

GÉNAIR PÁTRAICC: OLD IRISH BETWEEN PRINT AND MANUSCRIPT, 1647–1853

Printing his *Focalóir gaoidhilge-sax-bhéarla, or An Irish–English dictionary* in Paris in 1768, Bishop John O’Brien explained on his title-page its being compiled¹

not only from various Irish vocabularies, particularly that of Mr Edward Lhuyd; but also from a great variety of the best Irish manuscripts now extant; especially those that have been composed from the 9th & 10th centuries, down to the 16th: besides those of the lives of St Patrick & St Brigit, written in the 6th and 7th centuries.

Manuscripts from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries were ostensibly quarried for words and idioms from Irish texts, but the major source, Edward Lhwyd’s Irish–English dictionary, was a modern work, printed at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford, made available in Ireland in sheets from 1705 and bound as part of Lhwyd’s *Archaeologia Britannica* from 1707.² Now, the last few words, ‘those of the lives of St Patrick & St Brigit’, ought to refer back to ‘the best Irish manuscripts’, distinguished from other sources by their early date, the sixth and seventh centuries. Yet the plain fact is that these texts were used by him in print. This paper will focus on the unusual history of one of them, the metrical Life of St Patrick attributed to St Fiacc.

Both works, indifferently described as Lives or as hymns of the two saints, Patrick and Brigit, have been preserved in two related manuscripts of a collection of texts known as the Irish *Liber Hymnorum*, both written around the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century. One manuscript was used by Brother Míchéal Ó Cléirigh, writing his martyrology at the Franciscan convent in Donegal in 1630.³ From there it was taken to St Anthony’s College at Louvain. Here it was used by Father John Colgan, who entered a note in the lower margin of p.

¹ [John O’Brien], *Focalóir Gaoidhilge-Sax-Bhéarla or an Irish-English dictionary* (Paris, 1768), title-page.

² On the production of Lhwyd’s dictionary, see R. Sharpe, *Roderick O’Flaherty’s Letters* (Dublin, 2013), 110–42, and in particular p. 134 for the sending of a hundred sets of unpagged sheets to a Dublin bookseller in 1705.

³ *Féilire na naomh nÉirennach*, ed. J. O’Donovan, J. H. Todd, & W. Reeves, *The Martyrology of Donegal. A Calendar of the Saints of Ireland* (Dublin, 1864), 20 (19 Jan), refers to the *Liber Hymnorum* as ‘an Leabhar Iomann’, and at p. 34 (1 Feb), citing Ultán’s *Brigit bé bithmaith* and Broccán’s *Ní car Brigit*. Again, p. 102 (14 April), mention of Tassach’s giving communion to St Patrick is drawn from *Génair Pátraicc*, q. 27, and Ó Cléirigh left a gap in which to insert the quatrain. Among Ó Cléirigh’s notes at the front of the manuscript of his work, now Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 5095–6, he refers to the hymn ascribed to Ultán of Ardbraccan, *Brigit bé bithmaith*, which he can only have known from the *Liber Hymnorum* (*Martyrology*, p. xxv); Colgan included a Latin translation of the piece, *Trias*, 606a–b, which he attributed to St Columba, but in that case he did not print the Irish.

3, ‘Ex libris de Conventus [*sic*] de Dunnagall’. From this copy he printed the two works in his *Triadis thaumaturgae acta* (1647).⁴ In company with other manuscripts it passed from Louvain to Rome, and from St Isidore’s in Rome it returned to the Franciscan convent in Dublin in January 1872, now UCD–OFM MS A2 (known as F).⁵ O’Brien could conceivably have seen this manuscript in Louvain, though there is no evidence that he did.⁶ It appears that F, or notes derived from it, was known to Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh before 1653, but it is impossible to find a secure context for this.⁷ The other manuscript, now in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1441 (known as T), has ~~always~~ remained in Ireland.⁸ A passage unique to T was cited by Archbishop James Ussher in his *Britannicarum ecclesiarum antiquitates* (1639), and O’Sullivan has established that it was one of the many manuscripts from Ussher’s library that came to the college.⁹ The manuscript itself was thought to be very ancient.¹⁰ Its text was printed in

⁴ *Triadis thaumaturgae seu Divorum Patricii Columbae et Brigidae, trium veteris et maioris Scotiae, seu Hiberniae sanctorum insulae communium patronorum acta* (Louvain, 1647), 1–10, 515–20. In each case the page-range includes Colgan’s notes drawing on the scholia in the manuscript.

⁵ M. Dillon, C. Mooney, & P. de Brún, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Franciscan Library, Killiney* (Dublin, 1969), 2–5. Surviving manuscripts and printed books from the library of the Irish College are now divided between the Franciscan collections at UCD and at Killiney in Ireland and the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels.

⁶ He was in Brussels for a time in 1764, from where he wrote to Rome to request a subsidy to print his dictionary (J. Coombes, *A Bishop of Penal Times. The life and times of John O’Brien, bishop of Cloyne and Ross* (Cork, 1981), 82). Too little detail is known of his travels to know whether he ever visited St Anthony’s College at Louvain, though he sent ordinands from Cloyne and Ross to study there. In his dictionary he does not cite the *Liber Hymnorum* as such, nor does he cite any text in it apart from the two printed by Colgan.

