either before an abduction or even after what was initially a rape has taken place, appears to have been a belief commonly held – at least by men of letters – in the medieval West. In the twelfth century such a belief appears to be particularly evident, as the following historical and literary examples illustrate: Gerald of Wales claims of the abduction of Derbforgaill, wife of Tigernán ui Ruairc, by Diarmaid mac Murchada in c. 1152 that, 'rapta nimirum fuit quia et rapi voluit', 'no doubt she was abducted because she wanted to be': Scott & Martin, *Expugnatio*, pp. 24–5, l. 13 (Scott & Martin's trans.); the author of *Aithed Emere la Tuir nGlésta mac Rig Lochlainn*, 'The Elopement of Emer with Tuir Glesta son of the king of Lochlann', similarly depicts the wife of Cú Chulainn being willingly abducted before her husband brings her back home, having killed her lover (in a manner comparable to Orestes' pursuit of Hermione and killing of Pyrrhus in *FCT*): Meyer, 'Anecdota', pp. 184–5; Albert of Aachen, whose *Historia Ierosolimitana* chronicles the First Crusade (1095–1119) describes an incident in which a nun is captured and held by a Turk before being rescued. Despite having been taken by force initially, and having been raped by more than one captor, this nun is said by Albert of Aachen to have returned to the same Turk, 'for no other reason than because her lust was too much to bear', 'non alia de causa, nisi propter libidinis sue intolerantiam': Edgington, *Albert of Aachen*, pp. 128–9 (Edgington's trans.). One hundred years before Albert's anecdote, the anonymous medieval *Semiramis* tells of the eponymous queen's preference for a bull to her lawful husband in crude terms: Dronke, '*Semiramis*', especially p. 66, ll. 1–19; this is a version of a myth best-known in Greece, Egypt and the Near East, and its composition in the West, perhaps in Rouen, is remarkable for its time. Van Houts suggests that this *Semiramis* may have been intended as a satirical attack on Emma of Normandy's preference for the 'bull' Cnut to Athelred the Unready of England as evidenced by the events of 1016, when she left London with the Danish leader: 'A Note on *Jezebel*', pp. 20–2. All of the above accounts emphasise that a female who is carried off by a male is likely, if not certain, in their medieval authors' collective opinion, to have 'wanted to be abducted', in the words of Gerald.

[602] 'ben is caime bai isin domun acht a máthair', 'the fairest woman there was in the world, bar her mother ': *FCT*, § 20.

[603] Notably in *FCT*, Helen dies of grief for her 'dear lover, Alexander, son of Priam', 'a caim[lenn]áin, .i. Alaxandair mac Priaim.': *FCT*, § 16.

preference for Pyrrhus to Orestes has the effect of giving motivation to a main character's actions in Episode 7, in addition to supporting thematic consistency in *FCT* as a whole.

The opposite situation is of course possible, i.e. that the sources available to the author of *FCT* were not as brief and / or lacking as the full analogues are concerning Hermione's motivation. They may have included at least one, perhaps partial, account of this narrative which displayed a similarly pejorative attitude towards Hermione to that of Aldhelm some five hundred years prior to the composition of *FCT*. Or, conceivably, it may have been true that the author of *FCT* was aware of a work such as Ovid's *Heroides*, by an author who, in stark contrast to Aldhelm, portrays Hermione as both the passive victim of Pyrrhus' aggression and as the loyal, loving, lawful wife of Orestes. Had he been aware of such a source which represented Hermione as a constant wife, it is of course possible that the Irish author simply chose to alter this completely, perhaps, as mentioned above, in order to draw a deliberate parallel between the marital faithlessness of Helen and that of her daughter Hermione, as an example of motif of the wilfully adulterous woman, recurrent in *FCT*. It is again difficult to decide between the deliberate radical alteration of detailed source material and the rebuilding of a skeletal narrative as the Irish author's most likely method here. However, it is perhaps significant that only Aldhelm's account presents an opinion close to that offered by the author of *FCT* – that Hermione wished to be abducted by Pyrrhus – but there are several extant accounts which are sufficiently unclear or lacking in detail to allow a skilled reworker to reach the same conclusion as the author of *FCT* concerning the faithlessness of Helen's daughter. In any event, this medieval Irishman's presented opinion of Hermione was closer to Aldhelm's than to Ovid's.

(b) Further evidence for the use of detail-deficient sources in the account in *FCT*?

If Hermione's rare preference for an abductor lover to her lawful fiancé / husband in *FCT* is probably, but not necessarily, to be ascribed to the Irish author, in an attempt to attribute motivation to characters where his sources may have been deficient, there are two examples of unique details present in Episode 7 where such a process of rebuilding from patchy sources may be still more likely. Firstly, concerning the relative chronology of the narrative's events: in *FCT* (§ 20) Hermione is engaged first to Orestes, then to Achilles' son, the same order as in nearly all other extant accounts, but Pyrrhus' appearance on the scene as abductor is specified, uniquely in *FCT*, as taking place at a relatively early stage in the narrative's

internal chronology, at the point while Orestes is in exile after his mother and Aegisthus have murdered the returning Agamemnon. In *FCT*, indeed, the author makes a special point of mentioning Achilles' son's opportunism in abducting Hermione at that point.[604] From the above analysis it is clear that of the extant accounts there is a clear difference between all the accounts of this narrative within primary works (except that in *FCT*) which specify that Pyrrhus' intervention concerning Hermione took place after Orestes killed both his mother and Aegisthus, and those within secondary accounts, none of which offer specific information concerning the timing of Pyrrhus' act of wife-stealing.[605] It seems likely, therefore, that the Irish author's uniquely early presentation of the timing of Hermione's abduction by Achilles' son results from the use of source material as lacking in detail concerning the order of events as are the extant mythographic accounts. This is surely the most likely explanation for the stark disagreement in this regard between *FCT* and the other primary accounts.

Furthermore, there exists a strong possibility of a connexion between this otherwise unattested chronology in *FCT* § 20 concerning Orestes' early betrothal and the apparently unique presentation by its author of the prince as an adult when he went into exile. Orestes is a child at this point according to every other extant account in every analogue in which any information regarding his age is given.[606] This may indicate an instance where one act of filling in missing details by the author of *FCT* led to another. If, for example, any source(s) used by the Irish author here failed to mention Orestes' age when he went into exile the assumption may have been made by the author of *FCT* that the prince was an adult at that time, and from this it may follow that Agamemnon's son may well have been already engaged / married to Hermione at this point, much earlier than in any other extant primary account. The logic may of course run the opposite way, with any lack in specifics in any putative source(s) concerning the timing of the betrothal or marriage of Orestes and Hermione leading to the assumption by the Irish author that it took place while Orestes was in exile, and hence perhaps that he was very probably an adult at this point.

This possible instance of assumption on the part of the author of *FCT*, that Orestes was an adult at a point in the narrative when all other accounts which make any claim concerning his

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[604] 'Tuc Pirr mac Aichil iarsin Ermionha... otconnairc co hanbhfhann é iar marbad a athar ⁊ iarna innarbadh budhein', 'Pyrrhus son of Achilles then carried Hermione off...having perceived that he was very weak after his father's killing and his own banishment': *FCT*, § 20.

[605] See Table 7.2 above, p. 128.

[606] He is a minor in all other accounts in 'full' analogues, bar that in *FVM*, as discussed above, pp. 114 and 116–17.

age make him a child, mirrors the earlier detail found only in *FCT* (Episode 1) that Pelops, Tantalus' son, was also an adult when the action took place (at the time of his attempted sacrifice by his father) whereas Pelops was a minor in every other extant account to mention his age. It seems likely that both instances of a character who is described as a child elsewhere (where his age or status is mentioned) being portrayed as an adult in *FCT* form part of a similar process of rebuilding of a primary narrative from a bare-bones account which lacked specific information concerning both characters' ages at the relevant times.
From the above comparative analysis of both Episodes 1 and 7, it seems that the Irish author eschewed any meagre biographical fare such as that provided by the extant, often detail-deficient, analogues. The uniqueness of *FCT*'s assertions of Orestes' and Pelops' adulthood at times where elsewhere they are either stated to be children or their ages are simply not mentioned, suggests that its author borrowed from one or more of the sketchy mythographic sources, in which where neither character's age / status is mentioned. Again, there are the alternative possibilities that the Irish author either borrowed from, but altered radically and by design, source(s) which specified that Orestes and Pelops were children at the relevant time, or that he borrowed from now-lost sources which stated that both characters were adults at the relevant times. It may be that neither of the latter two scenarios took place, though they cannot be ruled out. The evidence of surviving detail-deficient analogues, such as those in mythographies such as *FVM*, indicates that bare-bones secondary accounts of this narrative were available in the medieval West. If one such *opusculum* was used for Orestes' narrative as it appears in *FCT*, it may well have invited or required significant rebuilding, such as introducing details such as characters' ages, by an Irish author seeking to produce a cohesive narrative within a primary work.

The idea that the likely sources for Episode 7 were both detail-deficient and mythographic gains further support from the fact that, in contrast to *FCT*, all other primary-source analogues both portray Orestes clearly as a child at the time of his exile and do not state or imply that the prince was then (as a boy) engaged to his cousin Hermione before his return and murders of both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. There may have been artistic reasons for the Irish author to portray Orestes (and earlier Pelops) as an adult rather than as a child at the time in question in *FCT*, even if he borrowed from such a source in which his status as a minor was made clear – though any such suggestion would be highly speculative – but there must be a strong possibility at least that this opposite position to that taken by all other primary sources supports the proposition that the Irish author's source(s) for this episode are

likely to have lacked this detail, and were therefore very probably skeletal. None of the extant full analogues from secondary sources makes Orestes' age clear at the time of the abduction of Hermione by Achilles' son.[607]

Furthermore, the unique ending of the mini-narrative concerning Orestes in *FCT* also gives the impression that this final part is built from extremely sparse source material, if not invented outright by the medieval Irish writer. Though it might be considered natural that Orestes, having earlier disposed of Aegisthus, should become king of Mycenae / Greece owing to his status as Agamemnon's son, few other sources state outright that this is the case. From Table 7.3 above, it may be seen that of the complete analogues to this episode no early Greek source mentions Orestes' succession, and but two Latin authors, Hyginus and Dracontius, do. The statement in *FCT* that 'Orestes was in the kingship of Greece for a long time' has no corollary from within the ranks of the full analogues, nor does the appearance of 'Aimpitir mac Eighist'– no such character exists, other than in *FCT*.[608] On the other hand, Hyginus does relate that Orestes kills one Aletes, son of Aegisthus, who has earlier usurped the kingship of Mycenae.[609] Although Aletes is killed by Orestes in Hyginus' version, whereas 'Aimpitir' kills Orestes in *FCT*, it is conceivable at least that these two literary incidents have some loose connexion, in any event each recognises the possibility of a political struggle between Orestes and a son of Aegisthus.

The appearance of Teucer son of Telamon at this late stage in the version of the Orestes narrative in *FCT*, and his eventual wresting of the kingship, from 'Aimpitir' here, is also unparallelled. Moreover, this late and unlikely Teucerian bid for the sovereignty in opposition to 'Aimpitir' sits rather uncomfortably with Teucer's own earlier appearance in *FCT* § 13, in which Telamon's son takes the side of Aegisthus, father of his later enemy 'Aimpitir', in the former's battle with Agamemnon. The author of *FCT* seems either to have a rather

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[607] The Classical mythographers, Apollodorus (*The Library*, Epitome. 6.24) and Hyginus (*Fabulae*, 117) both state that Orestes was a child when he went into exile, and place the wrangling between him and Pyrrhus / Neoptolemus over Hermione some years later, after Orestes' post-matricide madness (*The Library*, Epitome 6.14, *Fabulae*, 123), in contrast with what is presented in *FCT*. Even though Hyginus' account is relatively rich in detail, compared especially with medieval précis accounts such as those by the first two Vatican Mythograhers, there appears to be some confusion between his *Fabulae* 122 and 123 over the order of events. It seems that in *Fabula* 122 Orestes married Hermione only after killing Neoptolemus (thus Orestes appears in this *fabula* in a more aggressive guise) whereas in *Fabula* 123 we have the fuller, and more orthodox version in which Hermione was first betrothed to Orestes: Frazer, *Apollodorus* 2, pp. 252 and 270; Marshall, *Hygini Fabulae*, pp. 103 and 106–7.

[608] 'Baí Oirist iarsin fri ré chian a ríghi na Gréce': *FCT*, § 22; on 'Aimpitir', see above, p. 62.

[609] Marshall, *Hygini Fabulae*, p. 106, ll. 13–14.

unusual conception of Teucer or is blatantly contradicting the orthodox Classical tradition, when he states of the character best-known elsewhere as the foremost Argive archer that 'ní raibhe mharaen re Grécaib ag togail na Troí, uair nir léig a mháthair dó dhol do trascradh for a derbráthair 7 for macaibh a derbráthar', 'he was not with the Greeks at the destruction of Troy for his mother did not allow him to go to overthrow her brother and her brother's sons'.[610] On the other hand, the statement by the author of *FCT* that Teucer was absent from the Trojan campaign because of his mother indicates a fairly detailed orthodox knowledge of the Greek archer's lineage, since the mother in question is Hesione, sister of the Trojan king Priam. Since the absence of Teucer from the Greek side at Troy, of all the unusual details in his text, is attested in at least one source very likely to have been known to the author of *FCT*, i.e. *TTr*^{2}, this is perhaps the clearest indication that he was prepared to make deliberate alterations where he saw fit.[611]

7. (v) *Analysis*

The above comparative analysis final episode of *FCT* offers further evidence in support of the idea that its author rebuilt Classical narratives from detail-deficient sources. In particular, it seems likely that whichever sources he used did not contain the details that Orestes was an adult at the time of his exile (unique to *FCT*) or that Hermione was content to have been abducted by Pyrrhus (elsewhere found only in Aldhelm's brief reference).

In addition to these fairly specific details, which the author of *FCT* seems to have introduced into fairly well-established, if detail-deficient, narratives, there are other apparent innovations consisting of characters and sub-plots, such as 'Aimpitir' son of Aegisthus, and the involvement of Teucer in the post-Orestes struggle for the sovereignty. These wholesale novel features appear to have been brought into the narrative in order to provide a degree of closure where even Orestes' own fate after his act of revenge against his mother and Aegisthus is left unclear in many if not all of the full analogues. This apparent outright invention of whole plotlines in Episode 7, missing from any other extant source, is highly reminiscent of the process which appears to be taking place in Episodes 4 and 5. Where the

[610] *FCT*, § 13.

[611] The evidence that he knew *TTr*^{2} is based upon both certain highly unusual personal names, such as 'Pallor', which are common to these two medieval Irish works, see above, pp. 55–6; the pseudo-historical details concerning the Trojan War, such as the raid by 'Alaxandair', i.e. Paris, on Cytherea (*FCT*, § 7), are found in *DETH* as well as in *TTr*$^{1+2}$.

story of the Tantalus clan, as told in the extant full analogues, seems to lack cohesion, particularly concerning matters such as how Aegisthus came to become involved with Clytemnestra and the fates of important characters such as Pelops and Orestes, the author of *FCT* appears unafraid to introduce his own details. Among the effects of unorthodox or novel details such as Hermione wanting to be abducted and Teucer taking the sovereignty from the surviving member of the Tantalus clan (the otherwise unknown 'Aimpitir') is that they appear to provide both fuller characterisation and greater narrative cohesion to the account of the narrative related in Episode 7 of *FCT* than is found in the analogues.

However, stylistic considerations are unlikely to be the only reason for the introduction of these unique features in Episode 7, whether they are brief references to motivation or wholesale plotlines. It appears significant that another of the main female characters in *FCT* (Hermione) is portrayed as wantonly adulterous, leading to the violent deaths of male members of her family (and her own suicide). It may also be the case that the tale's unique ending reflects its author's standpoint towards the litany of kinslayings within the Mycenaean Royal House. In *FCT* alone the sovereignty of Greece is not only finally lost by the Tantalus clan, but it is also gained by that of Aeacus and Telamon in the person of Teucer, who is also connected through his mother to the Trojan Royal House. This unique ending appears to suggest that its author felt that the result of generations of sexual and violent crimes within this family was its eventual fall from power, extinction, and replacement by an 'enemy' bloodline. No member of the Tantalus clan seems to have survived the final episode of *FCT*.

2.5 Conclusion

The episodes of *FCT* contain a great deal of material which is in broad agreement with many of the extant full analogues from the Latin tradition, as defined above. It is generally the case that *FCT* is among the earliest medieval attempts to re-integrate this once generally fairly well-established Classical material into a primary literary work. Since no other extant single work offers fully analogous accounts of all the episodes, it should be held to be the more remarkable that a medieval Irish author both fixed upon the Tantalus clan's many generations of sexual misdemeanour and kinslaying and brought their sub-narratives together within a single work held together by theme as well as plot.

However, the above comparative analysis shows that the process of re-integrating the narratives concerning each of the Tantalus clan's main characters may have required, or inspired, considerable authorial reworking. Many details concerning a character's biographical details and motivations for particular actions are lacking in many extant full analogues, both primary and secondary. Occasionally even where these details are given in certain sources the Irish author either does not seem to know them, or perhaps knows them but prefers his alternatives. There is at best little way to judge how much of each of these two processes is taking place in *FCT*, yet looking at the kinds of sources known to have been in circulation in the West, if not for certain in Ireland, around the year 1200 (such as *FVM* and Servius' commentaries) it is fair to say that these often lack the very details concerning biography and motivation which appear as unique details in *FCT*, often in direct opposition to fuller Classical accounts such as those found in the respective plays of Aeschylus, Euripides and Seneca.

The overwhelming impression to be taken from the cumulative evidence of the above comparative analysis is that the author of *FCT* might have produced the orthodox Classical parts of this work using only skeletal accounts such as those contained in extant mythographical works (but not using only those found in any single extant work). Despite this, he appears to succeed in not only reproducing a primary work which retells what are clearly recognisable as the narratives of the House of Tantalus but, in addition, he appears to share some of the thematic concerns of Classical authors, including tragedians. When tested by stirring events or by the provocative actions of others, the main characters as portrayed in *FCT* consistently lack the quality of self-moderation, closely resembling the quality of *sophrosyne* of Ancient Greek literature, especially in tragedy in which a single character typically causes the downfall of that figure and of many family members in addition.[612] The need to control the emotions was also a major preoccupation of Latin stoic authors especially Seneca, whose versions of several of the narratives also represented in *FCT* also appear in tragic guise.[613] That the Greek kingship is specified in *FCT* as having been eventually lost by the House of Tantalus to another dynasty appears to suggest that political failure is viewed as

[612] On the importance of the quality of *sophrosyne* in Ancient Greek literature from Homer onwards, see Rademaker, *Sophrosyne*, especially pp. 99–190.

[613] On the interaction between Seneca's philosophical works and his tragedies with reference to the importance of self-control therein, see Staley, *Seneca and the Idea*, especially pp. 77–81; on the popularity of many aspects of stoic moral philosophy, especially those contained in Seneca's works on the control of passion, in the twelfth century see Lapidge, 'The Stoic Inheritance', pp. 90–5.

an extra consequence of this collective lack of self-control.[614]

The cumulative evidence of the above comparative analysis suggests that *FCT* consists of sub-narratives which are recognisably close to analogues from the Latin Tradition as represented in mythographical works yet, remarkably, also appears to treat their content in terms which are at least comparable in places to that of Classical writers of primary texts such as tragedies. The most marked example of the latter phenomenon is the apparently similar way in which the author of *FCT* and Seneca (in his *Thyestes*) approach the grisly feast prepared by Atreus for his brother. Without necessarily knowing or even knowing of the original primary work, the medieval Irish author appears to have understood the moral, spiritual and psychological content of this particular mini-tragedy very well.[615]

However, from the significant number of elements in *FCT* which are unique in the context of their respective Classical narratives as established in the above comparative analysis, and therefore which may be considered likely to be authorial, it appears that the medieval Irish author either perceived a need or desire to add to his Classical raw material. The precise nature of the details which are unique appears to demonstrate both his inspirations and his most likely purposes in incorporating such details into *FCT*.[616]

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[614] On the presentation of lack of self-control in members of the House of Tantalus in *FCT* see below, pp. 152–8 (female lust, though Thyestes' portrayal also shows him to be licentious) and pp. 165–7 (male anger, though beginning with that of Moesia).

[615] On a rare medieval reference to 'tragoedia' in *FVM* with reference to the story of Orestes' matricide see above, pp. 112–13.

[616] The unique material in *FCT* is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 below, pp. 139–68.

3. THE MEDIEVAL IRISH CONTEXT OF *FINGAL CHLAINNE TANNTAIL*

The comparative analysis undertaken in Chapter 2 demonstrates that *FCT* contains a significant proportion of plotlines, characters and details which chime with at least one analogue from the broad spectrum which may be called the orthodox Classical tradition. However, it is also clear that *FCT* contains not only specific details which are unique in the tradition of a given established Classically-inspired narrative, but also whole sub-narratives which are largely unique (such as the interplay between Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Helen and Teucer in §§ 8–15). It has been suggested above that a possible reason for at least some of these apparent innovations may have been that the Irish author wished to offer not only pseudo-historical information concerning events, but also *the reasons why* a given character acted in the way he or she did in *FCT*, and therefore why the disastrous action related in *FCT* took place.[617] The question of the author's likely preoccupations in producing the medieval Irish adaptation as it stands, complete with innovations, is considered below.[618] However, in addition to considering the text as it stands it is also worth considering the nature of possible sources for its unique details; in particular, it seems prudent to consider these unique details in the context of the medieval Irish literary corpus as a whole. In identifying at least some of the potential sources for the unique material (in terms of Classical narratives) found in *FCT* it seems likely that its author's medieval Irish preoccupations and methods will become more apparent, assisting the task of understanding its themes.

3.1 *FCT* and the Medieval Irish Literary Tradition

Considering the evidence of other medieval Irish adaptations of Latin works from the Classical tradition, it would be surprising if there were not a significant level of acculturation evident in *FCT*.[619] However, in contrast with the situation in *TTr* and other medieval Irish adaptations based on a known Latin model, uncertainty surrounding the sources of *FCT* makes it more difficult to establish where deliberate acculturation, as opposed to coincidental

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[617] On the apparent introduction of Moesia as the instigator of Pelops' murder in *FCT* (where Classical sources are silent, and other medieval accounts offer the scarcity of food as an extra motive for Tantalus' filicide) see above, pp. 75–7.

[618] Section 3.2 below, pp. 150–68.

[619] On the results of this process of acculturation in *TTr* see Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, pp. 74–106; on acculturation in the medieval Irish versions of the resepctive Epics by Lucan, Virgil and Statius, see Ahl, 'Uilix mac Leirtis', pp. 179–88.

correspondence, is taking place in the text. There is also the possibility that an element found in both *FCT* and elsewhere in the medieval Irish corpus was borrowed or inspired by a Classical analogue, though this is very difficult to establish. All in all, any correspondences between *FCT* and other medieval Irish literary works must be treated with caution before being termed firm examples of acculturation. With this caveat in mind, the following examples from *FCT* do appear to resonate with a medieval Irish counterpart from outside the corpus of Classical adaptations:

(i) *The Lustful Stepmother as a cause of* fingal *in* FCT *and in* Fingal Rónáin

There are obvious similarities between the respective narratives which deal with the murders of Pelops in *FCT* §§ 1–3 and that of Máel Fothartaig in *Fingal Rónáin* (*FR*), which is the only other extant medieval Irish work with the word 'Fingal' in its title.[620] Both sons are killed at the behest of their respective fathers on the evidence of their respective stepmothers; in each case, the stepmother, having been rejected by her stepson complains to her husband of sexual molestation, and the husband in question takes his wife's word without allowing his son the opportunity to defend himself. Furthermore, each son, when confronted by his stepmother's advances, makes a categorical denial that he would ever countenance sex with his father's wife using a similar rhetorical device, that even if certain extreme circumstances prevailed he still would not become involved with her.[621]

The literary motif of the lustful as opposed to merely wicked stepmother – especially where her lust results in her stepson's death – is not particularly common in pre-modern literature.[622] However, it may be significant that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw the wide dissemination throughout Europe and the Mediterranean lands of versions of a particular lustful stepmother narrative. This is the story of The Seven Sages, sometimes

[620] The edition of *FR* referred to here is Greene, *Fingal*, pp. 1–15.

[621] The sons' respective denials are couched in different words, with Máel Fothartaig using the image of a fiery pit which he says he would endure three times, whereas Pelops employs a different imagined scenario in which his father is amorously connected to all the world's women. In each respective extreme hypothetical situation, the son in question declares either that 'ní chomraicfind fri', 'I would not sleep with [my father's wife]' (*FR*) or 'ní édraidhfinn', 'I would not interfere with' [a single woman of them]' (*FCT*): Greene, *Fingal*, p. 4, l. 53; *FCT*, § 1.

[622] On 'the lustful stepmother story pattern', O' Connor notes, 'Most authors have been content to pass off its literary recurrence as a universal folk-motif, avoiding analysis with the excuse that it is 'widely spread'... It is in truth far less widespread than the related, but distinct, 'wicked stepmother' and 'Potiphar's wife' motifs with which it is almost always silently bracketed. Far from appearing in world folklore at random, our motif manifests itself in a remarkably close-knit group of branching literary traditions': 'Stepmother Sagas', p. 21.

known as the story of Sinbad (who is usually presented as the wisest sage), in which an unsuccessful lustful stepmother, like Moesia in *FCT*, attempts to use winning words in order to persuade her royal husband to order the death of his son.[623] This story's depiction of the use of words by a lustful woman in order to cause the death of an innocent son at the hands of his father prompted one scribe to give the thirteenth-century Castilian version of this story the extra title, 'Libro de los Engaños e los Asayamientos de las Mugeres', 'The Book of the Wiles and Cunning of Women'.[624] However, the narrative of The Seven Sages (perhaps connected at some stage in its development to a story similar to that of Joseph and Potiphar's wife in the Book of Genesis) is different from the story of Moesia in *FCT* in that in the former the stepmother is unsuccessful and the chaste son survives, and she is therefore the only main character to die as a result of her words and actions.

Since the only victim in this story, the stepmother herself, is guilty, The Seven Sages presents a narrative which is resolved happily, in that what is surely intended to be the natural order is restored with, crucially, the husband's dynasty intact since his son still alive. In stark contrast to the situation at the end of The Seven Sages, the stepmother narratives found in both *FCT* and in the earlier *FR* are ultimately tragic in that the chaste son is also killed and the husband's dynasty is thus extinguished (albeit that the gods revive Pelops in *FCT*). With their respective tragic outcomes, the similarities between the two medieval Irish instances of 'lustful stepmother' narratives are striking enough to support the notion that the author of *FCT* was inspired by this account of a father-son instance of *fingal* from *FR*, rather than by a story of The Seven Sages type with a happy or 'order-restored' ending. If he both knew a version of *FR* and wished to present both lustful women and women's scheming counsel to their credulous menfolk as the most important cause for both kinslaying and the ultimate demise of a royal dynasty, it would have made sense for the author of *FCT* to transfer the motif of the lustful stepmother as the prime mover in the downfall of a king and his dynasty from the earlier medieval Irish work to his account of that of Tantalus. Of course, any knowledge he possessed of the story of the scheming, lustful stepmother as related in a version of The Seven Sages may have also fired the *FCT* author's misogynistic ardour.[625]

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[623] On the content and dissemination of the story of The Seven Sages see Runte, *The Seven Sages*.

[624] Lacarra, *Sendebar*, p. 49 (I am grateful to Dr. Andreea Weisl-Shaw for this reference and translation).

[625] There is no known medieval Irish adaptation of The Seven Sages narrative; versions exist in Middle Welsh (Lewis, *Chwedleu Seith Doethon*) as well as Middle English (Whitelock, *The Seven Sages*) and Old French (Speer, *Le Roman des Sept Sages*). The earliest versions in Old French were composed in the second half of the twelfth century: Speer, *Le Roman des Sept Sages*, pp. 17–18; these texts therefore probably pre-date the composition of *FCT*.

However, despite the aforementioned close correspondences between these two medieval Irish literary depictions of lustful stepmothers and chaste stepsons, it cannot be proven beyond doubt that the author of *FCT* borrowed his stepmother narrative from or was inspired by *FR*. The other obvious literary source from which this particular motif might have been borrowed is the Classical story of Hippolytus and Phaedra, represented in inter alia the respectively-named tragedies by Euripides and Seneca.[626] Each of these two plays, as well as mythographic accounts of their narratives in, for example, the respective works of Apollodorus, Hyginus and the First Vatican Mythographer presents, like both *FR* and *FCT*, an account of a stepmother who desires her stepson and is rejected, with deadly consequences for both parties. Beginning with Kuno Meyer, modern commentators on *FR* have been struck by the similarities between elements of its narrative and that found in Classical works which relate a version of the Phaedra / Hippolytus story. First among these, as Meyer notes, is that in *FR* the son Máel Fothartaig is, like Hippolytus, above all a huntsman who is at home in the forest.[627]

Moreover, other similarities exist between extant accounts of the Phaedra / Hippolytus story from the Classical tradition and *FR*. These include the presence of a female companion for the stepmother who acts as a go-between, though only in the medieval Irish text does this companion sleep with the object of desire as part of the stepmother's plan.[628] Furthermore, the name of the stepmother in *FR* is 'ingen Echdach', 'Echaid's daughter', which may be read as a gaelicised form of 'Hippolyta', a name which is either a coincidence or a subtle authorial acknowledgement of his Classical inspiration by the composer of *FR*.[629]

On the other hand, there are also several differences between the Phaedra / Hippolytus story and that which is presented in *FR*, including concerning their respective stepmothers' methods of 'proof' that the son is guilty, and the respective manners of the deaths of the main

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[626] Editions: Kovacs, *Euripides* 2, pp. 115–263; Fitch, *Seneca*: *Tragedies* 1, pp. 435–551.

[627] 'It certainly does not seem a mere coincidence that Máel Fothartaig like Hippolytus is introduced in the character of a mighty hunter, whose favourite abode is the tall forest', K. Meyer, '*Fingal*', p. 371. However, Máel Fothartaig's readiness to sleep with the stepmother's maid in *FR* contrasts with the chaste huntsman of Euripides' *Hippolytus* whose refusal to honour Aphrodite may be understood as a poetic expression of sexual abstinence.

[628] De Bernardo Stempel suggests that the jealousy which the stepmother, ingen Echdach, then feels towards her companion may be related to the medieval Irish practice of polygamy, with the implication that the portrayal of the stepson as not totally chaste in *FR* (in contrast to the Classical Hippolytus) is an example of acculturation: 'Phaedra', p. 259.

[629] On the equine name of the stepmother in *FR*, and its possible Classical antecedents, see de Bernardo Stempel, 'Phaedra', pp. 257–8.

characters.[630] Thus, whilst a connexion between *FR* and an unspecified Classical analogue based on the Phaedra / Hippolytus narrative may be suggested by the closeness between their respective plot outlines and the aforementioned details, the situation remains far from clear cut, especially since both the form and content of any proposed Classical analogue available to an Irish writer in either the tenth or eleventh century are at best speculative. Whereas de Bernardo Stempel suggests that the author of *FR* appears to have borrowed especially from Seneca's *Phaedra* (though also from Euripides), Mac Gearailt asserts that the conduit for any such borrowing was not direct access to the Latin tragedy but aural access to 'a version of it'.[631]

Returning to the lustful stepmother motif in *FCT*, it seems to be at least as likely as is the case for the author of *FR*, then, that its author, clearly in possession of a great deal of Classical material, also had access to a version of the Classical Phaedra / Hippolytus narrative (this might have been in skelatal form, rather than being found in a primary work such as Seneca's *Phaedra*).[632] This means that it is perhaps equally probable that the author of *FCT* drew upon Classical sources for his lustful stepmother motif as it is that he drew upon *FR* for it. The situation is not made much clearer by the evidence provided by a manuscript summary of the story of *FR* in the *Fragmentary Annals* which relates a means of proof of sexual assault offered to Rónán by ingen Echdach which is very different to the 'verse-capping' proof found in the full text of *FR*.[633] The version told in the account in the *Fragmentary Annals* offers a proof which is instead very similar (but not identical) to the action of *FCT*, in that the stepmother ingen Echdach does not mention verse-capping but inflicts injuries to her

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[630] Greene concludes that 'the combination of the step-mother theme with the hero's skill at hunting is striking, but the rest of the story shows little resemblance to the classical tale': *Fingal*, p. 2.

[631] De Bernardo Stempel asserts that 'scheint ... Euripides' *Hippolytos* dem irischen Autor nicht unbekannt gewesen zu sein', 'Euripides' *Hippolytus* ... seems not to have been unknown to the Irish author': 'Phaedra', p. 256. However, there is little evidence, either circumstantial – such as the knowledge that any version of either Seneca's or of Euripides' account of the Phaedra / Hippolytus story existed in Ireland c. 1000 – or within *FR* itself, concerning the form of any possible Classical inspiration for the medieval Irish work. De Bernardo Stempel rightly points to the extensive collection of Seneca's work in the medieval catalogue of the Cistercian House at Margam, Glamorgan as evidence for Insular knowledge of the Latin writer's work: 'Phaedra', p. 252. However, this collection appears to have consisted entirely of Seneca's Letters and Moral Essays, and no tragedies are listed: Mynors, *Registrum*, p. 291; Mac Gearailt's discussion of the Classical analogues for details found in *FR* are in 'The Making of *Fingal* Rónáin', pp. 67–84; Mac Gearailt's reference to the likely aural nature of any conduit between Seneca and the author of *FR* is 'The Making of *Fingal Rónáin*', p. 71.

[632] See, for example, the account of this narrative in *FVM* 1.46: Zorzetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p. 31.

[633] Editions of this summary are found in both Greene, *Fingal*, p. 12 and in Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, p. 16.

countenance and seeks to blame her stepson for them as proof of his attempted rape.[634] Remarkably, this account is closer not only to the Moesia / Pelops incident in *FCT* than it is to that in the 'full' version of *FR*, but it is also notably similar to Seneca's account in which Hippolytus takes Phaedra by the hair in order to rebuke her for attempting to seduce him and her dishevelled appearance is then used by the stepmother as part of her proof to her husband that his son is guilty of sexually assaulting her.[635]

All things considered, then, it would not be a surprise if the author of *FCT* both knew of and was inspired by versions of both lustful stepmother narratives in which the son is killed at the behest of his father, i.e. those found in respectively *FR* and in Classical-tradition versions of the Phaedra / Hippolytus story. He certainly seems to have shared the misgivings of the authors of both these accounts (and of those who adapted and disseminated the story of The Seven Sages throughout Europe in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) concerning female sexual behaviour, female intrigue and female counsel / testimony, especially when a stepmother is involved.[636]

(ii) *The respective portrayals of Clytemnestra in* FCT *and Medb in* TBC *I and II*

The portrayal of Clytemnestra in *FCT* places an emphasis upon the political as well as sexual nature of her rejection of her husband for Aegisthus, as has been mentioned above. Moreover, in both her desire for political power over Agamemnon's kingdom and in her willingness to use her sexual power over men (specifically over Aegisthus) in order to achieve this end, the Clytemnestra of *FCT* echoes aspects of the portrayal of the medieval Irish literary Medb,

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[634] 'as eadh dorigne, cumdach a cinn do mhionughadh ... agus toidheacht d'ionnsoigh Ronáin amhlaidh sin', 'This is what she did, to tear her head dress ... and to come before Rónán thus': Greene, *Fingal*, p. 12.

[635] 'Nefanda iuveni criminal insonti apparat...quaerit crine lacerate fidem, decus omne turbat capitis', 'She is preparing wicked charges against the innocent youth ... she seeks credence with her torn hair, she mars the beauty of her head': Fitch, *Seneca*: *Tragedies* 1 pp. 514–15, ll. 825–7 (Fitch's trans.). A misogynistic interpretation of Phaedra's actions is given directly after these words (in the voice of the Chorus, as are the above lines) in Seneca's work, 'Instruitur omni fraude feminea dolus', 'The plot is marshalled with every female trick': Fitch, *Seneca*: *Tragedies* 1 pp. 514–15, l. 828 (Fitch's trans.); these words are in keeping with the spirit of the Moesia / Pelops sub-narrative in *FCT* § 2.

[636] It should be noted that Euripides among Ancient Greek authors portrayed both Phaedra and Hippolytus in almost equally negative terms, Phaedra for her inability to resist the machinations of Aphrodite, *Hippolytus*, ll. 370–550: Kovacs, *Euripides* 2, pp. 162–75, and Hippolytus for his excessive devotion to Artemis, *Hippolytus*, ll. 58–105: Kovacs, *Euripides* 2, pp. 128–35. Latin writers tended to place the most blame upon Phaedra yet, a millennium after Euripides, Malalas' *Chronicle* both states that Phaedra was chaste, and blames gossipmongers (for inventing her lust for her stepson) and poets (for publicising it): Jeffreys, *The Chronicle*, p. 43.

Queen of the Connachta, as she is presented in recensions I and II of *TBC*.[637] In contrast with the portrayals of Medb in *TBC*, no extant account of Agamemnon's queen, save that in *FCT*, gives any indication that she used sex in order to further her political desires.[638]Medb, according to both *TBC* I and II (the two extant recensions likely to have been composed prior to *FCT*) was more than willing to offer herself sexually in order to gain the military-political support of men, most notably that of Fergus mac Róig, in her attempt to wrest the bull *Donn Cúailnge* – itself a metaphor for both sexual and political power, perhaps – from the Ulaid. It is also noteworthy with respect to *FCT* that both recensions I and II of *TBC* also touch upon the issues of female counsel and female promises, which are each are considered to be less honourable than their respective male counterparts.[639]

It appears that both *TBC* I and II respectively offer depictions of Medb as a politically-ambitious queen who uses sex in order to seek to gain her desires. Furthermore, it is noted in both texts that female words are of a markedly lower status in terms of honour than those of men. So far, then, these two recensions of *TBC* appear to at least chime both with the misogynistic evaluation of female words found in *FCT* and with its unique presentation of Clytemnestra as a political queen. However, the closeness of their respective portrayals of adulterous, ambitious queens is perhaps more striking between *TBC* II and *FCT* than it is between *TBC* I and *FCT*. The opening 'pillow talk' episode between Medb and Ailill, found in *TBC* II but not in *TBC* I, makes it clear that Medb's goal is equality of wealth and status with her husband, whereas in *TBC* I the reason for the great *táin* is not spelled out, and may be assumed to be to the collective benefit of both Medb and Aillill, rather than being

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[637] This correspondence was noted by Stanford in his brief description of *FCT* in which he writes simply, 'Clytaemnestra is like another Medb': Stanford,'Towards a History', p. 35.

[638] On the classification of the recensions of *TBC* see O' Rahilly, *TBC from the Book of Leinster*, pp. xiv–xvi.

[639] For example, Medb's counsel concerning the Gailióin, a grouping of her own allies who are considered too proficient in warfare and therefore likely to steal the glory from the Connachta, in *TBC* I is simply ''A nguin'', ''Kill them'', and this advice is derided in a rare act of defiance of his wife by Aillill with the words, ''Ní chélam, as banchomairle'', 'I shall not hide it, that is a woman's counsel': O' Rahilly, *TBC Recension I*, p.6, ll. 162–3. In *TBC* II, Cú Chulainn justifies his absence from his guard duty for a night while indulging in a tryst with the handmaid of Feidilmid Noíchruthach using the notion that a man's promise is superior to its female equivalent, ''dáig meni digius, gúigfitir dála fer fírfaitir briathra ban'', 'Unless I go, men's appointments will be proved false, and women's words true': O' Rahilly, *TBC from the Book of Leinster*, p. 13, ll. 454– 5.

primarily for Medb's purposes as in *TBC* II.[640]

Even so, this is far from proof that there is anything resembling direct borrowing taking place between the respective depictions of Medb in *TBC* II and Clytemnestra in *FCT*. The depiction of Medb in *TBC* II does suggest, however, that sexually liberal, politically ambitious queens (prepared, moreover, to combine the two traits) were of interest to at least one twelfth-century Irish author. If we are correct to assume that both recension II of *TBC* is likely to have been well known amongst the educated Irish at least at the time of the composition of *FCT*, the latter's Clytemnestra would surely have resonated with the former's Medb among the Classical adaptation's intended contemporary audience.

(iii) *Hermione's suicide in* FCT *and that of Deirdriu in* Longes Macc nUislenn

Hermione's particularly painful and gory act of suicide which she commits, we are told, in preference to seeing herself the wife of an enemy (Orestes), resembles the incident at the end of *Longes macc nUislenn* (*LMU*) in which Deirdriu faces the unpalatable situation in which she will be forced to spend a year in the company of Eogan mac Durthacht.[641] Like Orestes in *FCT* with respect to Hermione's Pyrrhus, in *LMU* Eogan is the slayer of Deirdriu's paramour, Noísiu. Deirdriu's response to her situation, equally bloody and painful to that of Hermione, is to smash her own skull to smithereens on a rock rather than become attached to her lover's killer.[642]

Since Hermione's suicide in *FCT* is unique among literary accounts of her actions it seems at least possible that the Irish author was influenced by the portrayal of Deirdriu's similar actions in *LMU*. That Hermione's precise method of suicide is rather different to that of Deirdriu – the former cuts into an existing wound in *FCT* – need not be an obstacle to the suggestion that these two medieval Irish literary female suicides in preference to life as the sexual partner of a lover's killer are connected.

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[640] On the political aspirations of Medb and on other aspects of her portrayal in *TBC* see Kelly, 'The Tâin as literature', pp. 77–87, and Sessle, 'Misogyny and Medb'; Findon remarks of Medb' s important position within *TBC*, 'For Medb ... an active role proves to be a double-edged sword. The power to act is offset by the ultimate censure of her actions.': *A Woman's Words*, p. 7. For historical women too, especially from the eleventh century onwards, an increase in political power seems to have led to an increase in both scrutiny of and comment on actions and motives perceived to be female, see below p. 161, note 675, and p. 164, note 681.

[641] Hermione's suicide and the events which lead up to it are described in *FCT*, §§ 20–1.

[642] Hull, *Longes*, p. 51, ll. 316–17.

An alternative explanation for the similarities between the two medieval Irish literary incidents is that both authors shared similar views concerning likely female behaviour when confronted by the unappealing prospect of a forced sexual relationship with the killer of a lover. However, although to the modern reader these incidents of suicide may inspire pathos and sympathy towards the female character in question it seems clear, in both *LMU* and in *FCT*, that this is not the only or main authorial intention. In each case, the respective female character is portrayed as having previously acted against both societal norms and against the interests of her people in consorting with the lover in question. In *LMU*, Deirdriu is described as having used both her sexual powers, and (female) words, to 'force' Noísiu to elope with her, an episode couched in animal terms, against the wishes of Conchobar, her legal guardian. The resultant damage to the Ulaid, appears to bear out the earlier words of the prophet Cathbad in the text concerning the as yet unborn Deirdriu that, 'biaid olc impe', 'concerning her there will be evil.'[643] Indeed, exhibiting a very similar attitude to that of the author of *FCT* towards women's responsibility for giving birth to those who will bring about destruction, the author of *LMU* appears to blame Deirdriu's mother for having given birth to her, emphasised in the lengthy birth-tale which begins his text.[644]

The overall picture concerning these two cases of female literary suicides appears to be, then, that they share some details which are notably similar, and though there can be little proof that the author of *FCT* either knew of or borrowed from the account of Deirdriu's suicide in *LMU*, he shared an outlook which held that a woman in the position of either Hermione or Deirdriu would be likely to commit bloody and painful suicide as a creature of passion, rather than exert self control and act according to legal norms to the benefit of her own people.

However, it may be noted that, whether influenced by the portrayal of Deirdriu in *LMU* or not, the behaviour of Hermione in *FCT*, though comparable to that of her Irish literary forbear, appears to be viewed considerably more negatively by its author since the man whom she perceives as her 'namhaid', 'enemy', Orestes, is specified as having been her legal

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[643] Hull, *Longes*, p. 44, ll. 52–3 (Hull's trans.); Deirdriu's forced seduction of Noísiu is related in Hull, *Longes*, p. 46, ll. 109–33; Deirdriu's preference for a younger man to an older one resonates with 'lustful stepmother' narratives as discussed above with reference to those present in, amongst other works, *FCT*, *FR*, and in the respective accounts of both the Phaedra / Hippolytus and The Seven Sages stories. Moreover, Deirdriu, like ingen Echdach in *FR* and the Classical Phaedra, is portrayed in *LMU* as conspiring with another female, Leborcham in *LMU*, who identifies Noisiu as the object of desire to be pusrsued: Hull, *Longes*, p. 45, ll. 90–9. However, this motif of a female accomplice for the lustful stepmother is not found in *FCT*.

[644] Hull, *Longes*, pp. 43–5, ll. 1–89.

fiancé before she became involved with Pyrrhus.[645] Though Orestes has earlier killed Pyrrhus in *FCT*, just as Eogan has killed Noísiu in *LMU*, the former's behaviour towards Hermione is portrayed as honourable in *FCT*, whereas the honour status of the planned 'sharing' of Deirdriu between Conchobar and Eogan in *LMU* is more dubious, and her giving to Eogan for a year by Conchobar is presented as an act of spite, rather than as according to the demands of either law of honour.[646] As such, the moral status of Deirdriu's act of suicide as defiance in *LMU* is surely to be viewed as superior to that of Hermione in *FCT*. Even so, these two medieval Irish literary instances of violent female suicide in preference to becoming attached to a lover's killer are close enough to allow the suggestion that the author of *FCT* both knew of and was inspired by Deirdriu's fate when producing his unique account of Hermione's actions. That the portrayal of Hermione in *FCT* offers less scope for sympathy than that of Deirdriu in *LMU* may be a matter of different authorial attitudes – especially towards women – and does not offer any significant bar either to the likelihood that the story of Deirdriu's suicide was known by the audience of *FCT*, or that it might have inspired the author of the Classical adaptation.

(iv) *The ivory shoulder of Pelops in* FCT *and the silver arm of Núadu Argetlám*

The replacement by the gods of Pelops' shoulder, consumed in error by Ceres in *FCT* § 3, with one of ivory resembles incident related in both *Cath Muige Tuired* (*CMT*) and *LG* concerning the prosthetic hand or arm (both are possible translations of the Irish word *lám*) of silver given to Núadu, a royal figure belonging to the mythological *Túatha Dé Danann*, following the severing of its natural counterpart during the battle of Mag Tuired.[647]

The closeness between the above medieval Irish literary incidents relating to prosthesis is enhanced by the fact that in each case, the new upper body limb in question is made of a material which is both pale and luminescent. Even so, there is little to suggest specifically that the author of *FCT* was influenced here by the surgical procedure related in both *LG* and *CMT*, especially since Pelops' replacement shoulder of ivory is an orthodox Classical

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[645] *FCT*, §§ 20–1.
[646] Concobar's decision appears to be the result of vindictiveness only, since his loan of Deirdriu to Eogan occurs immediatelyafter he has asked her, 'Cid as mó miscais lat at-chí?', 'What do you see that you most hate?', and received the answer that it is Eogan: Hull, *Longes*, p. 51, l. 308 (Hull's trans., p. 69).
[647] Gray, *Cath*, pp. 11 and 32, §§ 11 and 33; Macalister, *Lebor* 4, pp 112–15.

detail.[648] If anything, it is perhaps more likely that the originator of the story of Núadu Argetlám as we have it was influenced by a version of the Pelops narrative. However, the similarities between the two literary incidents may equally be coincidental, with the story of Núadu's replacement arm of silver being ultimately inspired, perhaps, by the name 'Núadu' itself – or, conceivably, the name 'Núadu' might have been inspired by the action of this narrative.[649]

Interestingly, although the fact of the resurrection of Pelops by the gods following his murder and sacrifice is important to the action of *FCT* – for without it there could be no marriage and children for Tantalus' son, and no subsequent Royal House – the detail that he received a replacement shoulder serves little obvious literary purpose. Since it appears to be superfluous to the action, apart from the addition of both colour and Classical flavour, the inclusion of a shiny, pale prosthetic upper body part in the version of the sub-narrative of Pelops may therefore have been influenced by its resemblance to the Núadu narrative found in both *LG* and *CMT*.