⁷ N. Ó Muraíle, *The Celebrated Antiquary: Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbisigh (c. 1600–1671), his lineage, life, and learning* (Maynooth, 2002), 215. At the beginning of Mac Fhirbhisigh’s *Naoimhsheanchas*, in *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach*, pp. 692–4 (ed. N. Ó Muraíle, *The Great Book of Irish Genealogies compiled (1645–66) by Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh* (Blackrock, 2002), ii. 692–7) he draws on material found in the scholia in MS F. For example, the notion that, as Michael was angel of the Hebrews, so Victor was angel of the Irish, appears to have come from the scholia in F, but by the time Mac Fhirbhisigh was drawing together his materials, that manuscript was already in Louvain.

⁸ T. K. Abbott & E. J. Gwynn, *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin, 1921), 320–22. Its dating to the late eleventh or early twelfth century was first made by W. Stokes, *Goidelica* (Dublin, 1872), 61, commenting on what he called Middle Irish forms and correcting the early date of ninth or tenth century, favoured by John O’Donovan and J. H. Todd. Trinity College also acquired from the estate of William Reeves a facsimile copy of the manuscript made by Patrick O’Keeffe in 1842, now TCD MS 1130.

⁹ *Britannicarum ecclesiarum antiquitates* (Dublin, 1639), 961. This was discovered by W. O’Sullivan, ‘Notes on the Trinity *Liber Hymnorum*’, in Roger Powell, *The Compleat Binder*, ed. J. L. Sharpe, Bibliologia 14 (Turnhout, 1996), 130–35.

¹⁰ George Petrie, ‘On the history and antiquities of Tara Hill’, *TRIA* 18 (1839), *Antiquities*, 25–232, at p. 56, says that Ussher was of the opinion that the manuscript was ‘a thousand years old’; he cites Ussher’s *Epistula ad Vossium* (n. 14), where Ussher says no more than that the manuscript was *uetustissimus* (p. 2). McCarthy (n. 14) says that Petrie thought it

part by the college librarian J. H. Todd in 1855–69, who dated T to the ninth or tenth century, and F to the eleventh or twelfth century.¹¹ A complete edition from both manuscripts was made by two fellows of the college, J. H. Bernard and Robert Atkinson in 1898.¹² Confusingly, in 1639 James Ware refers to the *Liber Hymnorum* as being once at the Franciscan convent in Donegal but in his time kept at Ussher’s house.¹³ The editors were indeed able to prove that Ussher had used what is now the Franciscan copy, for he cites the Irish prefaces to *Quicumque uult* and *Te Deum*, which are not found at all in T.¹⁴ Four of the Irish hymns were copied for him from F, and the copy is now TCD MS 591 (E. 3. 28).¹⁵ (Another early copy of the two hymns for Brigit survives in a seventeenth-century volume between notes on Irish families and notes on ancient kings.¹⁶) While it appears, therefore, that both copies were once in Ussher’s hands, F from Donegal, T of unknown provenance, it would

twelve hundred years old, which transfers the same opinion from Ussher to Petrie by adding two hundred.

¹¹ J. H. Todd, *Leabhar Imuinn. The Book of Hymns of the Ancient Church of Ireland*, Irish Archaeological Society 16, 22 (1855–69), which breaks off unfinished and lacks any general introduction. The date of T is stated in a brief ‘Advertisement’ at the start (p. 2); he did not see F until some years later (see n. 75). Todd’s Irish title with genitive singular *imuinn* rather than plural, in Modern Irish *Leabhar Iomann*, suggests that his language-advisers were not entirely conscientious.

¹² J. H. Bernard & Robert Atkinson, *The Irish Liber Hymnorum*, Henry Bradshaw Society 13, 14 (1898).

¹³ James Ware, *De scriptoribus Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1639), 15; id. *S. Patricio adscripta opuscula* (London, 1656), 144.

¹⁴ *Epistula ad G. J. Vossium*, dated 8 February 1646/7 (OS), 18 February 1647 (NS), at the front of his *De Romanae ecclesiae symbolo apostolico vetere, aliisque fidei formulis diatriba* (London, 1647), 2–3. T lacks *Quicumque uult* entirely and has not the Irish preface to *Te Deum* (*Liber Hymnorum*, i. 59, 203). Todd, *Book of Hymns*, i. 8–9; Bernard & Atkinson, vol. i, pp. xiv–xv. On the strength of Todd’s remarks, McCarthy writes, ‘It is a curious fact that the *Liber Hymnorum* known to Ware and Ussher seems to have been the copy now preserved in Rome’ (‘St Fiacc’s poem on the Life of St Patrick’, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 4 (1868), 269–93, at p. 269n).

¹⁵ The description in T. K. Abbott’s *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin, 1900), 98–9, is jejune, and that in Abbott & Gwynn’s *Catalogue*, 4, hardly better. Despite Abbott’s dating to c. 1600 (perhaps on the basis of its including papers from Mountjoy’s time as Lord Deputy, 1600–1603), the manuscript is from Ussher’s collection, as observed by Bernard & Atkinson, i, p. xv. The four hymns here are Ultán’s hymn, *Brigit bé bithmaith*; Broccán’s hymn, *Ní car Brigit*; Sanctán’s hymn, *Ateoch rígnamra*; and Fiacc’s hymn, *Génair Pátraicc*.