The ivory shoulder of Pelops may therefore be an instance of an orthodox Classical detail which might owe its inclusion in *FCT* at least partly to its resemblance to an established Irish literary incident, i.e. in order to render the adaptation more familiar to its Irish audience. This is supported to a significant extent by the content of *FCT* as a whole, in which there are few details, orthodox or not, which may be regarded as either not strictly necessary to the action or not one of a thematic pattern of instances of, for example, lust, anger or scheming, which are repeated through two or more generations of the Tantalus family. The detail of the renewal of Pelops' shoulder is certainly colourful, yet it serves little purpose to the overall narrative, as mentioned above. It is difficult, by definition, to establish that the author of *FCT* knew of, but omitted to mention any orthodox details of a particular Classical sub-narrative. However, there is at least one instance of a plot detail with known connexions to a sub-narrative of *FCT* not being included in the text even though there are fairly strong reasons to suppose that the author knew it. This is the information that the sun turned away in horror at the crimes of Atreus, which was known to the author of *Togail na Tebe* – who in addition related it in connexion with what he calls 'Fingal Claindi Tantail' – but is not mentioned in

[648] See Table 1.4 above, p. 75.

[649] On an attempt to both etymologise Núadu as 'New Hand' (perhaps based on 'dae', 'upper arm') and to relate this, and other 'hand' names from European mythology to Orion's Belt, see Fitzgerald, 'Early Celtic History', pp. 198–9.

FCT.[650] It must be suspected that the author of *FCT* simply omitted this detail from his narrative since it had little or no relevance to either the plot or to his thematic purposes. The latter is also true of the detail of Pelops' replacement shoulder, and the inclusion of this non-essential orthodox detail in *FCT* may reasonably be held to have been influenced by its resonance with the aforementioned Núadu incident.

(v) *Conclusion*

Though it appears to be a notable feature of several medieval Irish adaptations from Classical texts, especially those based upon Latin works by a known author, the process of acculturation is difficult to pinpoint as occurring for certain in any detail present in *FCT*.[651] Acculturation does not appear to be the primary reason behind the inclusion of any the first three details discussed above which have parallels elsewhere in medieval Irish literature (the lustful stepmother, the politically-ambitious and sexually manipulative queen, and the female who commits violent suicide rather than marry her lover's killer). Acculturation may not be the primary reason either for the inclusion in *FCT* of the orthodox Classical detail that Pelops gained a shoulder of ivory, yet it would doubtless have chimed with an audience who can be assumed to have known a version of the story of Núadu Argetlám. Cumulatively, the presence in *FCT* of the above narrative elements which have fairly close parallels elsewhere in medieval Irish literature appears to suggest that its author was prepared to incorporate details from the medieval Irish corpus in his adaptation based on Classical source material. Apart from the detail of Pelops' ivory shoulder, it appears that these elements with Irish corollaries were included for thematic reasons since they appear to fit very closely with the author's preoccupations as evidenced by the remainder of *FCT*.

3.2 The Themes of *FCT*

(i) *Overview: a medieval Irish writer's understanding of a dysfunctional Classical family*

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[650] On the presence of this detail in *Togail ne Tebe* but not in *FCT* see above, pp. 95–6.

[651] Whereas in the case of *TTr*^{2}, for example, Myrick comments that 'The Irish version of Dares displays some Irish elements which may seem to have been somewhat randomly imported into the text to give it an Irish flavor': *From the De Excidio*, p. 106.

Turning specifically to the thematic preoccupations of its author, we have seen that *FCT* relates a series of kinslayings within the Tantalus family over five generations, anchored in historical terms by references within the text to characters such as Achilles, Helen, Agamemnon and Paris (called by his alias, 'Alaxandair', in *FCT*) found in accounts of the Trojan war such as *DETH* and *TTr* which appear likely to have been well-known amongst medieval Irish scholars. Unlike the story of a battle, a campaign, or a lengthy siege, such as that of Troy, *FCT* concerns itself with a long term political process which is driven by personal factors. Beginning with a political situation which is stable, i.e. with Pelops as the son and presumably natural heir of Tantalus, the narrative culminates in both the loss of sovereignty for the family upon the death of Orestes and its corollary that no member of the dynasty survives. In its depiction of the self-inflicted manner of the fall from power and slide into extinction of the Tantalus family, *FCT* is therefore a medieval prose vernacular retelling of what is recognisably a Classical tragic narrative, in that the *moral* reasons why the family fell are also related, in addition to the fact and circumstances of their fall.[652] Thus, *FCT* is unlike many of the other medieval Irish adaptations of Classical narratives based on known models in that it does not only relate events, but offers an interpretation of them.[653]

The importance of the thematic content of *FCT* has become clear as a result of the above comparative study, in which it is demonstrated that *FCT* differs markedly from other extant accounts of its constituent sub-narratives in both certain unique details which it relates and other well-known details which it fails to relate. Indeed, several details present in *FCT* appear to be unique, beginning with the important initial role of the otherwise unknown Moesia, presented in *FCT* as stepmother of Pelops. The action of *FCT*, in particular where it offers details not found in analogous sources, appears to illustrate particular thematic preoccupations of its author. It appears that he had his own ideas concerning the reasons why the Tantalus family might have self-destructed over the generations and, when considered collectively, these are typically only thinly disguised, if at all, in the narrative he presents.

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[652] In addition to the aforementioned short account of the Tantalus family's woes over generations in Euripides' *Orestes*, several of the past and future intra-familial crimes of the Tantalus family, and their wider consequences, are alluded to by a Fury in Seneca's *Thyestes*: Kovacs, *Euripides* 5, pp. 412–15, ll. 1–30; Fitch, *Seneca*: *Tragedies* 2, pp. 232–5, ll. 23–67.

[653] Poppe notes of *IA* that, 'The main interest of the redactor appears to be the presentation of the history of Aeneas' travels and fights, without interpretation, moral assessment, or application to his own present': *A New Introduction*, p. 14.

An examination of these unique details demonstrates that *FCT* is held together not only by the recurrent actions it relates, especially kinslaying and incest, but by certain recurrent motifs, especially the emphasis placed on main characters' lack of self control over sexual and violent impulses (chiefly in respectively women and men) in the stories of disaster it relates. Although these themes are not always explicitly stated to be the direct causes of the individual and collective demise of members of the Tantalus family, their recurrence in the text in close proximity to instances of kinslaying (and incest) strongly suggests that they provide evidence for how the author of *FCT* interpreted the action of the Classical narrative related by his sources. It may be that he was inspired by the presence of what he understood to be suggestions of these themes in any putative sources, such as orthodox accounts which mentioned Aerope's adulterous role in the conflict between the brothers Atreus and Thyestes.[654] Even if this is the case, it is clear that the account in *FCT* at least emphasises the aforementioned themes to a far greater extent than may be found in any combination of extant accounts, if they are not the outright invention of the author as, for example, the attitude of Hermione towards Orestes in *FCT* § 21 appears to be.

(ii) *A negative portrayal of women*

FCT presents a consistently negative attitude towards its female characters especially in depicting them as both sexually licentious and devious. There are several examples in *FCT* of women, beginning with Moesia at the outset of the text, directing their verbal powers towards men in order to achieve their personal ends, which typically relate to extra-marital and incestuous sexual activity. These female characters are portrayed as licentious and devious in acting in ways which are clearly contrary to the interests of both their husbands and of their husbands' male relatives. Added to this, through their roles as mothers, female characters in *FCT* are shown not only to propagate children, but also to reproduce negative personality traits, especially the propensity to sexual and violent excess, in their offspring. These traits, found in several of its leading members, are an important mechanism by which the Tantalus dynasty fights against itself in *FCT*, eventually bringing about its own destruction. If anything, for the author to appear to hold this force of nature against women appears even harsher to the modern reader than his aforementioned misogynistic outlook concerning both sexual matters and the question of the power of women's counsel to cause destruction. Even

[654] Aerope's adultery with Thyestes seems to have been accepted as part of this narrative from the fifth century B.C., see above, p. 85.

so, the evidence of the text is that on more than one occasion the author appears to go out of his way to emphasise the maternal role in the inter-generational transmission of psychological as well as physical traits.

The starkly negative view of what the Irish author seems to consider female attributes and behaviour is clear from the apparent introduction of a woman, Moesia, as the prime mover in the story of the murder and sacrifice of Pelops (§§ 1–2). Moesia is portrayed as both lustful and scheming, and her advice is shown to be against the interests of the dynasty. Had the gods not intervened to revive Pelops following her actions there would be no heir for Tantalus.[655] Tantalus' masculine role in this opening instance of *fingal* is confined in *FCT* to mere credulity in accepting his wife's word and in allowing her to pronounce sentence on his son.[656] As mentioned above, this peculiarly female central role in the story of Pelops' death, the first of the text's litany of *fingala*, is unique to *FCT*, and seems therefore to indicate an authorial viewpoint. That this apparent innovation appears in the text's initial act of *fingal* begins a pattern which resonates throughout the text, with instances of female lust and scheming shown as leading to ever more instances of incest and kinslaying in Tantalus' family. Indeed, three generations after that of Pelops there are no named survivors of the Tantalus dynasty and *FCT* ends with the most unorthodox detail that Teucer son of Telmamon, a member of a rival dynasty, is king of the Greeks.

The theme of the lustful, often scheming, woman bringing about *fingal* continues through the generations, encompassing orthodox details such as the adultery and incest between Aerope and Thyestes (§ 4) and unorthodox details such as Helen's somewhat cowardly advice to the Atridae (§ 11) and eventual death from a broken heart over her adulterous love for Alexander, i.e. Paris (§ 16). Added to these is the faithless attitude of Hermione towards her fiancé Orestes, unknown in other sources, apart from in Aldhelm's *Letter To Wihtfrith*, in the account of her re-abduction from Pyrrhus in *FCT* (§ 21).[657]

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[655] Moesia's words and actions in *FCT* may be contrasted with those of Emer, wife of CúChulainn in the Irish tale *Aided Óenfir Aife*, *The Death of Aife's Only Son*, (composed in either the ninth or the tenth century), in which Emer unsuccessfully attempts to persuade her husband *not* to kill her stepson and thereby avoid *fingal*, "Mac duit fil tís. Ná fer fingail immot óenmac", 'It is your son below. Do not commit kinslaying upon your only son': Van Hamel, *Compert*, p. 14. For a comparison between this literary incident and the roughly contemporaneous Irish stepmother / *fingal* narrative in *FR* see Findon, *A Woman's Words*, pp. 98–100.

[656] See above, p. 76, note 463.

[657] See above, pp. 124–6.

In the case of the portrayal of Helen, it may be assumed that both the author and audience of *FCT* knew of her pivotal role as the faithless wife as a direct cause of the Trojan War, yet this does not appear to be a central preoccupation of the author. This best-known act of female faithlessness may have been underplayed by the author of *FCT* (whereas several otherwise obscure or unknown instances are given prominent roles by him) because he considered it either to be too well-known or to have little direct relevance to the kinslaying-related self-destruction and final demise of the Tantalus clan.[658] In fact, it appears that the author of *FCT* transferred the topos of female sexual faithlessness from Helen to her daughter Hermione who is, most unusually, portrayed in *FCT* as preferring a rival (Pyrrhus) to her fiancé (Orestes). This is one of several examples in *FCT* of a 'female' flaw being transmitted through the generations and, like the other such instances, the effect that predispositions, like physical qualities, may be inherited specifically from a mother is achieved by suggestion rather than by an open statement. In this case we are led to the conclusion that Hermione inherited her sexual faithlessness from Helen by analogy, since *FCT* informs us most unusually that Hermione 'was the most beautiful woman in the world, except her mother', 'ben is caime baí isin domun acht a máthair'.[659]

If Helen's portrayal in *FCT* is at least unusual in that it makes little direct mention of her adultery except to add, it seems, the detail that she died of a broken heart over Alexander, i.e. Paris, the medieval Irish text's presentation of Helen is unique in making her the figure to whom the Atridae turn to for counsel upon their return from Troy. This sub-narrative occurs at a point close to centre of the text (§ 11) and contains the comment, which may be understood as authorial even if it comes from Helen's own lips, that 'niruo cóir', 'it was not proper' for Helen to give the counsel she does to Agamemnon and Menelaus.[660] Thus the author of *FCT* appears to make the narrative which relates the intrigue between Agamemnon, his wife and Aegisthus his centrepiece, with Menelaus and more importantly Helen also involved. This unique narrative appears to be highly informative concerning the author's major preoccupations. Not only does he make it clear that Clytemnestra instigated her liaison with Aegisthus with an unusual interest in gaining political power for herself, by using winning words on a credulous male, but the author writes Helen into the narrative as

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[658] The reference to Helen in the *Banshenchus* in the Book of Lecan is suitably laconic, 'Is impi cocad Grec ɣ Troiandach', 'The war between the Greeks and Trojans was because of her': Dobbs, 'The *Ban-Shenchus*', *Revue Celtique* 48, p. 165.

[659] *FCT*, § 11.

[660] On the possible meanings of the phrase 'niruo cóir a tabairt' see above, pp. 49–50.

counsellor, pointing both to the cowardly and self-serving nature of her advice and to the unambiguous view that for the Atridae to seek her counsel 'was not proper'.

As mentioned above, Helen's advice to the Atridae to seek a military alliance in order to defeat Aegisthus and Clytemnestra is unique among accounts of the brothers' respective journeys home from Troy, in no other extant source do Menelaus and Agamemnon even return to their respective kingdoms together. This seems to be a further example, then, of the deliberate insertion by the author of *FCT* of an incident into a Classical narrative in which prominent male characters are given advice by a woman, a topos which begins with Moesia being given licence by the credulous Tantalus to pronounce a punishment for Pelops in § 1. However in this case, unusually in *FCT*, the woman's (Helen's) advice, not to fight but to seek help, is not followed by the man in question (Agamemnon) yet kinslaying still occurs.

In fact, from a practical standpoint, following the advice given by Helen in *FCT* is scarcely likely to have produced worse consequences for Agamemnon than ignoring it does, since he dies in battle, along with almost the entire force commanded by the Atridae (§ 14). However, the Irish author seems to make the distinction between open warfare between men and the private *fingal* committed by for example Atreus, and to prefer the former to the latter from a moral point of view. It would seem that for Agamemnon to have accepted Helen's advice not to fight in battle but to go away in order to seek an alliance would have placed him among the ranks of the devious, a trait associated with both women and men beguiled by women in *FCT*. Aegisthus and Thyestes are portrayed in the text as having each made a covert alliance with the wife of another member of their own *fine* and are not presented in a favourable light for having done so. It seems that the author also objected to military alliances if they implied behaving in a non-straightforward way, i.e. by retreating.

Though perhaps dishonourable, it does not appear to be the case that the author of *FCT* wishes to imply that Helen's advice not to fight straight away is bad on a practical level, for in *FCT* § 11 Agamemnon himself recognises that it is 'maith', 'good'. The author's apparent intention in uniquely having Helen offer the counsel she does seems to be that he desired to offer another example of a female character whose behaviour towards men is manipulative,

generally with their own (typically sexual) interests in mind.[661] As mentioned above, the pure 'fact' of Helen's adulterous actions was doubtless very well known to the audience of *FCT*. This is the most likely reason why it does not appear in *FCT*, save that in Classical accounts it does not lead directly to an instance of *fingal*. However, Helen's novel woe at her own prophecy of a future abduction (§ 11) is surely intended to refer to her past behaviour, with a healthy degree of irony. In this way, the author of *FCT* deftly refers to the well-known faithlessness of Helen, while introducing a novel aspect to her characterisation, her status as counsellor to the Atridae. The aforementioned statement that 'niruo cóir', 'it was not proper' for Helen to give counsel to men can be understood as the author's view, and the Atridae's contradiction of this statement should therefore be understood as a male error of judgement in the author's eyes, even if in not following Helen's counsel Agamemnon eventually dies in battle and the Greek sovereignty is lost – though Agamemnon's son Orestes temporarily reclaims it for his line.[662] It is the act of a man listening to a woman's words which is 'not proper' in the author's eyes; even if it does not, as in this case, lead to *fingal* as happens in, for example, the case of Tantalus, it is likely to lead to dishonour.

Another important instance of both the combination of female lust and scheming and of the acceptance of female words by a male to the eventual detriment of both him and his *fine* is the account in *FCT* of the interaction between Clytemnestra and Aegisthus which leads to the pair's adultery and usurpation of Agamemnon's kingship while he is away at Troy (§ 8). Again, this instance of female-instigated scheming (by Clytemnestra prior to her liaison with Aegisthus, her husband's cousin) appears to be a detail which is unique to *FCT*, and it may well owe its existence to an authorial desire to pin the majority of the blame for the resultant *fingala* and damage to the interests of the *fine* upon a female character.[663]

Concerning Aegisthus' lower level of culpability in relation to that of Clytemnestra present in their respective portrayals in *FCT*, the detail that Thyestes' son was Helen's husband before Menelaus may be significant. This is a literary union which is apparently unique, and in

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[661] The combination of female counsel and sex (personified in *FCT* most markedly in both Helen and Moesia) carries obvious connotations with the Genesis story of the Fall of Man. Notably, around the year 1170, Peter Comestor, a cleric and scholar writing in Paris, was the first to assign a female human face to the Eden serpent: Kelly, 'The Metamorphoses', pp. 308–324.

[662] To Helen's (and perhaps the author's) 'niruo cóir a tabairt', the Atridae reply 'Is cóir ám', 'it is proper indeed': *FCT*, § 11.

[663] On the apparent benefit to the story of Aegisthus offered by the unique account of Clytemnestra's advances towards him in *FCT*, see above, p. 108.

direct contradiction of all Classical traditions concerning Helen's marriages. Whether this detail is an outright invention, or based upon some unknown account, Aegsithus' position in *FCT* as the husband and king whose wife and realms had been taken from him and shared between them by the Atridae makes his behaviour towards Clytemnestra at least understandable, and more justified than in any extant Classical account. To excuse the male, Aegisthus, in part, for his role in the kinslaying of Agamemnon, by portraying him as merely credulous of a woman's words, fits the aforementioned misogynistic outlook of *FCT*. It also lays the blame for the tragedy which unfolds more squarely on Clytemnestra than other accounts of the death of Agamemnon do.[664]

As mentioned above concerning the issue of Helen's counsel, the question of the rightness or otherwise of characters' behaviour seems to be at the heart of the author's interest in the narrative in which Agamemnon's wife and kingdom are taken from him by means of his own wife's scheme. Clytemnestra, employing a messenger, uses the aforementioned otherwise unknown instance of wife-stealing by Menelaus as a rationale for Aegisthus to claim her for himself in return.[665] The use of quasi-legalistic terminology by Clytemnestra in her justification to Aegisthus, 'dligi-si', 'you have the right', is neatly echoed in Agamemnon's terse response upon hearing of his cousin having taken Clytemnestra for himself while the king is at Troy, when the Greek overking notes of Aegisthus' actions 'ní rodligh a nderna' 'what he has done is not right'.[666] The implications of this are both that Aegisthus, like other males in *FCT* beginning with Tantalus, falls for a woman's scheme and that, although the Atridae are hardly blameless, the author also believes Aegisthus and Clytemnestra's liaison and act of usurping Agamemnon to be 'not right'.

With reference to the strongly negative presentation of Clytemnestra's behaviour towards her husband in *FCT*, it is notable that the author sees fit to include a fairly substantial sub-narrative (Episode 4, *FCT* §§ 7–9) whose focus is on both the scheming of Agamemnon's wife and on the contrasting straight-dealing of the king himself. This is a uniquely political take on Clytemnestra's motivation in seeking a liaison with Aegisthus and the lead-up to Agamemnon's death, and its condemnatory attitude towards her behaviour – adulterous,

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[664] Both Aegisthus' usurpation of Agamemnon's kingship (of Mycenae only, not of the Athenians and of the Greeks in general as stated in *FCT* here) and liaison with Clytemnestra are typically portrayed as faits accomplis in Classical works such as Seneca's *Agamemnon*, see above, pp. 108–9.
[665] *FCT*, § 9.
[666] *FCT*, § 10.

scheming – is contrasted by a favourable portrayal of Agamemnon as a courageous war leader.

Clytemnestra's adulterous passion for her husband's cousin Aegisthus is described in *FCT* § 8 using the same words, 'tuc grádh ndermháir do', 'she developed a great passion for [him]', as those which relate Moesia's desire for her stepson Pelops in *FCT* § 1. This verbal echo serves to associate this pair of instances of a prominent female character's lust for a male within their husband's close kin group with each other. In each case a similar lack of self-control over her sexual passion has similar disastrous consequences for the woman in question, for her husband and for the wider *fine*. However, in the case of Clytemnestra alone, it also appears that the female character's 'great passion' forms part of a deliberate political strategy to gain at least a share of the Greek sovereignty herself, a detail not mentioned in any other source. Like Moesia, and others in *FCT*, Agamemnon's wife is an important female character whose unfettered adulterous and incestuous desires, the action of *FCT* illustrates, are shown to trigger disaster both for herself and for the *fine*. The Clytemnestra of *FCT* is alone in narratives which relate the series of disasters within the Tantalus clan in its presentation of her as a woman whose adulterous and incestuous desires are closely connected to her own political ambitions.[667] Indeed Clytemnestra's seduction of Aegisthus may be understood in *FCT* as, uniquely, primarily a political act on her part, with the male character lured to her bed and to his eventual doom by both her words and her sexual power over him. Clytemnestra's messenger makes the specific link between the queen's proposals of sexual and political union with Aegisthus in his speech to the latter, 'Tuc ben Aighmemnoin grádh duit-si, ⁊ adbert rit dul d'á saighidh ⁊ co faifedh let ⁊ cosain féin ríghi na Gréce fria d'naimdibh imalle fria-sí', 'Agamemnon's wife has fallen in love with you and she has invited you to come to her and that she would sleep with you, and that you yourself contest the kingship of Greece alongside her against your enemies' [668]

By contrast with the portrayal of Clytemnestra in this sub-narrative, Agamemnon is presented in a favourable light. That the Greek overking, while still at Troy, is forewarned of the

[667] Clytemnestra's deviousness, noted in Classical works in the etymologising of her Greek name to mean 'famous schemer', is focused on her plans to murder the returning Agamemnon in orthodox Classical accounts, see above, p. 48, note 363. The extra dimension in *FCT* is her 'aireg menman', 'scheme', to gain political power via sex, in a manner similar to that of the Medb of especially *TBC* II.

[668] *FCT*, § 8.

situation at home is unique to *FCT* among accounts of this narrative.[669] Although the reasons for the apparent introduction of this detail into *FCT* are not made explicit, its chief effect is to portray Agamemnon in a more positive light as a war leader, in his refusal to leave Troy before that campaign is won. This positive effect is further emphasised by means of Agamemnon's later refusal to accept the counsel of Helen, i.e. to retreat and seek an alliance rather than to confront Aegisthus and Clytemnestra directly, another detail which is unique to *FCT*. The contrast between Clytemnestra's and Helen's respective acts of scheming and Agamemnon's preference for open warfare appears to show the king in a more favourable light than these female characters whose modus operandi is the scheme, according to *FCT*. It may be noted that *FCT* is not unique in making a point of Helen's scheming nature, for Homer's Helen is far from free of trickery in her behaviour towards men for, aside from her elopement with Paris, she is related in the *Odyssey* as having drugged Menelaus, Pesistratus and Telemachus in order that they 'forget every evil', following which (while the drugs prevent a negative reaction towards her) Helen relates her version of events before and during the Trojan War, including her own faithless behaviour.[670] Even so, the scheming element of Helen's portrayal is more marked in *FCT* than in other accounts, and contrasts with the Irish text's portrayal of Agamemnon as averse to such machinations.

Further to his relatively honourable behaviour in politics and warfare, the positive portrayal of Agamemnon in *FCT* stretches to his lack of kinslaying and apparent chastity within marriage. Not present in this medieval Irish portrayal of the Greek overking, it may be noted, are either of the details, widely attested elsewhere, that Agamemnon was prepared to sacrifice his own daughter, Iphigenia, in order to obtain a fair wind at Aulis, or his adulterous liaisons with captive concubines, most notably Cassandra.

The above examples form, then, a catalogue of unique details found in *FCT* which have a direct impact on the course of the narrative and give it a strongly misogynistic flavour, far more so than is found in any Classical analogues. Female faithlessness and scheming are shown throughout *FCT* to lead to *fingal*, and they eventually bring about the demise of the *fine*. Moreover, in addition to these direct references to female activities which lead to both individual and dynastic ruin, there are several further instances of types of behaviour in *FCT* which are presented in a more subtle way as both feminine and contrary to the interests of the

[669] *FCT*, § 9.
[670] Murray, *Homer*: *The Odyssey* 1, pp. 134–6, ll. 219–64 (Murray's trans.).

family. These include the highly unorthodox intervention of the Trojan queen Hesione in order to prevent her son Teucer from fighting on the Greek side of his father's kinsmen at Troy (§ 13), which serves to illustrate the dangers presented by a woman's divided loyalties between her husband and his family and her own blood relatives.

Hesione's intervention in Teucer's martial behaviour is also a further example in *FCT* of a woman giving somewhat less-than-heroic advice to a male relative, a feature of Helen's aforementioned unique advice to Agamemnon not to return home, but to seek an alliance. In the case of Hesione and Teucer the woman's words constitute more than counsel since we are told of Teucer that 'nir léig a mháthair dó', 'his mother did not allow him', to fight on the Greek side at Troy.[671] It is highly unlikely that the author of *FCT* was unaware of the orthodox account of Teucer's active service on the Greek side at Troy – which he flatly contradicts – especially since he seems familiar with several fairly obscure characters found in TTr^2, in which the son of Hesione and Telamon is placed within the list of the Argives.[672]

Given the strong probability that he knew the orthodox story of Teucer's war record, Hesione's intervention in the martial and political actions of her husband's *fine* appears to be a very clear instance of the deliberate contradiction of an orthodox detail by the author of *FCT*. Its principal practical effect upon the narrative appears to be that Teucer's novel role as the opponent of Agamemnon eventually gives the author a suitable candidate for the Greek kingship from another dynasty to that of Tantalus, a notable feature of the story's ending. From a thematic perspective, that Teucer did not fight on his father's side at Troy because of his mother's refusal to allow him to do so is a neat example of the author's preoccupation with the dangers of the influence of women over their menfolk. The author does not go so far as to say that Teucer was wrong to allow his martial behaviour to be governed by a woman, yet it is clear that Hesione acted contrary to the interests of both her husband and of her *fine* by marriage. A similarly feminine influence, via the use of counsel, over the 'masculine' worlds of politics and warfare has already been condemned in *FCT* with the words 'niruo cóir', 'it was not proper', in the aforementioned case of Helen's advice to the Atridae.

Another subtle example of a misogynous outlook in *FCT* which might be added to the above instances of female faithlessness and scheming is the impression conveyed by the text's

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[671] *FCT*, § 13.
[672] Stokes, *Togail*, p. 29, l. 1172; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1094, l. 31986.

action that the moral and spiritual flaws in the Tantalus family are passed on through women, via their dual roles as both lovers and mothers. In the case of Pelops' sons Atreus and Thyestes, we are told uniquely in *FCT* (§ 4) that Taithis gave birth to them as twins, placing the responsibility for what happens in the next generation firmly in her, as opposed to their father's, sphere of influence.[673] From the action which follows, it becomes apparent that one twin (Thyestes) inherits the family sexual licentiousness and the other (Atreus) inherits both its tendency to scheme and swiftness to anger.[674] It seems from this most unusual feature of *FCT* that they are twins that its author attempts to make their mother Taithis responsible for passing on one each of these negative character traits associated with the Tantalus clan – even if there is no hint that she herself possessed them. By extension, it seems, responsibility for both accidents of conception and birth, and any moral or spiritual attributes which may be believed to be herditary, lies with women as mothers, in the mind of the author of *FCT*.[675]

It is certainly consistent with the apparent misogynistic slant present in *FCT* as a whole that the audience should be pointed towards a woman (Taithis) as a reason for Thyestes' apparent licentiousness and Atreus' scheming, character traits found elsewhere in *FCT* exclusively in women. Thus, it seems that the only instances in *FCT* of uncontrolled lust and scheming found in male characters, as well as the split of these behaviours between them can be viewed as having been caused by their nature as twins. Therefore, it is likely to be significant that this special birth is related in the text as having been actively caused by a woman, as mentioned above. According to the author of *FCT*, then, such defective traits as lustfulness and scheming may be transmitted by women between generations, passively it seems, since there is no suggestion in the text that Taithis is anything other than a faithful, non-scheming wife to Pelops. What appears to be the case, then, is that women's dual role as lovers and mothers is the means by which negative character traits may be passed on to the next generation in *FCT*,

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[673] On the identity of 'Taithis' see above, pp. 54–5.

[674] In *FCT* Thyestes commits both adultery with his brother's wife Aerope and incest with his own daughter Pelopia ('Telepia' in *FCT*); these details are orthodox, yet it may be that in uniquely making Thyestes the father of as many sons as fifty (the most sons related elsewhere is three) the Irish author implies that Thyestes was extremely promiscuous, as suggested above, p. 94.

[675] An interesting twelfth-century suggestion of a male commentator's belief that women are responsible for the sex of offspring they conceive is Herman of Tournai's comment concerning Clemence, wife of the crusader Robert II of Flanders who, having given birth to three sons within three years, is said by Herman to have 'used a woman's art', 'arte muliebri egit', in order not to have any more sons (in order to prevent future discord over their patrimony, according to Herman). Whatever he meant by this, Herman seems to have believed that the conception of offspring, and perhaps their sex and by extension other attributes, was subject to a 'woman's art': Herman of Tournai, *Herimanni*, p. 282, ll. 15–17. Clemence, it may be noted, was a powerful political operator in Flanders in the early twelfth century, especially while her husband was on the First Crusade: Nicholas, 'Countesses as Rulers', pp. 119–20.

prolonging and renewing the cycle of *fingal*. For this medieval Irish author, just as women physically give birth so the weaknesses of character he associates with the female sex in general may be passed on, even to males, in the next generation.

It should also be noted that the fact that Thyestes and Atreus are twins is mentioned in connexion with their initial strife concerning their patrimony in § 4. Again, it seems that their mother is to be blamed for the situation which has not produced an obvious heir, perhaps indicating that a primongenitive succession model was preferred in the author's mind.[676] However, the text also relates that the initial political dispute over their patrimony was resolved between the brothers, even though 'ár fer', 'slaughter of men', had taken place between their respective forces.[677] It is only after Atreus' wife Aerope becomes sexually involved with his brother Thyestes that the differences between the two men become irreconcilable, leading to the grisly feast prepared for his brother on the orders of Atreus.[678] From this unique account of the action of the Atreus / Thyestes narrative, then, it appears that for the Irish author political disputes which involve only men may be settled openly (without scheming, perhaps) on the battlefield, but female involvement leads to intrigue and underhand murder, including Atreus' horrific *fingala*, all the worse in *FCT* since Thyestes' sons are here uniquely also his brothers' fostersons.

Thus a woman, Aerope, is portrayed as in no small measure morally culpable for the increased seriousness of her husband's grim deeds in killing fifty of his own nephews and fostersons, since it is only her secret liaison with Thyestes, and not the earlier all-male political dispute, which triggers this terrible crime. As mentioned above, the fact that the brothers are twins, uniquely in *FCT*, emphasises the role of inherited traits (and hence, it seems, of women) in the respective sexual and scheming elements in the misdeeds of Thyestes and Atreus. Thus both the crime which ensues (which is strongly masculine in both its execution and effect, the killing of fifty sons, as an assault on their father and on his

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[676] The royal succession model is most pertinent in the story of the dispute between Eteocles and Polynices in works whose focus is on the Theban Cycle, including the two medieval Irish texts *Togail na Tebe* and *RIM*. These both envisage the drawing of lots between brothers, which is probably based on a particular interpretation of Statius' phrase 'sorte iacebat dilatus Polynicis honos': Shackleton-Bailey, *Statius* 1, p. 52, ll. 164–5. The word 'sorte' may be interpreted as involving either the physical drawing of lots or simply the workings of fate by which Eteocles had gained the kingship first, as first-born. Not every medieval adaptation of Statius' work agrees with the medieval Irish interpretation; the *Roman de Thèbes*, for example, envisages the primogenitive version: Mora-Lebrun, *Le Roman de Thèbes*, p. 80, ll. 617–622.

[677] *FCT*, § 4.

[678] *FCT*, § 5.

dynastic powers) and the continuation of the feud into the next generation is shown to be at least in part the responsibility of two women: an adulterous wife, and a mother who passes on what may be understood from the action of the whole *FCT* as 'female' traits to her sons. Indeed, in addition to the important roles played by Aerope and Taithis in its inception, the feud is continued into the next generation by means of another incestuous woman, Pelopia. Although her volition or otherwise is not stated in respect of the conception of Aegisthus with her own father Thyestes, Pelopia is the conduit by which Aegisthus is born in order to continue the feud within the Tantalus dynasty. Therefore, a central message of *FCT* seems to be that women, especially incestuous women such as Aerope and Pelopia, are the transmitters of the negative qualities found in the characters of kinslayers; *fingal* is in large part women's fault.

Yet another, perhaps more subtle, example of the apparent desire of the author of *FCT* to associate women with certain phenomena which he appears to wish to present as feminine may be the emphatic use of the feminine singular pronoun 'sí' in connexion with certain grammatically feminine words. Thus, of the 'comairle', 'counsel', of Helen we read ''is sí mo comairle-si dáibh', ar sí' (§ 11) and of 'aireg (menman)', 'scheme' we read 'is sí aireg menman for-fúair sí' (§ 8). In both instances, the emphatic 'sí' is echoed by a non-emphatic 'sí' which refers to the woman who is connected with the entity in question. Furthermore, it may be noted that although 'comairle' is firmly gramatically feminine, 'aireg' is a noun of uncertain gender and its femininity, marked with an empahtic pronoun in *FCT*, may therefore indicate an authorial choice.[679] Similarly, the word 'grádh', 'love' which appears twice in the phrase 'tuc grádh ndermháir' (once in each of § 1 and § 8) is clearly to be understood as feminine from the ending of the adjective 'dermháir'. This is a further possible instance of authorial choice concerning a noun which in this case had been neuter in the OI period and which might be either masculine or feminine in MI.[680] The act of marking the words for 'counsel', 'scheme' and '(sexual) love' as gramatically feminine may serve enhance their association with female characters throughout *FCT*. It is not clear whether these instances of the marking or emphasis of grammatically feminine nouns as such is a deliberate authorial policy, or mere coincidence. However, in his use of word-play in the aforementioned examples 'lár medhón' / 'Laimedhon' and 'aireg menman'/ 'Aigmemnon', the author of *FCT* proved himself to have been both willing and able to use particular linguistic tools in creative

[679] On the grammatical gender of 'airec' see DIL, p. 24, col. 192.
[680] DIL, p. 368, col. 142.

ways. In particular, that he marks each of the three words for 'counsel', 'scheme' and 'passion' as grammatically feminine may well be significant, given the overall content of *FCT*, it seems.

Since the cumulative effect of the above evidence is to make it clear that the author of *FCT* was careful to present female characters in a consistently unfavourable light, especially where either sex or politics or both are concerned, it is reasonable to ask why this should be so. An obvious starting point, given the aforementioned likely date of composition of *FCT* around 1200, must be the impact of the Crusades. It has already been noted above that interest in the Troy Story appears to have grown markedly in the West in the twelfth century during which hundreds of thousands of crusaders headed eastwards in order to assault the another great city. At the same time, moreover, the political impact of the absence of such large numbers of male crusaders (though a relatively small number were women) from the West appears to have been significant, in particular since it appears to have led to a marked increase in the number of women in powerful positions, most visibly in the upper social echelons.[681]

It would not be surprising under such circumstances if the increased political power of women in western societies in the crusading eras of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries brought out into the open any misogynistic attitudes held by observers. This is but one explanation of the strongly negative presentation of female characters in *FCT*, in which it has been noted above that it is not only those female charcaters with questionable reputations in

[681] Another example (in addition to the aforementioned Clemence of Flanders, see above, p. 161, note 675) of a powerful western woman of the crusading era is Adela of Blois, daughter of William the Conqueror, wife of the crusader Stephen, and mother of another Stephen, king of England. In her husband's absence between 1096 and 1098, Adela took control over their entire estates: LoPrete, *Adela of Blois*, pp. 96–101. In addition, after her husband's initial return following three years of gruelling warfare – which had culminated in the siege of Antioch where starvation, disease and desperation on both sides had led to gross acts of depravity of a similar degree to some of those recounted in *FCT* – Stephen returned to the campaign in 1101 in which he swiftly died, and Adela resumed her previous political control. Thirty years after Stephen's death, Orderic Vitalis, a clerical writer who wrote extensively on the First Crusade, mentions that after Stephen had returned home from Antioch, Adela urged her husband to rejoin the Crusade, and moreover that she used sex in order to persuade him to do so, for Adela's counsel came 'inter amicabilis coniugii blandimenta', 'between conjugal caresses': Chibnall, *The Ecclesiastical History* 5, pp. 324–5 (Chibnall's trans.). After Stephen's death, which occurred shortly after he had (according to Orderic) followed his wife's counsel, Adela's role in these events may have been viewed negatively by some. Unsurprisingly, in view of both her very considerable political power and her related interest in religious affairs – at a time and place of considerable dispute concerning both – she is known to have had enemies as well as admirers: LoPrete, *Adela of Blois*, pp. 255–61. An interpretation of Orderic's words, which would doubtless not have been lost on her contemporary opponents, and others, is that Adela had wished her husband to return to the Crusade in order to keep political power for herself – which was a noticable result of his absence and death. The Crusades appear to have led to higher political profiles for such women as Adela, with which came greater scrutiny, and greater scope for misogynistic (mis)representation, of their actions and motives.

orthodox sources such as Aerope, Clytemnestra and Helen, but also others such as Hermione and Hesione as well as the otherwise-unattested Moesia who are portrayed as either scheming or faithless or both. The questions of female political power and female chastity within marriage can only be expected to have become more salient during the crusading period as more women were left at home in positions which might have been held to be comparable to that of Clytemnestra while their respective husbands played the role of the absent Agamemnon.

(iii) *Escalating anger in* FCT*: from the personal to the international*

Having been shown in § 1 to be unable to control her sexual passion, Moesia's response to her rejection by Pelops is one of rage. It is certainly not the final instance of violent anger in the text, often couched using a phrase incorporating the noun 'ferg', 'anger', sometimes as in the case of Moesia using the formula 'rofergaigedh x', 'x became enraged'. It is also notable that the gods' response to the crimes of Tantalus and Moesia is that they too 'become enraged' before they commit violence in response via a thunderbolt.[682] The early part of *FCT* in particular seems to depict an age of uncontrolled fury among both gods and men, perhaps indicating the author's belief in a peculiarly primitive type of ferocity, a swiftness to anger which culminates in one or more acts of *fingal*.[683] This process occurs in *FCT* not only in the respective cases of Moesia and the gods (especially if it was known by the author that the Tantalus they destroyed was a son of Zeus) but in the generation immediately following Pelops, with the respective rages of the brothers Atreus (§ 5) and Thyestes (§ 6).

The anger felt by members of the three earliest generations of the Tantalus family is personal as opposed to affecting whole peoples, and the *fingala* which they commit are portrayed as essentially private events, caused by the perceived grievances of individual characters against others. From Atreus' terrible actions towards Thyestes and his sons onwards, however (§ 5), the stakes are raised somewhat, and the scale of violence increases incrementally, with whole armies and eventually nations and alliances of nations become embroiled in the personal,

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[682] 'ro ferccaiged iarum na dei', *FCT* § 3.

[683] The negative consequences of violent rage have been noted as a major theme of medieval Irish sagas, especially those of the Ulster Cycle: Radner, 'Fury destroys the world', pp. 47–57. Rage is also a major theme in many ancient works, including Homer's *Iliad*, whose first words are 'The wrath, sing, goddess': Murray, *Homer*: *Iliad* 1, p. 13 (Murray's trans.).

emotional, anger-driven cycle of vengeful feuding.[684] Thus, a single act of uncontrolled individual female lust in Moesia, leading to female anger and female scheming, not checked by a male portrayed as weak (Tantalus) is shown in *FCT* to lead first to uncontrolled anger in the gods, violent nemesis, and then to personal human anger in male characters, violence, and warfare on a grand scale. Because the characters involved are royal, with responsibility for the destinies of their own dynasties and peoples, if they are unable to control their instinctively angry responses to negative events – such as Atreus' discovery of his wife's liaison with his brother in § 5 – disaster beckons for them, for their close family and for their peoples.

Moreover, as *FCT* progresses, uncontrolled personal anger becomes accompanied by a whole range of negative emotional states, culminating in the madness of Orestes, and the eventual loss of the Greek sovereignty by the Tantalus family. Thyestes' act of turning to Apollo by means of the Delphic Oracle for advice is portrayed as a frustrated emotional response caused by his inability to act upon his anger towards Atreus. The advice given to Thyestes by Apollo, to commit incest with his own daughter, can be understood as the response of a mind unhinged by severe psychological trauma.[685] At this point in *FCT*, anger begins to be replaced by other highly dysfunctional emotional states, leading to the eventual tragic demise of Orestes, the final member of the Tantalus dynasty.

In its assessment of the role played by the lack of control over the emotions, especially over anger, in the singular and collective downfall of the Tantalus dynasty, *FCT* offers not only a medieval Irish account of the action also presented in several Classical dramatic works, but its author's understanding of the Classical tragic world inhabited by several of the latter's most important characters. Not far behind the uncontrolled anger of male characters in *FCT* which leads to *fingal* is almost always the combination of a woman's sexual misbehaviour and a woman's scheming, as has been mentioned above. Furthermore, the initial instance of uncontrolled anger in *FCT* comes from Moesia, a female character, allowing for the blame for its transmission through the generations of the Tantalus clan to be pinned on her as a woman, even if she is not Pelops' mother. This misogynistic interpretation is not generally

[684] The battle, unique to *FCT*, which the Atridae propose to fight against Aegisthus and Clytemnestra is described by Helen as unlikely to succeed since it would involve winning another victory 'ar ilcenélaib', 'over many races', soon after such a campaign had been won at Troy: *FCT*, § 11.

[685] On the apparent need felt by the respective medieval authors of *FCT* and *SVM* to introduce an emotional response in Thyestes after both the murder of his sons' and his act of eating their flesh see above, pp. 103–4.

present in analogous Classical works which deal with the anger of male characters, and where it is present it is not so pronounced as it is in *FCT*.[686] Even so, the action of *FCT* shows that whereas women find it almost impossible to control their adulterous sexual desires, male characters are unable to control their fury. The connexion between lack of self control and destructive anger in Classical tragedy is widely represented, and this is evidenced most strongly perhaps in the works of Seneca, who produced not only plays depicting angry rulers lacking in self-control, such as the Atreus of *Thyestes*, but also philosophical essays counselling control over the most violent emotions, such as *De Ira* and *De Clementia*.[687]

(iv) *Royal succession and patrimony*

Since *FCT* concerns an important royal dynasty, it is scarcely a surprise that several of its narratives mention either the succession or the possession of the Kingdom of the Greeks as patrimonial land owned by the Tantalus family. Indeed, it can be seen that as the text progresses from a single son in the generation of Pelops to first twin brothers Atreus and Thyestes, then to cousins and finally to outsiders such as Teucer, the grip which the Tantalus clan has on the sovereignty gradually loosens as more contenders for it are shown to mean more contention. However, the fact that the details of several of these instances of strife over the patrimony are more pronounced and better developed in *FCT* than they are in other sources points to a likely authorial interest in the succession which is typically only hinted at elsewhere.

As mentioned above, it is notable that Atreus and Thyestes fight first 'um ferann a n-athar', 'over their father's land' in *FCT* § 4 (while Pelops is still alive, since he does not die until § 6 when Aegisthus kills him) a strife related in the text to their having been born twins. This is the first instance in *FCT* of a struggle for the sovereignty over Greece, though it is possible to understand Moesia's acts – first attempted seduction, followed by murder of Pelops – at

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[686] In their aforementioned respective accounts of the grim history of the House of Tantalus, no hint of a specifically female cause is given in either Euripides' *Orestes* or in Seneca's *Agamemnon*.

[687] Basore, *Seneca*: *Moral Essays* 1, pp. 106–355 (*De Ira*) and pp. 356–449 (*De Clementia*), including an extract preserved in a letter by Hildebert of Tours, in which it is stated that 'Bonus princeps sibi dominatur', 'A good prince masters himself', an apt recommendation to the principal members of the Tantalus clan: Basore, *Seneca*: *Moral Essays* 1 pp. 448–9 (Basore's trans). Interestingly, Gerald of Wales notes at the end of his *Topograhica Hibernica* (c. 1185) in an address to Henry II that the king had 'often in your hands and always at hand that whole book of Seneca, On Clemency': O' Meara, *Gerald*, p. 125 (O' Meara's trans.).

the beginning of *FCT* as an attempt to place the succession in the hands of her own offspring. Aegisthus, in the conceit of *FCT* only, takes the crown from Pelops by murdering him, and is himself, again only according to *FCT*, driven away by the Atridae, his cousins, who take not only his kingship over Greece but his wife Helen too (related in *FCT* § 8). Towards the end of *FCT*, Orestes restores the sovereignty to Atreus' line before losing the kingship to one Aimpitir, who as a son of Aegisthus (in *FCT* alone) is at least a member of Tantalus' line, yet he in turn loses the sovereignty to Teucer in another development which is unique to *FCT*.

Despite all these instances in which the author pays some attention to the issue of sovereignty, which collectively offer pseudo-historical information as well as being thematically significant, it is in the exchanges between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra in *FCT* §§ 9 and 10 that the author demonstrates the clearest evidence of his interest in the question of succession and in the possession of patrimonial land. In a development far removed from orthodox accounts of Agamemnon's return home, his wife offers him the choice between a life of power in Troy or elsewhere, or death in Greece. We are told that Agamemnon replies, 'gur ferr lais a marbad ina thír budhein inas a innarbad asa athardha ndilis', 'that it would be preferable to die in his own land than to be banished from his own patrimony'.[688] Furthermore, the usurped king asks that his men be allowed to sleep 'ina tír féin a haithle an tíre namat ina rabadar', 'in their own land after the hostile territory in which they had been'.[689] This heightened sense of both the importance of home soil, and its nature as belonging to paternal ancestors – and by implication to sons – conveyed in the word 'athardha', is a particular feature of this part of *FCT* which is not found in analogous accounts of Agamemnon's homecoming. A preoccupation with patrimony in *FCT* also offers the suggestion of common thematic ground between it and *MU*, a text whose focus on both 'athardha', and synonymous terms meaning 'patrimony', and the relationship between fathers and sons is evident, as is discussed in the next chapter.[690]

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[688] *FCT*, § 10.
[689] *FCT*, § 10.
[690] On the importance of paternity and patrimony in both *MU* and in its Classical antecedents, see below, pp. 197–202.