¹⁶ This is now NLI MS GO 157, and the hymns, *Brigit bé bithmaith* and *Ní car Brigit*, occupy two unnumbered leaves after fol. 42v. After the first poem, there is an English version of the preface from the *Liber Hymnorum*. This cannot have come from Colgan. In RIA MS 23 N 4 (cat. 559), pp. 143–7, Owen Connellan has copied them with the reference, ‘See Vol. 18 p. 82’, and at p. 147, William Betham wrote, ‘The two preceding poems are copied from a MS of the 17th century in the Office of Ulster King of Arms, containing pedigrees of the Irish families and extracts from the Annals of Ireland’. I have not established whether the source was T or F.

seem likely that Ussher had no more than the loan of F before it went to Louvain. It is usually allowed that T is somewhat older than F, but the evidence for this is neither precise nor compelling.¹⁷

The extant manuscripts do not present exactly the same contents in the same order. For instance, F lacks *Amra Coluimb Chille*, which was added to or bound with T in the twelfth century. One can only wonder what Colgan would have done with this ancient text, if he had known it.¹⁸ None the less there is a case for thinking that a bilingual *Liber Hymnorum* was put together as a collection of texts and commentary in the years a little before or a little after the millennium. Armagh has been conjectured as the school where this was done at a date, if one allows certain suppositions, between 989 and 1007.¹⁹ It has been thought independently that the commentary, for example, on *Ní car Brigit*, was used at Armagh in the twelfth century in adding scholia to the verse martyrology of Oengus.²⁰

Bishop O'Brien made relatively little use of the life of St Patrick, known to us by its opening words, *Génair Pátraicc*.²¹ He made rather more use of the life of St Brigit, *Ní car Brigit*, often citing it by the name of its supposed author, 'Brogan', Broccán.²² As it happens, he cited both pieces for the word *génair*.²³ He was unable to lemmatize this third-person past tense of an Old Irish deponent verb *gainithir*, a fact that takes us to one of the essential aspects of the interest these two texts always

¹⁷ Bernard & Atkinson, vol. i, p. xiv, assert that the Irish of F appeared to be of later date than that of T, a consideration as likely to reflect a tendency to update the language of the exemplar, which T resisted to a greater degree. Bieler's palaeographical discussion sees T as older than F, based on the use of majuscule initials ('The Irish Book of Hymns: a palaeographical study', *Scriptorium* 2 (1948), 177–94, at p. 177 and n. 6); so too Françoise Henry and G. L. Marsh-Micheli, 'A century of Irish illumination (1070–1170)', *PRIA* 62C (1962), 101–166 (at p. 134), and Françoise Henry, *Irish Art in the Romanesque Period (1020–1170 AD)* (London 1970) 57.

¹⁸ Colgan was aware of the former existence of the work, since he found it mentioned in the early sixteenth-century *Betha Choluimb Chille*, compiled at the behest of Maghnus Ó Domhnaill (*Trias*, 470a, citing his own Latin version of Ó Domhnaill's work). O'Brien too knew the title (s.v. *amhra*, *Focalóir*, 22b, 'amhra Cholluim Chille, a poem composed for S. Columbus'), but he does not mention it elsewhere.

¹⁹ Máire Herbert, 'The Preface to *Amra Coluim Cille*', in *Sages, Saints, and Storytellers. Celtic studies in honour of Professor James Carney* (Maynooth, 1989), 67–75; eadem, 'Crossing historical and literary boundaries: Irish written culture around the year 1000', *Crossing Boundaries. Croesi Ffñiau*, *CMCS* 53/54 (2007), 87–101 (at pp. 89–91).

²⁰ Pádraig Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints. A history of Irish martyrologies* (Brussels, 2011), 189, 195–7.

²¹ The author is cited as Fiech under *fóghnaim* (p. 251a), *iceadh* (p. 295b), *ifearn* (p. 296a), *imtheachd* (p. 298b).

²² O'Brien quotes *Ní car Brigit* in Irish and Latin under *Séanaim* (p. 425b), and he cites the author 'Brogan', sometimes 'Brog.', or 'vit. S. Brigit.' more than twenty times.

²³ He quotes both works under the lemma *Geanair* (p. 274b).

had.²⁴ They represented Old Irish in the two centuries before anyone had worked out the diachronic history of the language. And these important poems were available only because they had been printed by Colgan.

O'Brien's little essays at the start of each letter of the alphabet show him as someone thoughtful about matters of language, but he had no idea of periodization. He often refers to 'the old Irish nation', sometimes just 'the old Irish', to mean the people of Ireland in times past. When he uses the phrase to refer to the language, 'the following marginal remark in old Irish is found at the end of the gospel of St Matthew', he has no definite sense of how near to his own time 'old' reached.²⁵ He was able to make vague comparisons, always contrasting familiar usage with that of old manuscripts, 'in old Irish manuscripts the particle *ad* was used for *do* of the modern writers, as was the particle *ró*', '*frí* or *frià*, in old Irish manuscripts, is the same as our modern *air*, or *re*; *fris*, the same as *leis*, or *ris*; *friom*, as *liom*, or *riom*', '*co* is often written for *go* in old Irish manuscripts', '*là*, or *lia* in old Irish manuscripts is the same as *le*, with, along with, as, *léighios canóin la German*, i.e. legit canones apud Germanum, speaking of S. Patrick', '*uair*, in old Irish manuscripts is often written for *dir*'.²⁶ Now the quotation for *la* here, and the Latin rendering, are taken from Colgan, *Génair Pátraicc*, line 12, though the source is not specified.²⁷ If it appears that old represented the contrast between manuscripts and modern usage, we must remember that in O'Brien's time most modern contact with written Irish meant contact with recent manuscripts. We know that, and his Irish readers knew it too. Yet here he professes to cite old Irish manuscripts while using a seventeenth-century printed book.