4. *MERUGUD UILIX MEIC LEIRTIS*: A PARALLEL TEXT TO *FINGAL CHLAINNE TANNTAIL*

4. 1 Introduction to *MU*

MU is a twelfth- or thirteenth-century vernacular Irish composition, which tells, loosely and in a highly abridged form, a version of the narrative contained in Homer's *Odyssey*.[691] Perhaps because the relationship between *MU* and the Classical narrative is far from clear, scholarship to date on this work has focused on the apparent fusion of Classical elements with elements which are unique to accounts of the *Odyssey*, yet are fairly widespread in folk tales, especially in the tale-type known as the *Three Wise Pieces of Advice*.[692]

Studies have shown that the sources for the Classical material contained in *MU* are far from clear, with the possible exception of its version of the Cyclops episode.[693] The account given in *MU* of Uilix's encounter with 'in Cicropecda' appears to have been based upon the vernacular Irish version of Aeneas' visit to the island of the Cyclops in *IA* rather than directly on Virgil's *Aeneid* itself.[694] Hillers, who has published most extensively on *MU*, suggests that the Irish author may have read or remembered only the opening part of *IA*, and that this explains both the lack of any mention of Uilix's encounter with Circe and the absence of story of the Trojan Horse, though accounts of both are present in both the *Aeneid* and in *IA*.[695]

This is a bolder assertion than it may appear at first sight, and it suggests a far from flattering view of the Irish author's method. It would certainly be curious that the author of *MU* failed to read or remember more than a tiny fraction of the *Aeneid* either (in Latin or in translation) considering the latter's status as the most important work of literature and source of Classical knowledge available to a Western European before the fourteenth century.[696] That a medieval Irish author, engaged in producing what is the only known pre-fourteenth-century vernacular

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[691] On the approximate date of composition of *MU* see Hillers, 'The Medieval Irish Odyssey', pp. 331–2.
[692] R. T. Meyer, 'The Middle Irish *Odyssey*', p. 78, and *Merugud*, p. xi; Hillers, 'The Medieval Irish Odyssey', pp.146–282, and 'The Odyssey', pp. 70–4;
[693] *MU*, §§ 4–6.
[694] Hillers, 'The Odyssey', pp. 68–9.
[695] Hillers, 'The Odyssey', p. 68.
[696] On early medieval Irish knowledge of, and interest in, Virgil's *Aeneid*, see Hofmann, 'Some new facts'; on Virgil's place among medieval curriculum authors see Curtius, *Europäische Literatur*, pp. 58–61.

account of Homer's hero's eventful journey home, might have omitted either to read or remember more than the first of three accounts of Ulysees' adventures as related in the *Aeneid*, is a suggestion which deserves further examination.

The essence of the riddle posed by *MU* and the most likely reason why it is possible to contend that its author either suffered from memory loss or was a far from diligent scholar seems to be that, apart from the Cyclops incident, it is difficult to specify with certainty how much orthodox Classical material its author knew. It has long been recognised by modern scholarship that the content of *MU* vacillates between containing orthodox Odyssean details and material which is unique, and that these two types of information are often entwined in a particular sub-narrative in the text. Kuno Meyer mentioned, in the introduction to his 1886 edition, two examples of incidents in *MU* in which 'we seem to catch faint echoes' of Odyssean material.[697] Seventy years later, R.T. Meyer recognised that the Irish version's 'story-teller may have heard the tale told or read (from some medieval Latin *periochae* of the *Odyssey* perhaps)'; however, he was at the same time 'certain that there is very little of the classical version of the story left' in the Irish tale.[698] For Kuno Meyer, then, *MU* retains some Odyssean material in the form of 'faint echoes', though it is difficult to provide any strong evidence for the sources of these; R.T. Meyer's opinion was that there is insufficient Classical material in *MU* to render it likely to have been composed by any Irish author with any Latin or other model or auxiliary text in front of him. Even so, he suggested that the Irish author may have had heard Latin source texts being read aloud, and it follows that these putative *periochae* must have contained enough of the *Odyssey* narrative to allow *MU* to be written.

Despite having an apparently low estimation of the author's knowledge of orthodox Classical lore, Hillers goes further than either Kuno or R.T. Meyer did in identifying three aspects in *MU* as recognisably 'homeric', in addition to the Cyclops episode, despite 'the rather drastic transformation of the story' in them.[699] These may be paraphrased as follows: Uilix seeing the mountains of his homeland before being thrown back to sea by the winds; the disgruntled attitude of Uilix's men as they undergo their maritime travails; and the recognition of Uilix

[697] K. Meyer, *Merugud*, p. ix.
[698] R.T. Meyer, *Merugud*, p. xvi. No *periochae* which are known to have been known in medieval Ireland are extant, yet Meyer's suggestion remains of interest, especially since it is in accordance with both Hillers' views concerning the likeliest sources for the Classical material in *MU* and with the evidence from Chapter 2 above concerning *FCT*.
[699] Hillers, '*In fer*', p. 27.

by both his dog (unnamed in *MU*) and by his faithful wife, 'Peneloipi'.[700] For Hillers, then, there is a connexion, albeit of unknown provenance, between *MU* and its Classical heritage, and this is not simply a question of the Irish text preserving, fairly faithfully, four stories present in the *Odyssey*, though that in itself is highly significant in the context of an Irish, or any other western European, text composed in either the twelfth or thirteenth century. In addition to mentioning the four correspondences noted above between elements present in both *MU* and its Homeric counterpart, Hillers goes on to point to the 'complete confidence' displayed by the Irish author of *MU* in portraying the character of Uilix in particular, not only in relation to the hero's reputation for cunning, resourcefulness and intelligence, but also in relation to his relationship with his disaffected followers. 'He clearly felt he knew Ulysees', Hillers concludes.[701]

That the author of *MU* offers characterisations of both Uilix and of his followers which are fairly close in certain aspects to their Homeric equivalents, implies that he possessed a considerable level of literary knowledge, and skill, the more impressive if he had only aural access to *periochae* or 'plot summaries' of the *Odyssey*. Although it has received less recognition by modern scholars than that of her husband, the portrayal of 'Peneloipi' in *MU* is clearly also in keeping with that of Homer's queen in her steadfast faithfulness and Odysseus-like cunning and caution.[702] To produce these fairly faithful portrayals of two of Homer's main characters, in addition to a portrayal of the hero's crew which is also close to that depicted in the *Odyssey*, is itself evidence of a high degree of literary skill. With this in mind, it is surely possible that if the Irish text preserves only 'faint echoes' of Odyssean narratives this may not have been because of authorial ignorance, but deliberate design.

The recognition that the author of *MU* possessed a high degree of literary skill may be the only way to solve the aforementioned riddle posed by an adaptation which appears to marry 'homeric' character portrayals with highly unorthodox narrative details. Whatever his sources in terms of level of both detail and orthodoxy in their account of Ulysees' journey home, it is surely not unthinkable that the medieval Irish creator of *MU* engaged in a process of editing and reworking, as well as translating them. If such an active reworking method produced the impression that he knew only 'faint echoes' of the Classical story of Ulysees,

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[700] Hillers, '*In fer*', p. 27.
[701] Hillers, '*In fer*', p. 28.
[702] On the portrayal of Peneloipi in *MU* see below, pp. 193–5.

this may be because the final result of this process, *MU*, has relatively few points in common with other accounts of the *Odyssey*'s narrative. This is the case when *MU* is compared with several other medieval Irish adaptations from Classical works by known authors such as Virgil, Statius, Lucan and 'Dares' where each of the latter adaptations has many close verbal parallels with its respective model.

However, it is likely to be of greater significance to any attempt to solve the problem posed by the content of *MU* that a similar relationship to Classical material to that which prevails in this text also occurs in *FCT*, another medieval Irish Classical adaptation from unknown sources which juxtaposes the orthodox and the unique throughout. Since the above comparative analysis of the episodes of *FCT* has demonstrated that this method can unlock both the most likely source-types and authorial methods for that text, it may be that a similar close comparison between the Classical content of *MU* and its analogues might achieve the same for the latter text.

Before devoting further attention to the analysis of Classical material in *MU*, it may be useful to consider the nature of any potential source(s) from which a twelfth- or thirteenth-century Irish author might have gleaned not only the non-Virgilian, information concerning Odysseus' return home identified by Hillers, but also such a Homer-like portrayal of both Uilix, Peneloipi and of other characters, such as Uilix's crew. Discounting the slim possibility that any complete Latin or other rendition of Homer's *Odyssey* was available to an Irishman at such an early date, we are left with, in terms of written sources, what Hillers describes as 'indirect sources, sketchy summaries and allusions'.[703] However, since the extant sources for allusions to the narrative of the *Odyssey* which Hillers mentions, i.e. those in Virgil, Ovid and Dictys Cretensis' *Ephemeris de historia belli Troiani* do not, as she notes, contain the information present in *MU*, it seems that R. T. Meyer's suggestion of Latin *periochae*, auxiliary handbooks perhaps akin to Aldhelm's aforementioned *opuscula*, may have been the

[703] Hillers, '*In fer*', p. 17. The possibility that fragments of Livius Andronicus' 3rd-century B.C. *Odissea* (an apparently fairly faithful translation of Homer's work and the only known Latin one) or a précis account based on this work survived cannot be completely discounted; however, no evidence of the existence of this or any other Latin version of Homer's work in the medieval West is extant. The extant fragments of Livius Andronicus' *Odissea* are published in Warmington, *Remains* 2, pp. 24–43; of the content of these Latin fragments only the Cyclops incident is included in *MU*, and for the Classical details in this account, *MU* appears to be dependent on Virgil's *Aeneid* and / or its Irish adaptation, *IA*.

most likely source texts for the Classical material found in *MU*, apart from the Cyclops episode.

Even if these works are not extant, it may be possible to demonstrate that the Homeric material in *MU* is very likely to be the result of the use of mythographic or other secondary works. Indeed Hillers seems to support the idea that the author of *MU* may have used such 'plot summaries', yet notes that because extant examples of such works, such as Hyginus' *Fabulae*, are not known to have been known in medieval Ireland, 'any discussion of potential sources must remain hypothetical'.[704] Although neither R. T. Meyer nor Hillers takes this possibility further, then, their shared suggestion of mythographical sources for *MU* appear to point to a mode of composition for this medieval Irish adaptation which resembles that identified via the above comparative analysis of the episodes of *FCT*, the rebuilding of an expansive Classical narrative using skeletal mythographic sources.[705]

Furthermore, there are two good if circumstantial reasons to connect *MU* with *FCT*, both of which also support the idea of a similar mode of composition for the two adaptation texts: firstly, textual provenance, since *FCT* travels with *MU* in both of the former's manuscript witnesses, in close proximity, and both appear to have been composed around the same time. In addition, they are linked thematically, as both *MU* and *FCT* focus very heavily upon marital (in)fidelity and (the avoidance of) kinslaying.

With regard to this high degree of common thematic interest in *MU* and *FCT*, it is noticeable that both of the former's main characters Uilix and Peneloipi illustrate idealistic, almost superhuman, levels of self-control in their respective avoidance of kinslaying and adultery. This situation in *MU* is in stark contrast to the behaviour of the main characters of *FCT*. Taken together, then, *MU* and *FCT* appear to reaffirm, remarkably for their most probable time and place of composition – Ireland c. 1200 – a direct contrast between the respective actions of members of the Ithacan and Mycenaean Royal Houses which is similar to that first mentioned by Homer. In the *Odyssey*, Agamemnon's shade twice (11. 430–53 and 24. 192–202) notes the stark contrast between Clytemnestra and Penelope, specifying in addition that 'Zeus has persecuted Atreus' race through women's guile' in the persons of both Helen and

[704] Hillers, 'The Medieval Irish Odyssey', p.144. However, the twelfth-century English scholar John of Salsibury did know some of Hyginus' works: Curtius, *Europäische Literatur*, p. 61.
[705] See above, pp. 137–8.

Clytemnestra; of Odysseus' wife, however, Agamemnon's shade decrees, 'The fame of her excellence shall never perish, but the immortals shall make among men on earth a song full of delight in honor of constant Penelope'.[706]

It seems clear that the respective authors of *FCT* and *MU* would concur with the sentiments of Agamemnon's shade (neither necessarily reflecting Homer's opinion) concerning their tales' respective main female characters. With this remarkable similarity between Homer and the Irish works in mind, it appears that even if *MU* was, like *FCT*, rebuilt from skeletal mythographic sources, this need not imply medieval Irish authors lacking in either Classical knowledge or literary skill. A comparative analysis of the narrative and thematic content of *MU* may shed further light on the suggestion that its author appears to have approached his Classical source material in a similar way to the author of *FCT*, i.e. as a skilled reworker who at least believed that he knew his Classical model narrative very well.

4.2 Comparative Analysis of the Classical Material in *MU*

(i) *Method*

(a) Plot

Any attempt at a systematic comparison between the Classical material in *MU* and its analogues faces considerable methodological challenges, even more severe than those presented by *FCT*. The nature of *MU* is such that it is seldom certain in this text that a given mini-narrative is Classical, i.e. that it has been derived from a Classical analogue (via whatever sources). For example, although it is likely, as mentioned above, that much of the Cyclops incident in *MU* derives from either Virgil's *Aeneid*, or from its vernacular Irish counterpart, *IA*, several details found in the account of this incident in *MU* are unique. Thus, the sources of details such as the mountain of gold in the centre of the Cyclops' island in *MU* are unknown, and this unique detail is likely to be the creation of the Irish author, and not Classical.[707] Despite the presence of such unique details, because a substantial part of the narrative concerning Uilix and the Cyclops has recognisable Classical analogues this account in *MU* may be suitable for the type of comparative analysis performed for the episodes of *FCT* above. On the other hand, this seems unnecessary from the point of view of source

[706] Murray, *Homer*: *The Odyssey* 1, p. 433, and 2, p. 427 (Murray's trans.).
[707] *MU*, § 3.

analysis since, as Hillers has demonstrated, the most likely source for the Classical content in the Cyclops episode of *MU* is *IA*, although Virgil's *Aeneid* itself cannot be ruled out.[708] Apart from the Cyclops episode, *MU* appears to contain very little material whose orthodox Classical sources may be safely traced. Even so, there do appear to be some elements of even the most idiosyncratic *MU* mini narratives which can usefully be compared with Classical material which may have inspired it. Three episodes in *MU* appear to offer the most scope for such a comparison since they have obvious close similarities with orthodox counterparts:[709]

(1) Uilix forces his men to leave an island in which plentiful and palatable food is freely available in favour of seeking their homeland (*MU* § 2). This appears to be very similar to the story of the Lotus Eaters found in Homer's *Odyssey*, except that the role of the Classical lotus is taken by giant sheep in the medieval Irish adaptation.

(2) Uilix, like Odysseus in Aeolia, receives the help of a ruler who offers him a way to get straight home (*MU* §§ 7–12). Not only this, but each respective ruler-helper gives the hero a bag which must not be opened. In each case there is a close connexion between this bag and gold.

(3) Uilix narrowly avoids killing his own son (*MU* § 17). This appears to have some shared features, not with any story found in Homer's *Odyssey*, but with stories found in other Classical and later sources in which Odysseus' feigned madness before the Trojan campaign almost produces the result that he causes the death of his own son.[710]

(b) Theme

The thematic content of *MU* appears to have largely escaped the attentions of modern scholars, yet as in the case of *FCT* above, comparative analysis of the Classical content of the

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[708] Hillers, 'The Odyssey', pp. 66–9.

[709] It may be noted that these are whole sub-narratives in *MU* with Classical counterparts, and not merely the aforementioned aspects of *MU* which Hillers noted as recognisably Homeric, see above, pp. 170–1.

[710] There may also be a connexion with a Byzantine story in which Odysseus decides at the last minute not to kill Telemachus; this is found in the aforementioned *Chronicle* of John Malalas, see below, p. 202, note 777.

medieval Irish adaptation ought to isolate which elements of the episodes of *MU* are most likely to be unique and therefore innovations of its author. These in turn may suggest his particular preoccupations, and open up the question of which, if any, orthodox Classical themes he preserves, and how they appear in their respective *MU* guises. The comparative analysis of the three abovementioned episodes of *MU* with their Classical-tradition analogues is therefore intended not only to examine the adaptation's content in terms of plot but, as in the case of *FCT*, to highlight its author's most important thematic preoccupations.

(ii) *Analysis*

Episode 1:- The Island of the Giant Sheep (*MU* §2)

Analogues (The Island of the Lotus-Eaters)

(c. 700 B.C.) Homer, *The Odyssey* 9.82–104

(1st century A.D.) Apollodorus, *The Library* Epitome 7.3

(1st century A.D.) Hyginus, *Fabulae* 125.2

All three Classical versions agree that this is Odysseus' first landing on an island which is in some respects alien to the human world.[711] It is noteworthy that in the version in *MU* the encounter between Uilix's company and the abnormally large sheep (who seem to fulfil the role of the lotus here) also appears first, and as in both the *Odyssey* and in Hyginus' précis account this takes place in *MU* immediately after a storm has blown the hero and his company off course.[712] Furthermore, just as in all the proposed Classical analogues, the account in *MU* pictures Uilix in opposition to those of his men who encounter a special type of food on this first otherworldly island – one which appears both palatable and inexhaustible – having tasted it they lose the desire to return home, and the hero must coerce them to do

[711] In both extant mythographic accounts Odysseus' supernatural adventures are related in chronological order, as might be expected from such works. This is also purported to be the case in Books 9–12 of the *Odyssey*, in which the hero himself, not necessarily a reliable narrator, relates his adventures to Alcinous, the Phaecian king: Murray, *Homer*: *The Odyssey* 1, pp. 316–481.

[712] In *MU* alone, this is the storm which blows the hero back out to sea when in sight of his homeland.

so: 'atá ar n-daíthin co bráth do caírib sund', 'there are enough sheep for us [to eat] forever here', is the plea of Uilix's men to be allowed to stay, but his response is that they will not be allowed to act 'gan dula d'íarrair ar n-athar-tíri bunaid féin', 'without leaving to seek our [i.e. my] own native fatherland'.[713] This may be compared with the hero's report of his own urgings in Book 9 of the *Odyssey*: 'These men I myself brought back to the ships under compulsion ... for fear that perchance anyone should eat the lotus and forget his homecoming.'; and especially in Hyginus' work among the mythographers, who notes in *Fabula* 125 that: 'qui gustabant obliuionem caperent domum reditionis', 'whoever ate it [the lotus plant] forgot about returning home'.[714] It may be noted that the specifically patrimonial nature of the hero's homeland is made explicit at this point in *MU*, but not in any analogue.

The fact that the food in question is very large sheep in *MU* and not the Classical lotus leaves does not necessitate that this sub-narrative in *MU* is the result either of its author's imperfect memory or of highly unorthodox sources. A deliberate, medieval Irish, authorial change from lotus to giant sheep can be explained by either deliberate acculturation or by a lack of explanation in any putative mythographic source(s) concerning the food of forgetting eaten by Uilix's men.[715] It is notable that no early medieval Latin analogue of this narrative survives, it is not related by any of the Vatican Mythographers, for example.

Whatever his sources, is remarkable that the Irish author's Uilix possesses largely the same purpose – to get home as soon as possible – as that of Homer's hero. Indeed, it may be argued that Uilix is a distilled portrayal of the Classical Odysseus since only the medieval Irish incarnation of the hero also recognises from the outset the main reason why he needs to get home as soon as possible – his patrimony may be under threat. The recognition of this pressing need occurs in Homer's hero at the end of a long journey, and some later commentators considered that Odysseus' slow recognition of his important role at home was

[713] *MU*, ll. 18–21.
[714] Murray, *Homer*: *The Odyssey* 1, pp. 322–3 (Murray's trans.); Marshall, *Hygini Fabulae*, p. 108, ll. 6–8.
[715] Although Hyginus, who calls them 'Lotophagos' (acc. pl.), does also offer a fairly clear explanation of their name: Marshall, *Hygini Fabulae*, p. 108, ll. 4–6.

worthy of criticism.[716] It seems to be the case, then, that any source used by the author of the Irish text this narrative retained enough of the tone of the *Odyssey* to at least allow a medieval Irish writer to produce an Uilix who is remarkably not only true to Homer's hero at this point in the narrative of his return, more so than the figures presented by either Hyginus or by Apollodorus, but if anything more enlightened concerning his patrimonial goal than Odysseus himself.

Given that this is the case, it seems likely that such a source was at least fairly detailed, even if it were simply a précis account. This seems, then, to be promising evidence of a high level of Classical knowledge, and no small measure of appreciation of Homeric preoccupations, on the part of the author of *MU*. Given this level of expertise, it appears all the more probable that the transformation of lotus into lamb in *MU* is the result of deliberate reworking, as opposed to having been caused by imperfections of either memory or source. That the author of *MU* appears to have a high level of understanding of the *meaning* of the 'magical food island' incident in the narrative of the hero's return surely suggests that he also possessed a high level of knowledge concerning the orthodox version of the narrative itself, however unorthodox certain details in his adaptation may appear. This view contrasts with that of Hillers concerning the presentation of this episode in *MU*: 'The reluctance of the comrades to leave the island seems perfectly understandable and can hardly be equated with the magic change of consciousness that affects the comrades who join the lotus eaters in Homer'.[717] Although Uilix's crew's behaviour is more understandable here than that of Odysseus' men with the Lotophagi, this only serves to render Uilix wiser still than Odysseus and, crucially, more aware of the importance of getting home as soon as possible in order to secure his patrimony than Homer's hero is at this early stage. Uilix is thus presented like Odysseus but with his wisdom, already considerable in Homer's epic, enhanced.

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[716] For example, Ovid's long-waiting Penelope suspects (in *Heroides* 1) that her husband had not exactly rushed to get home, 'Haec tua Penelope lento tibi mitti, Ulixe', 'These words your Penelope sends to you, O Ulysees, slow of return that you are': Showerman, *Ovid*: *Heroides*, pp. 10–11, l. 1(Showerman's trans.). Moreover, in the same line of this text Ovid makes her suspect Ulysees of having been not exactly held prisoner by females whom the reader knows to be Circe and Calypso, for she exclaims 'quae vestra libido est, esse peregrine captus amore potes', 'you may be captive to a stranger love – such are the hearts of you men!': ibid., (Showerman's trans.).

[717] Hillers, 'The Odyssey', p. 77.

Once it is accepted that the medieval Irish author was unconcerned with preserving the exact narrative content of the *Odyssey* in whatever form he knew it, but was concerned with its *thematic* content, it becomes relatively straightforward to read *MU* as an adaptation text where a great deal of Homeric meaning has been skilfully preserved, even if plotlines and details appear different. For example, in this episode only the hero of *MU* among his men has the necessary inner strength to resist a perpetual ('co bráth', 'for ever') and plentiful ('ar ndaithin', 'enough for us') supply of palatable food, available without effort, if in an unusual form.[718] The magical effect of the lotus leaves may not be openly stated with regard to the supersized sheep in the *MU* version, but Uilix's men immediately exhibit the same forgetfulness of home as those of Odysseus' crew who eat the lotus do in Homer's version. The hero of *MU*, like his Homeric counterpart, forces a more demanding course on his men, caused by the need ''to seek our own fatherland of origin'', ''d'íarrair ar n-athar-tíri bunaid féin''.[719] Remarkably, the hero's awareness of this patrimonial need occurs even earlier, and is given more emphasis, in *MU* than in the *Odyssey* itself, in which the conscious realisation of the importance of home by Odysseus is more of a gradual process, at times requiring the interventions of the goddess Athena, who is not mentioned in *MU*.[720]

If it is accepted that the substitution of outsize sheep for lotus leaves need reflect neither the *MU* author's poor sources, nor his poor memory, but instead deliberate and careful reworking, it becomes easier to understand how the Irish tale's apparently Homeric features such as its characterisations of Uilix, of his men and of Peneloipi can and do occur side by side with apparent innovations and details which seem to constitute fairly drastic changes of plot. That deliberate reworking akin to the change from lotus to lamb is likely to be taking

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[718] *MU*, ll. 18–19.

[719] *MU*, ll. 20–1.