Modern philologists use Old Irish as a term to refer to the Irish language 'of the earliest sources'. Thurneysen, for example, wrote, 'Man nennt die Sprache der ältesten Denkmäler altirisch, die seit dem 10. Jh. mittelirisch, seit Anfang des 17. Jhs. neuirisch'.²⁸ It is one of the perennial truths of the discipline that Old Irish, the language of the glosses in manuscripts of the eighth and ninth centuries, was in effect discovered by Johann Caspar Zeuss (1806–1856) and a description of it

²⁴ O'Brien did not recognize the deponent verbs of Old Irish, but, ironically, under Modern Irish *geinim* 'I beget' (p. 276b), he compared the Greek middle form, γίγνομαι.

²⁵ *Focalóir*, 154a, with reference to Mael Brigte's Gospels, BL MS 1802 (AD 1138). O'Brien saw this manuscript in the British Museum in the autumn of 1767 (R. Sharpe, 'Humfrey Wanley, Bishop John O'Brien, and the colophons of Mael Brigte's Gospels', *Celtica* 29 (2017), 251–92).

²⁶ *Focalóir*, 188b, 260a, 284b, 313a, 502a.

²⁷ Under *la*' (p. 313a), where Stokes's text reads *légais canóin la German (Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, ii. 312). I have not attempted a tally of such unattributed quotations.

²⁸ R. Thurneysen, *Handbuch des Altirischen* (Heidelberg, 1909), 1. The revised edition in English (Dublin, 1946), 1, substituted 'from about AD 900' for Middle Irish.

published in his *Grammatica Celtica e vetustis monumentis* (Leipzig, 1853). Zeuss defined the period represented by the glosses as including the tenth century, with Middle Irish, ‘media aetas linguae Hibernicae’, from the start of the eleventh century.²⁹ During the fifty years after Zeuss the glossed Priscian from St. Gallen was redated from the tenth century back to the ninth century, accounting for the change in the date of the boundary between Old and Middle Irish. This is not always apparent.³⁰ Thurneysen’s definition remains current, that until the ninth century we apply the term Old Irish, and from the tenth century Middle Irish. Periodization from the end of Middle Irish through Classical and Early Modern Irish has been slower to emerge, since Eleanor Knott called for its radical revision in 1922.³¹ More recently perceptions of the earliest period have become more complicated, in part through the use of expressions such as archaic Irish and early Old Irish, in part through questions of register.³²

Less than ten years before publication of Zeuss’s work an essay by the distinguished German philologist Heinrich Leo (1799–1878), *Commentatio de carmine vetusto Hibernico in S. Patricii laudem* (Halle, 1845), was entered in a prize competition; this represents the last of the old school, treating Fiacc’s Hymn for St Patrick as the oldest of the old Irish texts. He still relied on Colgan’s edition and translation, though he was also aware of the modified Latin version in O’Conor’s *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores* (1814). In a curious conjunction of old and new, Caspar Zeuss’s own copy of Leo’s work, now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, has been made generally available through Google Books.

The poem *Génair Pátraicc* experienced the most remarkable *fortuna*. Printed from its medieval source with Colgan’s Latin translation in 1647, it was for the next two hundred years the best known example of a work composed in the Old Irish period, albeit not really understood as such. It circulated in two spheres, among the learned who studied

²⁹ J. C. Zeuss, *Grammatica Celtica e vetustis monumentis* (1853), p. xxxvi.

³⁰ Thurneysen’s contemporary, Georges Dottin, for example, clung to the older view, ‘On appelle moyen-irlandais la langue gaélique écrite en Irlande du XIe au XVe siècle’, with Old Irish implicitly continuing through the tenth century. *Manuel d’irlandais moyen* (Paris, 1913), p. vii. Windisch (1879) and Pedersen (1909), similarly, had not made the adjustment in the light of up-to-date judgement of the handwriting but followed Zeuss.

³¹ E. Knott, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn*, Irish Texts Society 22, 23 (1922–6), i, p. lxxv n. For further references, see L. Breatnach, ‘An Mheán-Ghaeilge’, *Stair na Gaeilge in ómós do Pádraig Ó Fiannachta* (Maynooth, 1994), 221–333 (at p. 221).

³² D. W. Greene, ‘Archaic Irish’, *Indogermanisch und Keltisch*, ed. K. H. Schmidt & R. Ködderitzsch (Bonn, 1977), 11–33. Teasing distinctions do not help, for example, K. R. McCone, ‘The Würzburg and Milan glosses: our earliest sources of “Middle Irish”’, *Ériu* 36 (1985), 85–106, (on which see L. Breatnach, ‘Lebor na hUidre: some linguistic aspects’, in *Lebor na hUidre*, ed. R. Ó hUiginn (Dublin, 2015), 53–77, at p. 53).

Colgan's book and among vernacular students of the Irish language in its earliest forms, mainly through manuscript copies, with or without the aid of Colgan's Latin version. It was the first Old Irish text translated into Modern Irish as a self-conscious exercise in opening it up to ordinary readers rather than simply the rewriting in manuscript of language too difficult for modern readers.³³ Reprinted and retranslated several times in the years before and after the publication of Zeuss's book, it remained a work much read until the beginning of the twentieth century. Last edited by Whitley Stokes in *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* (1903), it remains easily available but largely unstudied. The reason for this, I suspect, is because it represents in Irish verse a narrative, based on Latin sources that are still available to us, about the career of St Patrick. With the publication of Muirchú's *Vita S. Patricii*, and the start of modern study of the saint's life and context from J. B. Bury's *St Patrick* (1905), it lost its interest as a source of information. And for students of the language and literature the fact of its obviously following Latin sources may have reduced its interest, when, after all, there were many less well-served texts to study. The dating of the two works *Génair Pátraicc* and *Ní car Brigit* to the Old Irish period depends on a comparison of linguistic forms in the manuscripts of the *Liber Hymnorum* with systematic Old Irish grammar, dependent in part on the primary evidence of the glosses and in part on a critical understanding of other works now recognized as composed and first written down in the Old Irish period. It cannot be said that any thorough study has yet been made of either the language or the metrics of these two works.

COLGAN'S EDITION AND ITS RECEPTION IN IRELAND

Father John Colgan OFM (1592–1658) was at work on what might have been five volumes on the Lives of Irish saints, of which only two ever appeared. He was one of several Irish scholars at work on the Continent in this period. Born in Inishowen, trained on the Continent and ordained priest in 1618, he entered St Anthony's College, Louvain, in 1620.³⁴ This Irish College had been founded in 1607, and by the beginning of 1611 it was equipped with a font of Irish type with a view to

³³ On the translation by Richard Plunket, not later than 1784, see below, pp. 17–18.

³⁴ There are complementary brief biographies in *ODNB* and *DIB*, each with lists of sources. A contemporary printed obituary records that he died 15 January 1658 in his sixty-sixth year, allowing his birth to be reckoned as most likely in 1592 (B. Jennings, *Michael O Cleirigh and his Associates* (Dublin, 1936), 208–9). Colgan himself says that he was born in a place called *Domhnach Glinne Tochair*, where the church was founded by St Patrick for St MacCairthinn, brother of the saint of the same name from Clogher (*Trias*, 181 n. 173); this is the parish of Donagh in Inishowen, with its church now at Carndonagh. In writing of St Mura, *Acta*, 587a, Colgan referred to relics he had seen at Fahan in Inishowen.

producing devotional literature in Irish.³⁵ None of these books was in a format larger than octavo and most were smaller. The good intentions of printing much larger works in the 1630s came to nothing. The Annals of the Four Masters, therefore, though sent to Louvain for printing about 1637, remained largely unknown apart from the passages rendered into Latin and printed by Colgan.³⁶ The folio volumes of Colgan's *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* were too big for the little Irish press at the college, which, in any case, was not equipped with a fount of Latin types, so the friars paid professional printers to do the work.³⁷ In printing his *Trias* Colgan used the college's Irish type to present the two Old Irish lives in full with his own Latin translation. He did not print the Middle Irish scholia that accompany them, but he occasionally quoted from these in his commentary, again using the Irish type. He also printed excerpts from a Middle Irish poem on the kings of Scotland, which caught the attention of Roderick O'Flaherty in the 1670s and after.³⁸ The Irish type was used here and there for Irish phrases in his notes, among them, the opening words of ten poems, which he attributed to St Columba.³⁹ Such sporadic use suggests that the whole font was taken to the printers' workshop for the duration of the printing process. The slowness of typesetting, perhaps

³⁵ The prevailing view is that the Louvain type was planned and made during 1608–10 in Antwerp (D. McGuinne, *Irish Type Design* (Dublin, 2010), 23–31), where it was first used to print Bonaventura Ó hEódhasa's *An Teagasg Criosdaidhe* (1611). The first items from Louvain were an undated two-sheet booklet of poetry by Ó hEódhasa, *Dán do rinne an brathair bocht Bonabheantúra Ó Heódhasa*, without imprint, of which two copies survive, and an undated edition of his *An Teagasg Criosdaidhe*, 'Iar na chur a cclodh maille re hughdarras'. These are datable with some probability to 1614. An 8vo edition of a Spanish religious text in Irish translation, *Desiderius*, appeared with an imprint, 'Ar na chur a ccló maille ré hughdardhás, 1616', followed in 1618 by an edition of Aodh Mac Cathmhaoil's *Scáthán shacramuinte na haithridhe*, in 12mo, 'Iar na chur a ccló maille ré hughdardhás, 1618'. After a long hiatus the press produced *Riaghail threas uird S. Froinsias*, 'Ar na cur a gcló maille re hughdardhás a gColáisde S. Antoin a Lobhain, 1641', and soon after their most durable production, Míchéal Ó Cléirigh's *Foclóir nó Sanasán nua* (1643). An unnamed press used the same types to produce Antoin Gearnon's *Parrthas an Anna*, in 18mo, dated 1645. The friars' next production was John Dowley's Irish catechism in 1663.