[720] In Homer's work, Odysseus must cohabit with the divinities Circe and Calypso, visit the underworld where the family connexion is emphasised by both his mother Anticleia and by the spirit of Agamemnon in the telling of his own sorry tale, be offered the hand of Nausicaa the princess of the Eden-like kingdom of the Phaecians, and undergo other trials with supernatural or semi-human creatures, before he makes the firm resolution to return to his own human Ithacan ancestral *oikos*, the approximate equivalent of Uilix's 'athar-tir bunaid', which is given special mention by the hero at this early stage in *MU*. Homer's Odysseus also requires the intervention of Athena at various points in the narrative to help him first to recognise and then to achieve his own mission, to return to Ithaca in order to secure both his ancestral *oikos* for himself, and his son's inheritance. The goddess' role is however unmentioned in *MU*, as it is in both Hyginus' and Apollodorus' respective accounts. This need not mean that the sources of *MU* were necessarily free from the mention of Athena, for it is notable that even the 'fiamach fir-glic', 'cunning truly-clever', Uilix cannot get home without help from a superior being – in *MU* the hero's extra help comes instead from 'In Breithem Firinne', 'The Judge of Truth', and Uilix's high level of wisdom is evidenced by his willingness to both accept, and pay richly for, the latter's teaching.

place throughout *MU* has important implications for the interpretation of much of the apparently exotic material which follows in the later episodes of *MU*.

Episode 2:- Uilix's encounter with 'In Breithem Fírinne' 'The Judge of Truth' (*MU* §§ 7–10)

Analogues (Odysseus' encounter with the wind-king Aeolus)

(c. 700 B.C) Homer, *The Odyssey* 10. 1–82

(1st century A.D.) Apollodorus, *The Library* Epitome 7.10–11

(1st century A.D.) Hyginus, *Fabulae* 125.6

In all three Classical accounts, just as in that in *MU*, the hero, once he has met with and overcome the islands first of magical food and then of the Cyclops, reaches a land ruled by a figure who not only has the power to send him and his crew straight (i.e. without further diversion) home, but who also gives him a sack which must not be opened before he gets there. Furthermore, this bag has, in all accounts, a close connexion with gold, since in the Classical versions Odysseus' crew believe erroneously that it contains either gold alone (Apollodorus) or both gold and silver (Homer and Hyginus), whereas in *MU* the bag does contain the exact sum of (red) gold paid by Uilix for learning gained from the same ruler. These then are the close correspondences between narrative details present in all three extant Classical accounts of this sub-narrative and that which relates Uilix's sojourn with 'In Breithem Fírinne' in *MU*.

In *MU* alone, however, the Classical story of the bag of winds which must not be opened, itself with many counterparts in folktale, is presented rather differently, and appears rather closer to the widely-attested story of the Three Wise Pieces of Advice, in which crucially the instruction not to open the bag is kept, and the hero as a consequence does indeed go straight home, even finding a more direct, overland route according to *MU*.[721] Even if the Classical-tradition sources drawn on by the author of *MU* were either ambiguous about this, or

[721] This may even be an example of a touch of humour in *MU*, which is also found elsewhere in the text, in particular in the peculiar description of Uilix's dog: *MU*, ll. 265–6. That Uilix finds a more direct, overland route home may also be a further instance of the medieval Irish author's apparent desire to portray his hero as superior to Uilix's Classical counterpart.

mentioned that the hero's crew opened the bag causing their ship to be blown off course, it is at least possible that a medieval Irish author could have crafted a slightly different narrative, to suit his own particular purposes. Indeed, the evidence from *MU* § 1 is that its author knew more of the Classical 'bag of winds' narrative than he later relates when dealing with Uilix's encounter with 'In Breithem Fírinne'. He certainly knew of the detail that the hero saw his homeland before being blown back into the ocean, even if in *MU* alone this detail is not connected to the illicit opening of the bag given to Uilix by a ruler.[722] The Irish author places this detail at the beginning of Uilix's 'merugud', but it is not necessary to assume that this is because of any error on his part, nor because of inaccurate or incomplete sources. It is instead entirely possible that the author of *MU* deliberately changed the position of this detail within the whole narrative to suit his purposes.

The peculiar version in *MU* of the story of the bag which must not be opened, which has the hero and his men – uniquely among accounts of the hero's return – obey the ruler's taboo, has the effect of making the Irish version of the story told in the *Odyssey* far briefer than the other, including mythographic, Classical accounts. One way in which this truncation of the narrative is achieved is that the non-opening of the bag renders Odysseus' meetings with several non-human figures unnecessary to the action. Uilix is portrayed as an even wiser, and far less materialistic, figure than Homer's hero – the latter already the incarnation of cunning – in his willingness to exchange ninety ounces of red-gold for the teaching of 'In Breithem Fírinne'.[723] This may explain, then, why *MU* does not mention encounters with supernatural beings such as Circe even though of the hero's adventures this one was known to any reader either of Virgil's *Aeneid* or of *IA*. The author of *MU* appears to wish to stress his hero's advanced state of wisdom *before* his adventures with unusual beings begin, rendering such meetings unnecessary. His lack of mention of any extramarital liaisons on the part of Uilix also makes him more continent than Homer's hero concerning sex. As such, from a Christian perspective, Uilix's portrayal is even more idealised than that of Homer's Odysseus.

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[722] The unusually early position in *MU* of the detail that the hero gets blown back to sea within sight of his homeland, and its dislocation from its orthodox position within the Aeolus narrative, may be related to Uilix's apparent unreadiness to recognise the true state of affairs at home at this early stage. A higher, weather-controlling authority, the action of *MU* seems to imply, does not consider Uilix fit to return home, and he must both face other adventures and, crucially, meet with 'In Breithem Fírinne' before he can return home prepared to recognise the truth.

[723] As is also notable in Uilix's (unique among his party) unenthusiastic attitude to the otherwise-unknown mountain of gold in the aforementioned version of the Cyclops incident in *MU*. This is in contrast with Homer's hero, who is depicted as fond of receiving guest-gifts in the *Odyssey*; this appears to be further evidence of Uilix's idealised portrayal versus his Classical counterpart.

This extra level of idealisation in the medieval Irish incarnation of the hero is reinforced in his wise realisation that he must put the securing of his patrimony first, above even gold, when he decides to pay 'In Breithem Fírinne' for the 'foglaim', 'teaching' which offers to send him straight home (*MU* §§ 7–8). Furthermore, in portraying him as wise enough to act on the teaching he has received from the ruler (*MU* §§ 12–4 and 17), the medieval Irish author's hero is even superior to the Classical Odysseus. The Irish version of the hero clearly possesses greater mental fortitude than his forbear, for Uilix does not fall asleep at the critical time (in fact not until after he has discovered the truth about the identity of the young man at Peneloipi's side in *MU* § 18) and hence is able to prevent his crew from breaking the covenant with the ruler who has promised him that he will go straight home if he obeys his teaching.

These factors – added brevity, lack of need for supernaturals, and even greater wisdom and mental powers for the hero – all present in the Irish version of this narrative, are all achieved simply by not having the bag opened in *MU* where it is in all other accounts. The presence of the motif of Uilix and his crew being sent back to sea by a storm in sight of their homeland in *MU* § 1, without the mention of the bag of winds, confrims that the Irish author knew this aspect of the Classical story. The combination of these two factors – the author's knowledge of the story of the storm which sends the hero out to sea, and the 'improvements' to the overall narrative which result from its placement at the beginning of *MU* – strongly suggests that this unorthodox element of the medieval Irish work is the result of deliberate reworking and not present because of either sheer ignorance or poor memory on its author's part.

It is notable that in *MU* the ruler who gives Uilix the bag is called 'In Breithem Fírinne', 'The Judge of Truth', where in the Classical accounts it is the king Aeolus, who had been entrusted by Zeus with controlling the winds. Whatever his name, that the Irish author chose to associate the ruler with the concept of 'Fírinne', whether he was named as Aeolus in any sources or not, seems to be significant, as Hillers notes, and magnifies the *MU* ruler's status versus that of his Classical counterpart, who is little more than Zeus' wind-keeper.[724] Moreover, as is discussed below, it appears certain that the Irish author both knew Aeolus'

[724] On the strongly Christian meaning of the important role given to 'In Breithem Fírinne' in *MU* see Hillers, 'Ulysees and the Judge', pp. 213–8.

name and deliberately reworked it in its Irish guise as 'eólus', 'knowledge' or 'direction', into the narrative, with highly effective results.[725]

Taking into account the extra importance allotted in *MU* to 'In Breithem Fírinne' in relation to the Classical Aeolus (whose advice is ultimately fruitless because the hero falls asleep) the parallels between the narrative roles taken by the two rulers in their respective encounters with Odysseus and Uilix are striking enough to warrant further examination. Examples of details which are closely matched in each account are the presence in both of a taboo against opening the sack which the ruler gives to the hero after entertaining him, and the ruler's offer to Uilix of the chance to be sent straight home. The hero and his men are entertained for a month in the *Odyssey*, but for just three days in *MU*; the duration of the stay is not mentioned in either mythographical account, however, perhaps suggesting that this detail may not have been present in any source(s) available to the author of *MU* for this episode. Alternatively, the brief length of Uilix's sojourn with 'In Breithem Fírinne' in relation to Odysseus' stay with Aeolus might be a deliberate authorial reference to the higher level of wisdom and extra sense of urgency on the part of his hero versus portrayals of Odysseus in Classical sources. It has already been noted, with reference to the 'island of the giant sheep' episode of *MU*, that Uilix appears to have a greater sense of urgency in his desire to get home in order to secure his patrimony than Odysseus does at the equivalent stage of Classical accounts of his return. The truncated nature of Uilix's stay with 'In Breithem Fírinne' may also reflect this greater urgency on the hero's part in the Irish account versus that found in Classical sources.

Further comparison of 'In Breithem Fírinne' in *MU* with the Classical wind-king Aeolus appears to suggest that its author was engaged in a more active process of conscious reworking than simply half-remembering and reproducing 'faint echoes' of a Classical narrative. For example, in *MU* the notion that 'In Breithem Fírinne' has the power through learning to send the hero straight home is given special emphasis by means of a question to interlocutors which Uilix poses as he lands on the land in which the ruler holds sway: ''Cá fírindi fognas dó?' ar Uilix. 'Gach duine doní a foglaim aigi ro-soich a dúthaig fo chétóir', ar íat-sum', ''What kind of truth does he deal in?' said Uilix. 'Every person who gets his teaching from him reaches his hereditary land immediately''.[726] The importance to Uilix of the urgent completion of his mission in the eyes of the author of *MU* to get home and secure

[725] On the importance of 'eólus' to this sub-narrative and to understanding *MU* as a whole see below, pp. 186–8.
[726] *MU*, ll. 84–6.

his patrimony is demonstrated here by both the words 'fo chétóir', 'immediately' and by the legally-significant term 'dúthaig', 'hereditary land', in this statement of the particular powers at the disposal of 'In Breithem Fírinne'.[727] These powers are portrayed in *MU* as even more effective than those of the Odyssean Aeolus, since the latter's bag of winds promised simply to allow the hero's craft to sail directly, i.e. without wavering off course, to Ithaca, not to arrive instantly as the 'foglaim', 'teaching', offered by 'In Breithem Fírinne' promises to do.

The author of *MU*, then, not only preserves and even maginifies a central Homeric theme, the need for the hero to return home to secure his patrimony without stopping, with the help of a ruler-helper, but makes the process speedier and more efficient than its Classical equivalent. Although Uilix and some of his men do not get home immediately, despite following the learning given by 'In Breithem Fírinne', they arrive there without being further waylaid on islands inhabited by supernatural beings. This, of course, is in marked contrast to Classical accounts of the hero's return, and the fact that their journey to the unnamed Ithaca is made by land (following the counsel of 'In Breithem Fírinne') may also indicate not necessarily a flawed source or memory but the solidity of Uilix's learned path when compared with the more unstable watery journey promised by Aeolus – which is ultimately futile. Also notable is the fact that Aeolus' help is portrayed as ultimately futile as Odysseus is not yet capable of taking advantage of it, since he falls asleep, whereas the 'foglaim' offered with the bag by 'In Breithem Fírinne' allows Uilix to return successfully to reclaim his patrimony, and far quicker than Homer's hero does.

The essential difference between Uilix and Odysseus with regard to their respective encounters with 'In Breithem Fírinne' and Aeolus is that the Irish version portrays a hero who is not only ready to receive the ruler's advice, but who also possesses both the wisdom to sacrifice hard-won gold for it and the strength of will to prevent the foolhardy among his men from undermining his attempts to profit from it. Noteworthy also is the fact that six of Uilix's men eventually return home alive, whereas the Classical Odysseus returns alone with all his crew having died. Thus Uilix appears to be a better leader than Homer's hero, which may be connected to Uilix's more advanced state of enlightenment when he meets 'In Breithem Fírinne' than Odysseus at the time of his meeting with Aeolus. He is already 'in fer

[727] In *MU*, both of the adjectives 'athardha' and 'dúthaig' are used substantively to mean 'patrimony', with the latter carrying the added sense 'inherited from the close kin group (fine)'. For other examples of these words used substantively, see DIL, p. 56, col. 444 and p. 257, cols. 455–6 respectively.

fiamach firglic', 'the cunning truly clever man', whereas in the *Odyssey* the hero will require the help and urgings of Athena, as well as encounters with supernatural figures, in order achieve a similar level of wisdom, expressed in the ability to focus his attentions on his earthly patrimonial goal.[728] Uilix has a high degree of awareness of his role as custodian of his own (inherited) land – 'crích', 'ferann', 'athar-tír bunaid',' 'athardha' or 'dúthaig' – from the outset of *MU*, and this early and explicit focus on the hero's need to return home and the relative brevity of the Irish work may be interconnected. The Irish author seems to have believed that it was both possible and desirable to produce a distilled account of the narrative of the *Odyssey*, hence the apparent extra early enlightenment and haste on the part of Uilix relative to Homer's hero. Even so, Uilix is a figure close enough to his Classical counterpart to justify the belief that the author of *MU* is very likely to have felt that he knew Ulysees, to paraphrase Hillers' assessment of Uilix's portrayal.[729]

No mention of either haste or explicit awareness of his patrimonial goal on the part of Odysseus is discernable by the matter-of-fact accounts of this episode in either Apollodorus or Hyginus. The marked presence of both elements in *MU* may therefore suggest that the sources drawn on by the author for this episode contained more than the respective simple plot summaries offered by these two mythographers – the alternative is that the Irish author applied a very high level of creative and interpretative skill to such skeletal mythographic sources. Whatever his sources, the author of *MU* produced a narrative which shares and even distils and thereby magnifies one of Homer's main thematic preoccupations, the need of the hero to get home to secure his patrimony (approximating to Homer's '*oikos*') for himself and for his son as soon as possible. Just as with Uilix's early recognition of his need to get home straight away in *MU*, the powers of the adaptation text's helpful ruler, 'In Breithem Firinne', offer a speedier and more efficient resolution to the hero's problem than the bag of winds offered by the Classical ruler-helper, Aeolus.

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[728] The hero's visit to the underworld is described in the *Odyssey* 11, Hyginus, *Fabulae* 125.11, and Apollodorus, *The Library* Epitome 7.17. However, neither mythographic account, mentions the meeting between Odysseus and Agamemnon's shade in which the *Odyssey*'s hero is told of the faithlessness of Clytemnestra, which acts as a warning to Odysseus that Penelope and Ithaca might no longer be his wife and kingdom respectively, very much the same fear expressed by Uilix in § 1 of *MU*. If such a reference were not present in any putative source for *MU*, its author's portrayal of such an early recognition of doubt concerning the possession of both his wife and lands by another man – that they might be 'ag fir eli' – on the part of his hero reflects well on both his creative and interpretative skill.

[729] Hillers, '*In fer*', p. 28.

Further to this evidence for a remarkable level of thematic agreement between *MU* and the *Odyssey*, there is further strong evidence that this episode of *MU* represents a careful and skilful reworking of a version of Homer's Odysseus / Aeolus narrative. This is evident from a comparison between the teaching offered by 'In Breithem Fírinne' and the bag of winds offered by the Classical ruler-helper. The first element of the teaching to Uilix and his men in *MU* § 9 is that they should hold their breaths three times before committing any murder, even if this were to be an act of revenge against an assassin who had killed their father and mother. This particular advice turns out to be most important to Uilix, since putting it into practice will later save him from killing his own son in error.

A comparison between this element of the teaching received by Uilix and the help given by Aeolus to Odysseus in the form of a bag containing three of the four winds reveals the Irish author's deliberate and skilful reworking. It is highly noteworthy that the advice given by 'In Breithem Fírinne' to hold the breath involves restraining air within the body just as the winds must be restrained within Aeolus' bag, and that the three breaths to be held in *MU* may correspond to the three winds (North, South and East) which would, and later do, blow Odysseus off course in the Classical accounts.

However, the most powerful indication that this story is not only based on a Classical analogue but has been deliberately and knowledgeably reworked by the Irish author is the repeated use of the Irish word 'eólus', 'knowledge' or 'direction', in this episode. The ruler first warns Uilix and his men that they should be 'of one mind' before committing an act of violence; the Irish word used is 'aén-eólus', where the word 'eólus', despite its possible different pronunciation, is may well be a clear reference by the Irish author to the Classical wind-guardian Aeolus.[730] Futhermore, the word later used for the knowledge of how to get home most quickly given by In Briithem Fírinne is also 'eólus';[731] and, following this second instance of the word 'eólus', the corresponding adjective 'eólach' is used twice in one exchange in which those who are shortly to make the wrong choice and perish describe themselves as 'Ní heólach', 'not knowledgable'.[732] This is surely to be understood as an authorial comment on those who fail to learn their lessons well. Moreover, this 'eólus' comes

[730] *MU*, l. 121; the similarity between the Irish word 'eólus', 'knowledge', 'direction' and the wind-king's name in any Classical-tradition source(s) used here may well have been an inspiration for the portrayal of 'In Breithem Fírinne' as the keeper and distributor of 'eólus' in *MU*.
[731] *MU*, l. 158.
[732] *MU*, ll. 177–8.

from a teacher empowered with truth who charges handsomely for his special teaching, indicating an author who wishes to convey the economic value of receiving instruction from a good teacher (i.e. one endowed with truth). The double usage of 'eólach' here appears to be a deliberate echo of the already twice-mentioned 'eólus' taught by 'In Breithem Fírinne', and further suggests that the author knew of, but deliberately changed, the connexion between the Classical figure of Aeolus and Odysseus.[733] It may be worth noting that Ulysees is referred to as 'Aeolides', 'son / descendant of Aeolus', by Virgil in Book 6 of his *Aeneid*, and this albeit anti-Homeric suggestion of direct kinship between the Ithacan and Aeolus may have been an inspiration for the Irish author's apparent desire to connect the wise Uilix with the Irish term for knowledge, 'eólus', here.[734] The identification of 'Aeolides' with Ulysees, and an explanation thereof which makes Ulysees a grandson of Aeolus, is made by Servius in his commentary upon this line of Vergil's poem.[735]

Another effect of this particular repeated choice of word for the exact knowledge needed both to secure Uilix's homecoming and to avoid killing his own son is to make it clear to a certain elite cadre of scholarly readers – those familiar with the Classical Aeolus – that *MU* is no slavish translation of a version of the Classical narrative, nor a poor attempt at recall, but rather a deliberate reworking by a writer skilled and knowledgeable enough to make such use of his Classical source material. The repeated use of 'eólus' here implies that the medieval receivers of *MU* were expected by its author to understand his play on the name Aeolus, indicating a high level of Classical knowledge among its medieval Irish audience. It also demonstrates the *MU* author's high level of confidence in his own knowledge and understanding of the narrative of the *Odyssey*.

The 'In Breithem Fírinne' episode of *MU*, then, seems to illustrate a deeper level of reworking than that found in the aforementioned 'sheep-for-lotus' episode, in addition to a high level of knowledge of the *Odyssey*'s narrative. Taken together, these episodes also show a profound authorial understanding of central Homeric themes. In both cases, the Irish version offers a more direct and concentrated expression of ancient preoccupations which were expressed in a more gradual and elliptical way in the *Odyssey* itself. That both the

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[733] If the author of *MU* knew *TTr*[2] then he may have also known that 'Eoil' was the Classical 'comsid cumachtaig na ngáeth', 'lord and master of the winds': Stokes, *Togail*, p. 14, l. 538; Best, et al., *The Book of Leinster*, 4, p. 1077, l. 31354.

[734] Fairclough, *Virgil* 1, pp. 568–9, l. 529 and note 25.

[735] Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui ferentur in Virgili carmina commentarii* 2, p. 75.

imperative for Uilix to get home 'fo chétóir', 'straight away', specifically in order to secure his 'dúthaig', 'hereditary land' is emphasised and made explicit from the outset of *MU*, in thematic agreement with Homer's contrastingly allusive and extensive work. However, it is the neat and efficient transformation of the Classical Aeolus figure into 'In Breithem Fírinne' who offers the 'eólus' which is required by the hero which demonstrates a degree of knowledge and authorial skill which is greater than the previous relatively simple transformation of lotus into giant sheep.

Episode 3:- Odysseus narrowly avoids killing his own son (*MU* §17)

(1st century A.D.) Apollodorus, *The Library* Epitome 3.7

(1st century A.D.) Hyginus, *Fabulae* 95

(2nd century A.D.) Lucian of Samosata, *The Hall* 30

(4th century A.D.) Servius, *Commentary* on Virgil's *Aeneid* 2.81

(c.1000 A.D) *The First Vatican Mythographer* 1.35.1–2

The story of Telemachus' narrow escape from a violent death if not at his father's hand then at least caused by Odysseus' actions may not extend back to Homer's time, and no complete written account of it earlier than those by the above two Classical mythographers is extant.[736] The story differs so markedly in all other versions from that of Uilix's near slaying of his unnamed son in *MU* that, at first sight, it may be doubted that any connexion between the two narratives exists.[737] Even so, the central feature present in all accounts, including that in *MU*, is that the hero risks the death of his only son by his own reckless actions, until he comes to his senses and acts with a significant degree of restraint, at which point the danger to his son's life passes. The close similarity in terms of this central element of the respective accounts of this narrative, albeit couched in a quite different form in *MU* from that in the other examples, warrants further investigation. Given the degree of Classical knowledge displayed, and level of reworking demonstrated elsewhere in *MU*, especially in the aforementioned 'In Breithem Fírinne' episode, such a situation does not imply that the Irish

[736] However, the story may have originated in the era of Athenian tragedy in the fifth century B.C.: Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, p. 580.

[737] As far as I am aware, no connexion between Uilix's near-slaying of his own son in *MU* and this suggested Classical analogue – the Palamedes incident – has been proposed elsewhere.

account of Uilix's near killing of his son is not also the result of its author's deliberate and skilful reworking of sources from the Classical tradition.

The most marked difference between the account of the near-filicide incident in *MU* and those in the analogues is that in the Irish version alone the action takes place at the very end of Uilix's adventures, whereas elsewhere it is part of the mobilisation of the Greeks before the Trojan campaign, some twenty years beforehand. Odysseus, it is explicitly stated in the Classical-tradition accounts, feigns insanity when Palamedes arrives to muster him to Aulis on behalf of Agamemnon. Odysseus' ruse is overcome when Palamedes calls the shrewd tactician's bluff either by threatening to kill his young son, or by placing the latter in the path of his father's ploughshare. In every version of the incident involving Palamedes, then, Odysseus must choose between keeping up his pretence at madness, thereby 'killing' his son in protecting his own life, and preserving his son's life but risking his own by joining Agamemnon's expedition to Troy. In all cases, it is the latter option which the hero chooses.

Even among the analogues, however, there are multiple traditions concerning the less important details of this mini narrative: in the Latin analogues above, and in some Greek partial analogues, the hero is found ploughing with a team of animals of different species (pulling in different directions as a metaphor for the feigned madness itself, it may be understood) and according to Servius, followed here by the First Vatican Mythographer, the hero also sows salt into the furrow as though further evidence of (feigned) insanity were needed.[738] Palamedes then uses cunning superior even to that of the Ithacan hero by placing Telemachus in the path of his father's ploughshare, forcing the latter to own up to his sanity and hence fitness to join the Greek forces.