³⁶ The major extracts relate to churches associated with the three patrons, *Trias*, 292–311 (Armagh), 498–501 (Iona), 503–7 (Derry), 507–10 (Durrow, Kells, Raphoe, Swords, Rechrainn, Fahan, Drumcliffe), 628–30 (Kildare), as mentioned in the introduction to John O'Donovan's edition, *Annala Rioghachta Eireann. Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* (Dublin, 1848), vol. i, p. xlii–xliii; revised text (1851, 1856), p. xxxv.

³⁷ Colgan's *Acta* was printed by Everard de Witte, *Trias* by Cornelius Coenesteyn, both of them established printers. They were big books requiring a size of paper beyond the capacity of the friars' small press.

³⁸ *Duan Albanach*, edited by K. H. Jackson, 'The poem *A eolcha Alban uile*', *Celtica* 3 (1956), 149–67, with English translation, 'The *Duan Albanach*', *Scottish Historical Review* 36 (1957), 124–37. O'Flaherty used both Colgan's text and an unknown manuscript copy (Sharpe, *O'Flaherty's Letters*, 63, 144, 272, 274–5, and 412).

³⁹ *Trias*, 472, based on a manuscript in the collection at Louvain, now Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 5100–5104, written by Brother Míchéal Ó Cléirigh, 1630.

the trouble it gave the composers, may have led him to decide not to print any extensive work in Irish. With the Irish Lives of St Patrick and St Columba, he printed only his own Latin versions.⁴⁰ If he had printed the original Irish in parallel columns with his Latin, he would surely have earned praise in Ireland and helped to convince the learned of Europe that there was a body of literature in Irish to support the credibility of its historians. It might have helped to encourage the greater use of print for Irish in Ireland and speeded the modernization of the language's interface with the world. As it was, however, there were only the two poems. Print gave them a fixed textual form and made them, in principle, widely available.

The production of Colgan's big volumes in 1645 and 1647 was unfortunately timed. From the Catholic rising in 1641 until after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, the direction of travel for Catholic priests was out of Ireland into exile, so that the main national readership for the book was in trouble. It may be argued that clergy in Ireland were not Colgan's target audience: he wanted to display the breadth and depth of Ireland's community of saints to the learned of Catholic Europe. Measuring the impact of his *Trias* on either group is scarcely possible, and it is certain that the Continental audience could not read the Irish text of the poems. His printing them was, none the less, a statement that such texts existed, as he believed, older than anything in any European language other than Greek and Latin. The Bollandist Daniel Papebroch, in Antwerp, using Colgan's *Trias* in preparing his text of the Lives of St Patrick, published in 1668, chose not to reprint the Irish poem, saying he did not believe it was as early as Fiacc's time but was later than some other Latin *uitae*.⁴¹ If he had included the text—with the help of the Louvain press—Continental awareness of Old Irish may have developed sooner.

Copies of *Trias* certainly reached Ireland without any delay. That now in Marsh's Library, for example, carries on its half-title two notes in Latin. The first, a name and title in the dative case, records its belonging to Boetius Egan, Baothgalach Mac Aodhagáin, bishop of Elphin, while

⁴⁰ The early Middle Irish Life of St Patrick, *Bethu Pátraicc*, was printed under the lasting title *Vita Tripartita S. Patricii*, *Trias*, 117–88. Colgan had three manuscripts, none of them now known, from which he produced a conflated Latin text (L. Bieler, 'John Colgan as editor', *Franciscan Studies* 8 (1948), 1–24, at pp. 14, 23). The early modern Life of St Columba, *Betha Choluimb Chille*, was abridged in Latin, *Trias*, 389–446, based on UCD–OFM MS A 19.

⁴¹ D. Papebroch, *Acta Sanctorum*, Mart. II (Antwerp, 1668), 520A–B. Papebroch's acquaintance with the writings of Tírechán and Muirchú (whom he names Maccuthenus) was based on what he read in Ussher's *Antiquitates*; they were not printed before the nineteenth century. Treating the Lives of St Brigit, Godfried Henskens mentioned the Irish text printed by Colgan but quoted only one line in Latin, *Acta Sanctorum*, Feb. I (Antwerp, 1658), 102D, 104F.

the second records his giving it ‘conuentui de Killconnail’ in 1647, the year of first publication.⁴² Egan had entered the Franciscan order at Louvain in 1610. He returned to Ireland as guardian of this Franciscan house in Co. Galway, which remained his base even after his appointment as bishop of Elphin in 1625. He was often unable to reside in his diocese, and he died at Kilconnell in November 1650. Since in this case the bishop gave it to the convent, we cannot suppose that copies were distributed to the Franciscan houses in Ireland. One could conjecture, however, that the friars in Louvain despatched copies to every bishop still in Ireland. No later than 1658 Roderick O’Flaherty owned a copy at Moycullen, Co. Galway, which he was enriching with his own paraphrases in Latin metres.⁴³

Colgan’s *Acta* was also available in Ireland. It was printed two years before the *Trias*, and in 1647 it had issue within Ireland in the form of a little book, printed at Waterford, providing English translations of the Lives of St David, patron saint of Wales, and of St Ciarán of Saighir, made from the Latin as printed by Colgan.⁴⁴

How many copies of these big books came into Ireland is impossible to say. It would be laborious to count the copies mentioned, for example, in sale catalogues from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Dr Edward Worth had a copy of *Trias* before 1730, which is still in his library in Dublin. A set with the *ex libris* of James Butler, coadjutor and (from 1757) archbishop of Cashel, was recently offered for sale.⁴⁵ Dr John Fergus, *al.* Seán Ó Fearghusa (c. 1700–1761), a catholic physician and book-collector, possessed a set, sold at auction in 1766.⁴⁶

⁴² M. McCarthy & C. Sherwood-Smith, *Hibernia Resurgens: Marsh’s Irish Books* (Dublin, 1994), 44 (no. 40). My thanks to Dr Diarmuid Ó Riain in Vienna for bringing this to my attention.

⁴³ His copy was in the library of the Royal Dublin Society in the nineteenth century and remains in the National Library, much annotated (Sharpe, *O’Flaherty’s Letters*, 35–6, 51–2, 176).

⁴⁴ *The Lives of the glorious Saint David, Bishop of Menevia, patron of Wales and master of many Irish saints. And also of Saint Kieran the first-borne saint of Ireland, first Bishop and principall patron of the Diocesse of Ossorie. Collected out of Father Coganes first volume of the Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae: and Englished by a devoted servant of the aforesaid saints, for the publicque good* (Waterford: by Peter de Pienne, and are to be sold in Kilkenny at the corner shop, 1647). A single surviving copy in NLI is the only recorded representative of this edition, a 12mo booklet of 48 pages.

⁴⁵ De Búrca Rare Books Catalogue 129 (June 2017), item 79, *Trias*, at €750; Catalogue 130 (August 2017), item 66, *Acta*, at €2850. Both have ‘Ex libris Jacobi Butler, presb. Cassel.’ on the title page. He was coadjutor of Cashel from 1750 to 1757, the probable date-range of these *ex libris*.

⁴⁶ *A Catalogue of the Libraries of John Fergus, MD, and Son, both deceased. Which will begin selling by Auction, at their late Dwelling-house in Abbey-Street, on Monday the 3d of February* (Dublin, 1766), 38, lot 1574, ‘Colgani Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae. 2 vol. 1645’; lot 1986, ‘Colgani Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae’.

This kind of evidence, however, will be slanted towards learned protestants and could not be treated as representative. Citations from Colgan's works can be collected, but again it is near certain that they do not tell a representative story, allowing us to trace the availability of copies of his *Trias* in Ireland or elsewhere. It is no surprise that Peter Talbot, Catholic archbishop of Dublin from 1670, read Colgan's edition of Jocelin's *Vita S. Patricii*, though he found it full of absurdities.⁴⁷ Writing against Talbot, Hugh Mac Mahon, active Catholic archbishop of Armagh from 1715 to 1737, in his defence of the primacy of Armagh over Dublin, cited Colgan with warm praise.⁴⁸ Other published writers in eighteenth-century Ireland have generally used Colgan's work, if their interests gave them the occasion to need it. Yet by the early nineteenth century it was already a very rare and expensive book to acquire.⁴⁹ It is impossible to establish how widely available it might have been to those who would want to read the Irish poems on St Patrick and St Brigit.

There were some who found them and who realised the importance of the texts. We have mentioned Roderick O'Flaherty, who read Colgan's works with great care. By way of example, I have noted elsewhere his marginal notes drawing together the statements in Colgan's notes that establish his perception of the meeting of the kings at Druim Ceat in the year 590, a plausible year divergent from that given by the annals.⁵⁰ In his *Ogygia*, drafted in the 1670s, he cited *Génair Pátraicc* half a dozen times, and in *Ogygia Vindicated*, written after 1685, he refers to both poems.⁵¹ Reading Edward Lhwyd's dictionary in 1704 he remembered Colgan's

⁴⁷ [Peter Talbot], *Primatus Dubliniensis* (Lille, 1674), 10, 72; translated by W. E. Kenny (Dublin, 1947), 10, 53. Talbot was equally unimpressed by the Four Masters, though he can only have known their work as cited by Colgan; *Primatus*, 42; Kenny, 31.

⁴⁸ H. Mac Mahon, *Jus primatiale Armacanum* ([Dublin], 1728), 99, 'in antiquitatibus, et Historiis, tum Hibernicis, tum extraneis peritissimus, a contemporaneis, et posterioribus Scriptoribus multum celebratus, cuius opera, et eruditionem sublimibus elogiis exornant viri doctissimi Nicolaus Verneleus, Jacobus Pontanus, aliique Doctores Lovanienses cum Patribus Societatis'.

⁴⁹ At the front of one copy of Colgan's *Acta*, now RIA SR 24 E 30, whose owners are known right through the nineteenth century, a note (c. 1800) tells us that a set would fetch 'from 8 to 12 guineas'. On 20 June 1831, a bookseller offered the Academy a set for 25 guineas (Council Minutes, iv. 553). Less than a tenth of that would have bought a good-quality Irish manuscript. J. H. Todd had both volumes, not a uniform set, with *Trias* already heavily worn: at his sale they fetched £22 (1869 Todd 1315), bought by Dr Charles Graves, bishop of Limerick. While Todd was still alive, William Reeves published a list of copies known to him in libraries and private hands, adding also an account of prices paid in the market in his time, 'Irish Library. No. 1. Colgan's Works', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 1 (1853), 295–302 (at pp. 300–301).