However, in Apollodorus' account alone there is no ploughing at all, and Palamedes simply takes Telemachus 'from Penelope's bosom' and threatens to kill him with a sword to test the veracity of Odysseus' insanity.[739] The tradition that a sword was used to threaten Telemachus' life also appears in Lucian of Samosata's *The Hall*, in which the other potential means of death, Odysseus' ploughshare, also appears.[740] The presence of a sword in these accounts may be of interest when considering the near-killing of the unnamed Telemachus in

[738] On the Classical narratives, see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, p. 580; on the relationship between the accounts of this episode in *FVM* and Servius, see Zorzetti & Berlioz, *Le Premier Mythographe*, p. 22 note 96.
[739] Frazer, *Apollodorus* 2, p. 177 (Frazer's trans.).
[740] 'Palamedes ... threatens him with drawn sword': Fowler & Fowler, *The Works*, 4, p. 22.

MU since here Uilix's son is also unknowingly at the point of a sword until his father perceives the situation correctly, and chooses to preserve his son's life. The detail, albeit found in Apollodorus' account alone, that Telemachus is taken by Palamedes 'from Penelope's bosom' may also be significant in the light of the action of *MU*, in which Uilix's unnamed son also envisaged in close physical contact with his mother at the time of almost becoming the victim of a murder which would have been, as in all analogues, also caused if not perpetrated by his own father as in *MU*.[741]

A further significant difference between *MU* and the above proposed analogous accounts is the age of Telemachus at the time of his narrow escape from death at his father's hand. In *MU* alone he is a young man, old enough to be considered Peneloipi's lover, 'fer cáemfuar coímtech', whereas even if it is not stated outright in the other sources we must assume that as Telemachus is placed before Odysseus by Palamedes, he must be a small child or infant, unable to fight or flee of his own volition.

This rendering of a character who is elsewhere universally an infant or small boy as a youth or young man in *MU* is highly reminiscent of two such instances in *FCT*, in which a similar advanced age is assigned to both Pelops and Orestes in the medieval Irish text alone. It has been suggested above that in *FCT* this may have been due either to the use of detail-deficient sources such as mythographic accounts, in which the ages these characters were not made explicit, or that a deliberate strategem was employed in *FCT* by the Irish author to suit particular thematic interests.[742]

That the author of *MU* might have deliberately changed a version of the story of Odysseus' role in the near murder of his son, making the latter an adult, for thematic reasons, may be the most likely explanation in this case. In all extant analogues from the Latin Tradition the event is specifically stated to occur as part of an attempt to persuade Odysseus to join the Greek host, and in all cases Telemachus is either stated to be an infant or is placed before a sword or ploughshare. It is difficult in this case to imagine a version of the story so devoid of detail that the version in *MU* could have been a simple reconstruction from any such account. It is

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[741] The (as yet unrecognised by Uilix) son is first described as 'ara gúalaind', 'at her shoulder', in relation to Peneloipi as Uilix first approaches them: *MU*, l. 203; and engaging in pillow-talk with her at ll. 227–8.

[742] These two possibilities need not be mutually exclusive. On Pelops' relatively advanced age at the time of his attempted murder in *FCT* see above, pp. 77–9; on that of Orestes at the time of his escape into exile in *FCT* see above, pp. 132–4.

far more likely that such a short account as those in the extant analogues, or even a briefer one without Telemachus' name for example (since he is not named in *MU*), could have been the inspiration for a deliberately revised narrative of Odysseus' narrow escape from causing the death of his own adult son, such as that present in *MU*.

There at least two possible reasons for the change in *MU* which both places the timing of Uilix's near-filicide at the end of the tale and makes his son a young man. The first is that this eliminates the need for the story to account for Penelope's suitors who appear in every other version. Not having the suitors present in the story in *MU* alone both allows for a far briefer narrative than the analogues and allows the hero a peaceful, more idealised in Christian terms, return home – there is no need for the hero to kill either the suitors or the members of his household who have collaborated with them in his absence, as happens in the *Odyssey*. There is thus no need for Uilix to commit murder in *MU*, which is very different from the situation described in other accounts of his arrival back home, in which the hero performs many acts of violence in order both to secure his and his son's patrimony, and to take revenge on members of his household who have collaborated with the suitors.

A second possible reason for preferring the hero's son to be nearly killed by him at the end of his journey, rather than at any other time, is that this places extra moral weight on the benefit gained by Uilix from the earlier teaching of 'In Breithem Fírinne'. The extended account of Uilix's meeting with this figure, who is clearly so much more important to the action of *MU* than Aeolus is to Homer's *Odyssey*, seems to hold the key to understanding the major preoccupations of the author of *MU*. Hence Uilix's narrow avoidance of an act of *fingal*, which would end his own genetic line and thus threaten his own patrimony, is closely connected with the hero's acquisition of 'eólus' during his visit to 'In Breithem Fírinne'. That such apparently unconnected incidents in Odysseus' Classical biography as his meeting with Aeolus and his narrow failure to cause his son's death should be woven into a single narrative by a medieval Irish author demonstrates a high degree not only of Classical knowledge, but also of appreciation of Classical themes and of creative skill.

(iii) *Classical themes in* MU

(a) Recognition

As mentioned above, Hillers notes that *MU* contains the Odyssean acts of recognition of the hero by both his wife and dog. These offer further scope for comparison with their analogues elsewhere in the tradition of the story of Odysseus' return from Troy, as follows below. However, it is apparent from an initial inspection of the small number of analogues that there is little mention of Penelope's doubts concerning the identity of the returning Odysseus in either Apollodorus or Hyginus, and no mention of the dog Argus in either Classical work. In addition to specifying and describing these two acts of recognition with some apparent relish, it seems that the Irish text is more akin to Homer's than to either of the two extant mythographic accounts of the complete narrative of the *Odyssey*. *MU* is alone, then, among the post-Homeric analogues in its quasi-Odyssean preoccupation with recognition of major characters – in both senses, i.e. as (hu)man, husband, wife, father, son and lord as well as the hero's physical recognition as himself by his wife and household.[743] This similar focus on both types of recognition in *MU* and the *Odyssey* is itself remarkable, and further strengthens the case that the author of *MU* was both knowledgable concerning, and in possession of a high level of understanding of, Homer's work, whatever his sources.

It may even be argued that *MU* makes the theme of recognition at least as important as it appears in its Homeric counterpart. The importance of both types of recognition in *MU* is evident from the first speech of Uilix to his crew (*MU* § 1) in which his lament is based on the prospect that not only will he not be physically recognised as her husband by his wife and domestic household, but that another man will be recognised by all as king "over our land and he will possess our country", "ar ar crích 7 ar ferand do beith aigi".[744] The connexion between the political recognition of the hero as both husband and king with his physical recognition as Uilix is then emphasised by the clause which immediately follows, "and our own rejection because of our appearance although it is really us.", "ocus ar séna fén im ar ndeilb gid ar fírindi beam".[745]

The denouement of *MU* is at least equally replete with references to both types (political and physical) of recognition. Having already asked the same question when her husband and his men first entered the house, Peneloipi gets a truthful answer to the question 'cársa cia sib-si

[743] The importance of recognition as a theme in the *Odyssey* has been a favoured topic of critics since Aristotle, see Richardson, 'Recognition'; on the theme of recognition in the *Odyssey* see: Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice*, pp. 5–24; Cave, *Recognitions*, pp. 40–6, and Murnaghan, *Disguise*.
[744] *MU*, l. 7.
[745] *MU*, ll. 7–8.

etir?', 'who are you?' when she poses it a second time, i.e. that Uilix is himself.[746] The queen's response to this claim is revealing, 'Ní tú int Uilix rob aichnid dúin-ne', 'you are not the Uilix who might be recognised by us', for the author seems here to be making the deliberate connexion between both types of recognition, as well as giving an element of justification to a concern expressed in the aformentioned opening speech of Uilix in *MU* § 1, that he will not be recognised as husband and king because of his appearance.[747] Peneloipi's initial semi-rejection of him is followed by Uilix declaring his 'comartha', 'proofs of identity', literally 'signs', to her, and the couple then complete their recognition by means of a private revelation of a series of shared secrets.[748] Even after this, Peneloipi is not completely convinced, first asking Uilix where his form and (the rest of) his crew have gone, and then testing the hero on the subject of their parting gifts.[749] Only after Uilix has correctly described his dog is Peneloipi prepared to begin to accept him as her husband, referring to Uilix in the third person immediately prior to his description of the dog, but equating him for the first time with 'tuso', 'you', only in the sentence which follows Uilix canine description.[750] It is their collective act of seeing Uilix's own recognition by the dog which is the pivotal moment in convincing Uilix's dry-land household of his true identity, and their immediate acts of leaping at him and of kissing his clothing mirror those of the dog as

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[745] *MU*, ll. 250–1. Before recognising the true situation in his household, ie that Peneloipi remains faithful to him, and that he has not been dethroned by another as he feared at the tale's outset (and again at l. 205 when confronted with the sight of a handsome young man at Peneloipi's shoulder) Uilix fails to reply to a similar question, allowing his men to give the ambiguous response 'Daíne mescda muiridi sindi', 'we are confused seafaring folk', just as the hero himself has claimed on the shore of the land of 'In Breithem Firinne' that he was 'Do élóichtib na Troiana', an ambiguous response, greatly in keeping with the spirit of Homer's hero, which might mean either 'one of the Trojan fugitives', or 'one of those who escaped the Trojans': *MU*, l. 91.

[747] *MU*, l. 252; Peneloipi's use of the 'royal we' in her response to Uilix's initial revelation of his own identity echoes that of the hero in *MU* § 1 in the phrase, 'Ar séna fén im ar ndeilb' 'Our [i.e. my] own rejection because of our [i.e. my] appearance'. Although it is not quite so evident in *MU* as it is in the *Odyssey*, Uilix and Peneloipi demonstrate the quality of like-mindedness (*homophrosyne*) also found in Homer's work. In the *Odyssey*, both husband and wife use similar levels of cunning, resourcefulness and mental strength, in that both her resistance of the suitors and his resistance of the threats posed by figures such as the Cyclops and Sirens are portrayed as equally necessary for their eventual reunion. The equivalent to this in *MU* seems to be that Peneloipi both takes drastic action to protect Uilix's honour by sharing a chaste bed with their son only, and uses Uilix-like cunning ruses to establish the hero's true identity. In both works, the couple's like-mindedness is also demonstrated by their shared secrets which aid the recognition process. Peneloipi is thus not only at least as steadfast as her Homeric counterpart but also at least as cautious in testing the man who claims to be her husband, neither trusting his word nor her own raised hopes once he begins to reveal his identity, and waiting (in *MU* a week) longer than the rest of the household before she accepts Uilix at face value: *MU*, §§ 17–20.

[748] They go 'ina rúinib ⁊ ina comráitib ⁊ ina derridib', 'into their mysteries and into their confidences and into their secrets': *MU*, ll. 253–4.

[749] Uilix's response concerning the whereabouts of his form and crew is that, 'docúadar amugu', 'they went astray': *MU*, l. 256, in which the word 'amugu' may carry the implication of permanence, i.e. that both are irretrievably lost, see DIL, p. 449, col. 17.

[750] *MU*, ll. 263–8.

physical acts of recognition, both of Uilix as the physical man, and as their lord.[751] Peneloipi, notably, is the last to acknowledge Uilix in his role as her husband, alone in not moving towards him following the dog's exuberant act of recognition, and waiting for Uilix's 'dealb', 'appearance', to return before she is prepared to proffer full recognition to him in both senses.[752]

Certain details of Uilix's recognition are different in *MU* from those in the *Odyssey* and in other Classical accounts. For example, as noted above, there are no suitors in the Irish version, only the son whom Uilix initially misidentifies as his wife's lover, and only in *MU* does the hero reveal his identity to his wife first, before other members of the household. *MU* also differs from the *Odyssey* in that Uilix bears no scar to aid recognition, nor does any household member (in the *Odyssey* the nurse Eurycleia) berate Peneloipi for failing to recognise her own husband. As for the dog, Argus, a pitiful, neglected, figure in the *Odyssey*, his Homeric portrayal is a far cry from the unnamed, multi-coloured, lively hound found in *MU*. In the Irish text, Uilix's canine has, possibly with a touch of humour as well as acculturation, benefited from Peneloipi's 'brochán aísi', 'broth of long-life', the mention of which is also further evidence of a fittingly wise queen for Uilix, whose portrayal throughout *MU* renders her similar, yet if anything superior, to her Classical counterpart.[753] Concerning the respective portrayals of the hero's dog in *MU* and in Homer, it may be noted that although he is far livelier and colourful than Argus, Uilix's canine is as loyal to him as the Ithacan hound is to Odysseus, and both recognise their master immediately. The dogs' different roles in their respective accounts may be assigned to deliberate acculturation rather than any source deficiencies. It may also be the case that the hound is deliberately 'improved' in *MU*, just as Peneloipi and Uilix are even more 'ideal' than their already idealised Homeric counterparts.

Even so, both Homeric and medieval Irish versions of the recognition of the hero have plenty in common. Uilix, like Odysseus, delays the revelation of his true identity to his wife upon his return home until he has enough information to know the true situation there, i.e. that she has been faithful to him and there is no rival to bar his return. Similiarly, both Peneloipi and her Classical namesake are last among their respective husbands' households to recognise the hero, only doing so following many gradual steps of recognition, not by means of single signs

[751] *MU*, ll. 272–5.
[752] *MU*, ll. 278–81.
[753] *MU*, l. 263.

such as the dog's recognition (*MU*) or a scar (*Odyssey*) which suffice as proof for other household members. This seems to imply that the Irish author recognised the similarly cautious processes by which husband and wife became restored to each other in those roles, very much in the spirit of Homer, and with far greater emphasis on these acts of recognition than occurs in either extant Classical mythographic account, neither of which offers a detailed account of how Odysseus' recognition is achieved. The author of *MU* seems to have appreciated the situation in which Peneloipi finds herself. Just as in Homer's account, the hero's wife has most to lose of all those members of the household by misrecognition (in both senses of the word) of any claimant to be her husband, and she places extra demands upon him before her full recognition is granted. The particular importance of the role of his wife to Uilix's position in the household and as king appears to have been a particular preoccupation of the author of *MU*, for the Irish version alone spells out what is only implied elsewhere, that Peneloipi is the guardian of Uilix's honour.[754]

Moreover, the importance of both types of recognition in *MU* is not confined to Uilix, Peneloipi, dry-land household and hound. There are several further instances of this processs in *MU*, which are marked either by the use of forms of 'aichne', 'recognition' or refer to 'delb', 'appearance' as a means to do so, or by forms of the verbs 'ad-cluinethar', 'hears' and 'facaid' / 'ad-cí'', 'sees', but also with the sense 'perceives, senses, understands', indicators of (re)cognition, as in Modern English. Many of the occasions when such recognition is attempted in *MU*, particularly those when Uilix's men try to undertsand a situation using their human senses they fail to recognise it for its true nature.

There are several instances in *MU* when human senses alone mislead or offer incorrect recognitions or appreciations of truth, and lead Uilix's men off course in a state of confusion, a meaning suggested by the terms 'mesc-merugud', 'amugu', ' and 'mescda'.[755] The importance of recognising the truth ('fírinne') of a situation is a constant theme in *MU*, and the human senses are often shown to be deficient in this process. The sight of the mountains of his own country at the beginning of the story brings him a vision of what Uilix is incorrectly certain that he and his men will see at home (there is no element of doubt

[754] '...ac coiméd a einig-sium', '...guarding his own honour': *MU*, ll. 241–2.
[755] Respectively 'roaming astray', 'astray', and 'confused', applied in each case to Uilix's men: *MU*, ll. 13, 208 and 256.

expressed in 'inní fogébam', 'what we will find'.[756] That Uilix and his crew (who share a similar pessimistic understanding) are immediately sent back to sea by a storm at this point perhaps indicates that their inner senses are insufficient to see things the way they really are – to recognise the truth of the situation. Only when armed with the teaching provided by 'In Breithem Fírinne' is Uilix able to get home, for although at that point his sense of sight still continues to provide him with an incorrect version of reality – when he sees the handsome young man both at his wife's shoulder (*MU* § 15) and in bed with her (*MU* § 17) Uilix takes him for her lover – he now has learnt the self-control to wait for the true situation to become clear, enough information in this case to recognise the truth of Peneloipi's faithfulness, in the act of recognising his own son. Thus the aforementioned apparent bringing-forward in *MU* of the narrative of the storm which blows the hero back to sea in sight of his homeland from its orthodox later position within the story of the ruler-helper appears to have a function in that it shows that a higher authority (he who controls the weather) considers Uilix unready to return home at that stage, even though the hero is already both wiser and less materialistic than his men, as the subsequent Cyclops episode shows.

Uilix's men also show inferior understanding, misled by their imperfect human sense of sight, when confronted by the mountain of gold (ll. 26–7, the Cyclops lurks nearby, unseen) and by the massive form of the 'aithech' himself (ll. 55–6, his large size is mirrored by the depth of his slumbers, but Uilix's correct understanding of this requires more than the sense of sight).[757] Later in the story, some of Uilix's party are led astray by their reliance upon human vision alone to leave the lodging house before the instructed time, for although they can physically see the field and the road (*MU* ll. 179–80) they, unlike Uilix, are unable to see beyond these and recognise the bands of marauders who lurk (like the Cyclops had before) on either side (*MU* ll. 187–8). After Uilix has shown superior recognition of the true situation, the men who are left with him see ('condcadar') those of their fellows who had relied on

[756] *MU*, ll. 5–6.

[757] 'Cá fis daíb-si ón?', 'How do you know that'? (i.e. that the mountain of gold is a good windfall) is Uilix's question to his men (*MU*, l. 29) and they only understand the true situation when they catch sight of ('co facadar') the previously unseen Cyclops (*MU*, l. 31). Uilix reprises the question 'Cá fis daíb-si' (*MU*, l. 58) when his captive crewmen lament that the Cyclops' size will make it impossible for them to escape (*MU*, ll. 56–7). Again, even at this point before he has met and learnt from 'In Breithem Fírinne', Uilix alone has the wisdom to question whether the human senses offer the capacity to recognise the whole truth of the situation. He goes from a position of knowing his own human limits (already a higher state of enlightenment than that of his men who are led by their senses, and appetites, as in the sheep episode) to that of one who is willing to pay for and trust the learning offered by 'In Breithem Fírinne' over his own senses. The moral implications of this to a medieval Christian require little further elaboration. *MU* also points to the value (literal and figurative) of gaining costly instruction from a teacher of 'truth', a concept which may well have suited its learned author.

imperfect human visual senses killed by the marauders recognised as such only by Uilix, and the hero asks them whether they can see what has happened ('adchíthi siúd'?) and they reply that they can see ('adchíamaid') both echoing the conversation which had taken place between the crew members who left early to their doom and a figure described only as 'fer dun chuidechta', 'a man of the company' – a choice of words which emphasises his humanity, and hence reflects upon the imperfections of his senses (*MU* ll. 179–80).[758] With this in mind, it is also worth mentioning that, like Argus, Uilix's unnamed dog does not require the same level of proof in order to recognise his master that is required for human-human recognition. The *Odyssey* and *MU* appear to share the idea that it is human senses which are especially vulnerable to misrecognition.

(b) Paternity and patrimony

The climax of *MU* is in the gradual recognition process between Uilix, his household and Peneloipi, after which we may assume that normal relationships have been re-established, with Uilix as king and husband. However, this process only take place in the Irish version after Uilix has followed the three teachings of 'In Breithem Fírinne', the final, and therefore perhaps the most important of which being the advice to hold his breath thrice before committing an 'écht', 'murderous deed'.[759] It is notable that this particular 'aicept', 'instruction', is couched in the following terms: 'Gémad áen-athair áen-máthair do beith agaib bar nónbur', 'though the nine of you might have a single father and a single mother'. The instruction continues that even in the case of both of parents being murdered Uilix (and his men) should not commit the 'écht' before reflecting on it over three held breaths. This particular example of a deed worthy of instant revenge, ie. the murder of a father and mother, is interesting especially in the light of the situation in which Uilix uses this exact advice later in the story – in the avoidance of another act of kinslaying, the killing his own son, whom he has not yet recognised as such. When, with his own sword unsheathed, Uilix recognises his

[758] It is noticeable that terms for 'human' and 'man' ('duine' and 'fer' respectively) echo throughout *MU*, highlighting the differences between human and non-human. Since Homer's *Odyssey* begins with the word '(the) man', and the distinction between the beings he often calls 'bread eaters' and non-humans is a regular feature of Homer's work this appears to be another correspondence between the medieval Irish and Homeric texts. This is also notable in the fact that, like the Odyssean supernaturals, the non-human Cyclops does not offer greetings in *MU*, whereas the phrase 'ro fiarfaid scéla de..' is used exclusively for encounters between humans. That this phrase means literally 'he asked tales of' may also have a significance with reference to Homer's arch tale-teller which was not lost on the author of *MU*.

[759] *MU*, § 9. The importance of not committing an 'écht' in *MU* recalls the 'échta ⁊ aighedha na nGréc', 'murderous deeds and violent deaths of the Greeks', which are mentioned in the final sentence of *FCT* as the subject matter of that text. This may be coincidental, yet it serves to highlight the contrast between these two narratives which offer extreme ends of the same spectrum.

son as such, this occurs through the words of Peneloipi who empahsises the blood ties between herself, Uilix, and the young man who, in sharing her bed, protects his father's honour.[760] A major goal of Uilix's teaching at the hands of 'In Breithem Fírinne', then, is revealed as the prevention of kinslaying, in particular the slaying of Uilix's son by his father.

In emphasising the paramount importance of Uilix not being responsible for the death of his own son, *MU* shares some common thematic ground with more than one of its Classical counterparts, as discussed above with reference to the story of Odysseus' feigned madness. Not only this, but *MU* shares with both Homer's *Odyssey* and his *Iliad* a focus on the importance of fatherhood in the societies depicted therein. In *MU*, the possession of the hero's patrimony, which Uilix calls not only 'ar crích' and 'ar ferand' ('our land', 'our country') but also 'ar athar-tíri bunaid féin', 'our own native fatherland', is of the greatest importance.[761] At the beginning of *MU*, the hero perceives (incorrectly in this case) to his chagrin that his patrimony may be held by 'ríg eli', 'another king', while his wife may be possessed by 'fer eli', 'another man'.[762] Since Uilix is at this stage unaware that he has a son (this ignorance is a detail which is unique to *MU*) it seems clear that Uilix's fear is that someone from outside of his own kin group, an 'other' may have supplanted both him and therefore his *fine*.

Other terms for the unnamed Ithaca which are used several times in *MU* are the aforementioned adjectives 'atharda', and 'dúthaig', both of which are used independently as

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[760] 'Nocur léigiusa corp neich in áen-lepaid rium acht a fuil-sium m'fuil-sea ac coiméd a einig-sium','I have not let anyone's body into my bed but his blood and my blood for the protection of his honour': *MU*, ll. 240–1. This chaste bed-sharing between close kinsfolk is in sharp contrast with the incest which prevails in *FCT*.

[761] *MU*, ll. 7 and 20–1. Uilix's usage of the first person plural in all three occasions is interesting, since it may be the case that the author had particular motives in choosing it over the singular 'mo', 'my'. On all three occasions when he refers to the land as 'ours' he is addressing his men in the attempt to persuade them to return home. The 'ours' in Uilix's own mind may be his family's, rather than his men's, which would fit with any suggestion that the Irish author was aware of Homer's hero's reputation for duplicitous skill with words. Naturally, when it suits his purposes, Uilix stresses the inclusivity of his mission, even going so far as to use the first person plural possessive 'ar' to describe the fate which he believes will await him back home – 'ar séna fén im ar ndeilb gid ar firindi beam', 'our own denial because of our form although it were in truth us': *MU*, ll. 7–8. Whether or not his men recognise the true situation, i.e. that 'our' means 'my' when Uilix refers to his kingdom as 'ar...', the use of the first-person plural possessive at these particular times suggests an authorial awareness of the hero's skilful and diplomatic use of language. On Odysseus as '*polytropon*', '(the man) of many tropes / turns (of speech)', see Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice*, p. 3, note 3. In *MU*, Uilix is described as 'coitchindbérla', which may be translated as '(the man) of many languages' (*MU*, l. 80), a not too dissimilar characterisation of the hero's skill as a wordsmith.

[762] *MU*, ll. 5–6; this may be a veiled reference to the suitors, whose absence from *MU* may be related to Uilix's (unique) mistaken belief his that son is a threat to his position as Peneloipi's husband, see above, p.191.

substantives meaning 'patrimony'.[763] As mentioned above, Uilix is preoccupied with the need to return to his patrimony throughout *MU*, and the action which follows appears to fit very well with the idea that the reason that Uilix may be considered 'in fer fiamach fírglic', 'the truly cunning, clever man', is that he alone is able to recognise the value of the teaching given by 'In Breithem Fírinne'.[764] The act of following the Judge's teaching, and not his impulsive desires not only restores him to his patrimony and his position as king and husband, but crucially also prevents Uilix from killing his own son and thereby threatening the continuity of the family line.[765] Were all three pieces of the Judge's advice not followed, 'rig eli', 'another king', might well have broken the Leirtis-Uilix-son chain.

It is worth recalling in this regard that the hereditary, inheritance-focused relationship between father and son is central to the action of the *Odyssey*. Indeed, it may be arguable that Homer's work concerns Telemachus' growth into a maturity which makes him his father's worthy successor and inheritor as much as it does Odysseus' return to Ithaca.[766] As the disguised Odysseus is shortly to reveal himself to Telemachus, Homer tells us in a clear reference to the purpose of the hero's journey home, 'His only son and well beloved, for whose sake he has borne such sorrow'.[767] Then, at the end of the *Odyssey*, as grandfather, father and son prepare to defend themselves against the dead suitors' relatives, Laertes expresses a particular type of familial pride: 'What a day is this for me, kind gods! I utterly rejoice: my son and my son's son are quarrelling over which is the bravest', a final signifier that with his father's return Telemachus has come of age.[768]

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[763] See above, p. 184, note 727.

[764] *MU*, ll. 97–8.

[765] Uilix's instinctive impulse is couched twice in close in close succession using a similar formula, ''rob áil lium'', ''what I would like'', and ''is áil dam-sa'', ''what I want'': *MU*, ll. 211 and 215–6; this is also the formula used by Atreus in *FCT* (§ 5) when he announces his intention to have the grisly feast prepared for Thyestes, ''Rop áil lim-sa'', Atreus announces, but there is no holding of the breath to check *his* kinslaying impulse, as occurs in the case of Uilix here. Taken together, then, the implication is that whereas Uilix, having learnt from 'In Breithem Fírinne', knows how to control his angry impulses, characters such as Atreus in *FCT* do not. Uncontrolled anger is an apparently major preoccupation of *FCT* (see above, pp. 165–7); how to achieve the level of self-control in order to overcome anger appears to be a similarly important preoccupation of the author of *MU*.

[766] The opening books of the *Odyssey* picture the son powerless at home while his mother's suitors literally eat his inheritance but, following the intervention of Athena, Telemachus begins to take action, recognising himself to be Odysseus' son through the telling of his father's deeds at the court of Menelaus and Helen in Book 4. By the time of Odysseus' return to Ithaca, Telemachus has become a man, the only person apart from his father capable of stringing Odysseus' bow. He is also able to assist his father in the securing of the family *oikos* through the defeat of the suitors.

[767] Murray, *Homer*: *Odyssey* 2, pp. 18–19, ll. 17–19 (Murray's trans.).

[768] Murray, *Homer*: *Odyssey* 2, pp. 448–9, ll. 514–15 (Murray's trans.).

Patrilineal descent plays a very important role in the action and theme of the *Odyssey*. During the above final scene of the poem, in response to Odysseus' urgings, Telemachus has vowed "You shall see me, if you wish, dear father, as far as my present mood goes, bringing no disgrace whatsoever on your lineage, as you suggest."[769] These words have particular resonance, for Odysseus' paternal line, we are told in the *Odyssey*, consists of single sons, very much the Greek ideal since the patrimonial *oikos* would not become fragmented over generations via inheritance, and conflict between brothers could be avoided (as in for example that between Eteocles and Polynices in Thebes).[770] Despite this, the 'only son' situation might itself become dangerous if, like Hector in the *Iliad*, the father dies before a brotherless son (Astyanax) reaches maturity, for then that son would suffer loss of status and wealth at the hands of outsiders, such as Penelope's suitors in the *Odyssey*.[771] If there are no such suitors to threaten or consume Uilix's 'athardha' / 'dúthaig' in *MU* (though Uilix is unaware of this until the tale's climax, yet he fears that 'another man', 'fer eli', may have usurped him in *MU* § 1) and Laertes' name survives only in the tale's title, there is ample evidence within the text to support the notion that its author had at least enough information in any putative source(s) to grasp the importance of the links between Uilix, his father and his son, thereby enabling the important Odyssean theme of patrilineal descent and the preservation of the patrimonial *oikos* to survive in a medieval Irish guise.[772]

However, this emphasis on inheritance and the father-son relationship, strong in both the *Odyssey*, above all in the relationship between Odysseus and Telemachus, and in the *Iliad*, with the concurrent need to preserve the hero's patrimonial *oikos* over generations, is not carried through to every later Classical account of Odysseus' wanderings. In several accounts

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[769] Murray, *Homer*: *Odyssey* 2, pp. 448–9, ll. 511–12 (Murray's trans.).

[770] Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice*, pp. 19–21.

[771] The importance of a father staying alive until his offspring reach maturity is established as a major Homeric preoccupation in the *Iliad*, in which the death of Hector (who parallels Odysseus as the father of a single young son, and whose status as a father is given some attention in this work) is seen by Andromache as leading to inevitable ruin for their son, '... others will take away his lands ... now, since he has lost his dear father, he will suffer many ills': Murray, *Homer*: *Iliad* 2, pp. 488–9 (Murray's trans.).

[772] In addition to the special importance which the *Odyssey* attaches to the pressing need for the hero to resume his role as Telemachus' father, Homer also calls Odysseus 'father of Telemachus', and 'Telemachus' loving father' in the *Iliad*: Murray, *Homer*: *Iliad* 1, pp. 80–1, l. 260; and 190–1, l. 354 (Murray's trans.). In addition to these are several instances in Homer in which Odysseus is referred to as 'son of Laertes'. The latter, patronymic, formula is of course far from unusual in Homer and elsewhere in ancient Greek as in other literature in which many characters appear to derive both their name and their primary identity out of being 'son of x' or 'daughter of y', but references to a character as 'father of x' are far rarer in Homer's epic. The relationship between fathers and sons (and daughters, though there are fewer examples) is emphasised throughout the *Iliad*, yet only Odysseus is singled out by gaining a significant part of his identity from not only his status as a son of a particular father, but as the father of a named son.

of his homecoming, as in some later stories concerning the hero's exploits at Troy, Odysseus' martial prowess, cunning and duplicity often figure, whereas his status as Telemachus' father is not afforded a great deal of attention, nor are the Homeric ideals of marital exclusivity and the only son preserved.[773] These stories are in all likelihood at best crude misrepresentations of Homer's account, yet they demonstrate that, for some Classical writers and audiences, neither the Odyssean emphasis on the sacred chaste union between Odysseus and Penelope (symbolised by the ancient, rooted, olive tree bed at the centre of the palace to which the pair return, post-recognition in Book 23 of the *Odyssey*) nor the securing of his only son's patrimony as a significant driving force propelling Odysseus back to Ithaca, were necessarily taken as a fixed, pre-eminent parts of the story of Odysseus' return.[774]

On the other hand, the above-mentioned, probably post-Homeric, story in which Odysseus feigns insanity in order to avoid joining the Greek task force at Aulis, but is forced to admit the truth at the threat to his son's life, does indicate that some Classical writers recognised the importance of both his status as a father, and his paternity of Telemachus to the character of Odysseus. Lucian of Samosata, writing in the second century A.D., mentions of Odysseus' decision to cease his shammed madness in order to save the infant Telemachus that 'His paternal feeling betrays him ... The father in Odysseus is revealed'.[775] At certain times and places, it seems, among certain ancient writers, the Homeric importance of his being Telemachus' father to the identity of Odysseus was recognised. Such a time, place and writer

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[773] For example, the two extant Classical mythographical accounts of the narrative of the *Odyssey*, by Apollodorus (*The Library*, Epitome 7) and byHyginus (*Fabulae* 125–7) respectively, do not focus on this central theme of Homer's work, i.e. the relationship between father, son and patrimony, rather they pay more attention to the hero's adventures on his way home to Ithaca. Indeed, both Classical mythographers report the anti-Homeric detail that Odysseus fathered Circe's son Telegonus, and Apollodorus also reports that according to some sources Penelope had liaisons with either Antinous or Amphinomos of the suitors, and later bore Pan to Hermes.

[774] Of course, the union was chaste only on the part of Penelope for, in Classical accounts, but not in *MU*, her husband has sexual liaisons with both Circe and Calypso during his journey home. This point is made by Penelope herself in Ovid's *Heroides*, as mentioned above, p. 178, note 716. In contrast with Ovid's Penelope, neither Homer nor his hero appear to count Odysseus' infidelities with supernatural females on a par with, for example, Clytemnestra's with Aegisthus, or Helen's with Paris. The perceived difference appears to be in the fact that Odysseus' extramarital partners are figures from the non-human world, and their encounters (unusually for human- supernatural sexual relations in Greek mythology) do not produce offspring, which may be connected to the Homeric conceit that Odysseus' paternal line consists of single sons only. The fact that the hero's encounters with Circe and Calypso go unmentioned in *MU* mirrors the aforementioned lack of any reference in *FCT* to Agamemnon's extra-marital adventures, with Cassandra, for example. This may reflect a shared authorial desire to downplay the importance of male (un)faithfulness while the respective adultery and extreme marital chastity of Clytemnestra in *FCT* and Penelopi in *MU* is of great importance to their surrounding narratives.

[775] Fowler & Fowler, *The Works*, p. 563.

appear to have met in Ireland, c. 1200.[776]

In addition to these consistent and persistent references to Odysseus' status as a father throughout the Classical period, it may be noted that at least one Byzantine source, the aforementioned *Chronicle* of John Malalas, mentioned above as a possible ultimate source for certain of the unorthodox personal names found in *FCT*, relates a story in which Odysseus contemplates killing his own son with a sword, only to change his mind having reflected on the situation (he has received a prophecy that his own son will kill him). Malalas' account may have been at least influenced by a version of the Palamedes / Odysseus story; whatever inspired it, it shows the persistence of the ancient motifs of fatherhood and near-filicide, present in *MU*, to be associated with stories of Homer's hero well after the Classical period.[777]

4.3 Conclusion

The essential problem posed by *MU* is that it appears to include both highly unorthodox and, remarkably for its likely time and place of composition, Classical, even Homeric, elements. There are two possible approaches to this conundrum; one which depends upon authorial error, whether influenced by paucity or inaccuracy of sources, and a second which relies upon deliberate authorial intervention despite his possession of a high level of both knowledge and understanding of Homer's narrative, in whatever form it was known to the author.

In the light of the above comparative analysis in the context of the process which appears to have been at work in *FCT*, it appears to be the case that the author of *MU* reproduced a significant number of Homeric themes within a narrative which is many times shorter than

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[776] Despite the apparent absence of the text of the *Odyssey* itself, scholars in the medieval West appear to have been interested in its hero's character, not always favourably, see Stanford, *The Ulysees Theme*, pp. 281–94, and Hillers, 'In fer', pp. 16–25 and 29–35; the author of *MU*, by contrast, appears to have had a similarly positive attitude towards Homer's hero to that of pre-medieval commentators, including Cicero, Horace and Seneca, see Stanford, *The Ulysees Theme*, pp. 121–5.

[777] Malalas' *Chronicle* relates that Odysseus had a dream in which the hero 'thought that a beautiful amazing god-like creature was lying beside me on the same couch ... the bed from which it was bred was not clear to me ... but it said that there was a legal bond of kinship between us and that it was fated that I should perish at its hand'. Having had the dream interpreted, Odysseus rushes to kill his son Telemachos (named as such) but, seeing his son in tears, 'returned to his paternal senses and decided to spare his son': Jeffreys, *The Chronicle*, pp. 64–5; though this is not an identical account to the story of Uilix's near killing of his own son in *MU*, there are enough common elements between the two mini-narratives to show that such stories concerning a near miss with filicide for Homer's hero were in existence in the Christian era.

even that part of the *Odyssey* which deals with Odysseus' journey home. He appears to have replaced lotus with outsize lamb, Aeolus the wind-king with 'In Breithem Fírinne' who dispenses 'eólus', and the (non-Homeric) account of Odysseus' near-filicide of the infant Telemachus with another instance in which he almost kills his own adult son. The effects of these transformations in *MU* include the elimination of the need for Circe and other supernatural adventures, placing the emphasis if anything even more firmly on the hero's superior wisdom, on his recognition of both the truth in a given situation, and on his need to avoid kinslaying, thereby preserving his patrimony within his direct male line. Given Peneloipi's even more extreme levels of cunning, guardedness and marital chastity than her Odyseean counterpart, it may safely be stated that *MU* contains characterisations and thematic content which are more distilled, but recognisably Homeric.

In summary, then, it appears that, like the author of *FCT*, the author of *MU* was a scholar who both knew enough relatively arcane (for his time and place) Classical material that he felt comfortable reworking it, and possessed enough literary skill to preserve, even magnify, some ancient thematic preoccupations associated with his narrative's ultimate models. That these two medieval Irish Classical adaptation texts focus very heavily upon very similar themes – self-control over (female) sexual and (male) violent impulses, kinslaying and patrimony – is perhaps the most important result of the above comparative analyses of both texts. Added to their shared manuscript provenance and likely composition around the same time, there are several good reasons to suggest a connexion between *FCT* and *MU*.

CONCLUSION

FCT, though found in two manuscript versions which date from the late fifteenth century, is a text which, on linguistic grounds, is likely to have been composed either towards the end of the twelfth century or in the thirteenth century.

FCT relates versions of Classical narratives which concern acts of kinslaying within the same Royal House, i.e. that of Tantalus. As such, it offers briefer versions of the same narratives upon which Tragic plays had been based by both Greek and Latin authors. It is difficult to offer precision concerning the likeliest sources for the Classical material contained in *FCT*. Even a lengthy comparative analysis, such as that which forms Chapter 2 above, cannot hope to capture every possible example of even extant references to these narratives. However, it appears that the very brief, mythographic, sources known to have been available in parts of the medieval West, if not necessarily in Ireland, such as the respective works of Servius and the Vatican Mythographers would have been sufficient, taken together, for a skilful medieval Irish author to be able to form a cohesive narrative which grouped the stories of the Tantalus dynasty together. It is of course possible that the author of *FCT* had access to other mythographic sources which have not survived, and / or to sources from outside the Western tradition, such as John Malalas' *Chronicle*, which may have been an indirect source for some of the more obscure genealogical information found in *FCT* (perhaps via TTr^2). Further research into possible links between Byzantine and medieval Western scholarship may shed greater light on this tentative suggestion of such a connexion.

However, the author of *FCT* appears to have been far more ambitious than aiming simply to recreate a cohesive Classical narrative connected by the twin pillars of politics and kinslaying. The material which is unique to *FCT* demonstrates two clear authorial preoccupations: the presentation of women as the prime movers in tragic events within the family by means not only of their uncontrolled sexual passions and capacity to manipulate male behaviour using words and schemes, but also of the act of giving birth and therefore perpetuating the same family traits which sustain the cycle of crime. Secondly, there is a focus on men who are presented as weak, incapable of acting without seeking advice from women and, once inflamed by female words or sexual behaviour, unable to control their

violent rage. The overriding message of *FCT*, then, is one of the perils of failure to moderate the emotions, especially sexual passion in women and anger in men.

It is far from surprising that the tragic narratives of Classical characters such as Tantalus, Atreus, Agamemnon and Orestes should have suited such thematic preoccupations in a medieval Irish author. These themes are not only present in primary works such as the respective plays of Aeschylus and Seneca which touch upon these narratives, but they might also be recovered fairly easily from extant mythographic accounts, whether Classical or later, even if these sources are not so explicitly focused upon the reasons why x murdered y. Nevertheless, if the only sources available to the *FCT* author were both mythographic and as skeletal as those which are extant, so much greater is his achievement in both rebuilding them into a primary work and developing them to suit his own thematic purposes.

The author of *FCT* appears to have been not only very well informed concerning Classical material but well-versed in the Irish literary tradition. Although no text is mentioned by name, certain narrative details are strongly reminiscent of parallels found in works such as *TBC*, *LMU*, *CMT*, *LG* and *FR*, though the latter example, the lustful stepmother motif, might have been influenced by a Classical or other instance thereof. Furthermore, the author of *FCT* demonstrates a keen wit and love of wordplay especially in his unmarked mentions of both 'lár medhón' and 'aireg menman' in close proximity to the respective gaelicised character names 'Laimedhon' and 'Aigmemnon'. In the latter case, the effect of this skilful wordplay is all the more marked by the fact that the 'aireg menman', 'scheme', in question is devised specifically to cause the downfall of 'Aigmemnon'. In addition, it seems that the author of *FCT* made it a deliberate policy to refer to the gender of grammatically feminine abstract nouns which he wished to associate with 'feminine' qualities, especially 'comairle', 'advice' and the aforementioned 'aireg (menman)', 'scheme'. All in all, therefore, the author of *FCT* appears to have been a highly educated and skilled wordsmith, capable of drawing upon multiple sources and traditions.

FCT is then a work which not only contains pseudo-historical knowledge, replete with battle scenes and martial deeds, but it also reflects a deliberate, highly erudite, attempt by a writer to place a significant slice of Classical tragic lore in its place within his medieval Irish moral universe. If the Tantalus family was doomed to self destruct, *FCT* seems to inform us, it was because of the sexual misdeeds of its women and because of the resultant violent misdeeds of

its men. This is reflected in both the text's opening sentence which deals with Moesia's excessive passion couched in the phrase 'tuc grádh ndermháir' later repeated of Clytemnestra, and its final sentence which mentions that it relates the 'échta', 'murderous deeds', of the Greeks. The personal consequences of these excesses for the main characters of *FCT* are violent death, often in a particularly unpleasant fashion, interspersed with incest, madness and committing acts of *fingal*. The political consequences for the Royal House of Tantalus are that it loses sovereignty over Greece, expressed as patrimonial in nature via the phrase 'atharda dílis', to a rival dynasty, namely that of Teucer, in a most anti-Classical twist. Therefore, the action of *FCT* illustrates that the penalties for both the lack of personal self-control in both sexes and for men to allow women to interfere in matters of state are severe on both the micro and macro levels.

FCT, then, appears to be a text with a strongly moral purpose, and not merely a conduit for either Classical lore or an action-filled heroic plot. As such it appears to be somewhat out of step with medieval Irish adaptations of Classical Epics, such as *IA* and *Togail na Tebe* for example, neither of which presumes to make much by way of either explicit or implicit comment upon the moral status of the action it recounts. However, when *FCT* is compared with *MU* by means of a similar process of deconstructing the latter from its Classical-tradition analogues it can be seen that both medieval Irish works not only operate on a similar moral plane, but that both authors are very comfortable with reworking Classical material to their own ends, in remarkably similar ways. This reworking is evident throughout *MU*, not only in details such as the apparent replacement of lotus leaves with outsize sheep but also in the re-use of Classical literary motifs such as recognition. *MU* also shares with *FCT* its author's playfulness with the gaelicised forms of Classical personal names. Just as with 'lár medhón' and 'aireg menman' in *FCT*, the name of the Classical wind-king, Aeolus, is gaelicised and redeployed in *MU* as 'eólus', signifying the 'knowledge' or 'direction' Uilix needs in order both to return home and then to save himself from killing his own son. The correspondences between the moral outlook evident in *MU* with that in *FCT* are highlighted by the fact that it is only through the extreme sexual self-control of a woman (Peneloipi) and the self-control over violent instincts of a man (Uilix), learned in the latter case as taught 'eólus', that a catastrophic, dynasty-ending *fingal* is avoided in *MU*, the precise opposite of what occurs in *FCT*.

With both their respective disintegrated versus reconciled endings, and apparently shared moral outlook *FCT* and *MU* seem to be the opposites which make up a pair. Their manuscript contexts, with *MU* adjacent to *FCT* in both of the latter's witnesses, may suggest that they were considered to be related by fifteenth-century compilers. It also appears that their authors at least shared a similar outlook on the value of their respective Classical narratives as exempla which could be used to demonstrate the importance of self-control to both the individual and to the family over generations. Although it is doubtful that this moral perspective on these narratives was transmitted along with the information conveyed in mythographic accounts, it seems that enough of the Classical belief in the importance of self-control in preventing tragedy was discernible to the educated and perceptive minds which produced *FCT* and *MU* respectively. It is of course possible that the same author composed both texts, yet that must remain unknown.

With the above in mind, it seems likely that especially those Classical adaptation texts from unknown sources also found in RIA D iv 2 might be worthy of further investigation in a similar way to that which has been performed here in relation to *FCT* and *MU*. Miles' work on one such text, *RIM*, shows that its opening part most likely derives from the Statian tradition, if not from Statius' *Thebaid* itself. He further suggests that the second and final part of the text may derive from the Ovidian tradition.[778] It seems, therefore, that *RIM* was composed using mythographic sources, as has been strongly suggested for both *FCT* and *MU* here. Further investigation of both *RIM* and *SIM* following Hillers' work on the latter text may offer additional insight into these texts' likely sources and their authors' moral outlook(s). For example, it appears from the action of *RIM* that the 'Munntorc' of the title, which is owned exclusively by women and seems to cause death and division within the family, exemplifies both a similar narrative device and misogynistic perspective to that found in *FCT*, i.e. the 'female' causes of intra-familial strife, and its rebirth over generations. Similarly, the action of *SIM* appears to warn against the failure to regulate the self, as appears to be the overriding moral of its Classical model. It seems, then, that *FCT* is one of a group of four medieval Irish adaptations all found in close proximity in RIA D iv 2 in which a particular moral approach to Classical narratives may be shared. Further work on these texts may clarify this situation, yet this dissertation shows that both *FCT* and *MU* should be

[778] Miles, 'Riss', pp. 74–6.

understood as the works of at least one highly knowledgable and skilled medieval Irish writer working with Classical material from a particular moral perspective.

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List of Abbreviations

DETH	*De Excidio Troiae Historia*
DIL	Dictionary of the Irish Language[779]
EMI	Early Modern Irish
FCT	*Fingal Chlainne Tanntail*
FVM	*The First Vatican Mythographer*
GOI	Thurneysen, *A Grammar of Old Irish*[780]
IA	*Imtheachta Aeniasa*
ITS	Irish Texts Society
K	The version of *FCT* found in Dublin, KIL 12, folios 43c –45c
KIL	Dublin, King's Inns' Library
LG	*Lebor Gabála Érenn*
LL	*The Book of Leinster* (Dublin, Trinity College H 2 18)
MI	Middle Irish
MU	*Merugud Uilix meic Leirtis*
OI	Old Irish
om.	Omitted
pl.	Plural
RIM	*Riss In Muindtuirc*
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
S	The version of *FCT* found in Dublin, RIA D iv 2, folios 66vb–67va
s.	Singular
SIM	*Sgél In Mhinaduir*
SVM	*The Second Vatican Mythographer*
TTr	*Togail Troi*
TVM	*The Third Vatican Mythographer*
vn.	Verbal noun

[779] The edition cited is Quin, *Dictionary*.
[780] The edition cited is Binchy and Bergin, *A Grammar*.

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