⁵⁰ Sharpe, *Roderick O'Flaherty's Letters*, 316 n. 307.

⁵¹ References are collected in my discussion of O'Flaherty's reading, Sharpe, *Roderick O'Flaherty's Letters*, 405–6.

note on the word *cúan* in his commentary on the Life of St Cuanna.⁵² He several times directed Lhwyd to Colgan's volumes, correctly supposing that they were available to him in the Bodleian Library. Lhwyd was slow to follow the advice, but when he eventually did, he reported that he had copied out the text of *Génair Pátraic*, which brought this response from O'Flaherty:⁵³

That one Metre by you lately copyed, written in S. Patrick's time in Irish letters concurring with the vogue of all ages to this time, commented upon within an age after it was composed, cannot be paralleled by what can be produced by any other nation that sprung up by the declining state of the Roman Empire.

A little more than a year later, O'Flaherty cites the poem again in evidence of the antiquity of written Irish, 'We have an Irish hymn of S. Patrick's Life soon after his death composed by his disciple 1400 y(ears) agoe, & published by Colganus in Irish print'.⁵⁴ Not only were the poems important to O'Flaherty in his argument that the Irish written tradition was very ancient, but he also praised Colgan for printing examples of ancient Irish verse in full:⁵⁵

He plainly and candidly brought to light abstruse and hidden treasures, verbatim, in their own phrase and text, with his own industrious glosses and comments.

O'Flaherty was the only Irish-speaker who read through the sheets of Lhwyd's Irish dictionary and sent him comments. Lhwyd's only other critical reader was from Scotland, Lachlan Campbell, a Gaelic-speaking young man on the verge of a career in the ministry of the Church of Scotland. A few letters from him to Lhwyd survive.⁵⁶ In one of them he puts into words the impact that reading the two poems in Colgan's edition had on him:⁵⁷

I met here with two very old Irish remains. Both in meette. The one the life of St Patrick written by St Fiecus his contemporary and the other that of St Brigide written about the same time according the publisher Colganus in a Collection of the Lives of the Irish Saints printed in 2 vol. fol. at Lovain 1645 & 1647, in the last of which are those in Irish. I truly believe them to be very ancient, for not only the words are

⁵² O'Flaherty to Lhwyd, 6 June 1704 (Sharpe, *Roderick O'Flaherty's Letters*, 230). The note is found in Colgan's *Acta*, 251 n. 2.

⁵³ O'Flaherty to Lhwyd, 23 January 1705 (Sharpe, *Roderick O'Flaherty's Letters*, 263–4). He goes on to refer to his discussion of the name Nemthor in *Ogygia* (London, 1685), 12.

⁵⁴ O'Flaherty to Lhwyd, 7 February 1706 (Sharpe, *Roderick O'Flaherty's Letters*, 294).

⁵⁵ Roderick O'Flaherty, *The Ogygia Vindicated* [1686], ed. C. O'Connor (Dublin, 1775), Preface, p. lxi.

⁵⁶ R. Sharpe, 'Lachlan Campbell's letters to Edward Lhwyd, 1704–7', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 29 (2013), 244–81.

⁵⁷ Campbell to Lhwyd, 30 October 1704 (Sharpe, 'Lachlan Campbell's letters', 256–7).

generally obsolete, but the construction is such as I should never understand them by it were it not for the Latine version printed over against them in the same page. There are also some other fragments dispersed throw the same volume, the most considerable of which is a piece of a poem written in our Malcolm Can-mores times about 1057, giving a succinct [-& word] view of our History from which OColgan endeavours to prove the Bishop of St Asaphs hypothesis about the late beginning of our Kingdom.

In a later letter, asking whether this one had arrived, he says more directly:⁵⁸

I shall be glad to know if you received my letter from Belfast where I told you I got a copy of St Patricks life and St Brigids in the oldest Irish I ever yet saw.

Such ingenuous observations are all too rare. It is possible, nevertheless, to follow interest in the poems, and especially in *Génair Pátraicc*, through the manuscript copies made from the printed text.

MANUSCRIPTS DERIVED FROM COLGAN

It would probably be correct to say that most Catholic works that were printed in Irish in the seventeenth century made the crossover from print into manuscript. The printed books were for the most part poorly distributed, with the result that printed copies became extremely hard to find. If a work offered something of interest to Irish readers, then it was likely that it would be copied by hand. We must be chary of hailing this as itself representing manuscript transmission: copying by hand from print was a part of reading culture until the invention of photocopiers and scanners provided more efficient means of making a copy to keep.⁵⁹ When Lhwyd told O’Flaherty that he had copied the poem, he did not signify any intention to circulate it. He wanted it nearer at hand than the book in the library afforded, and he aimed to acquaint himself better with the language of the poem. In the context of Irish book-culture in the eighteenth century such handwritten copying may represent *either* the same kind of desire to have and keep a copy of something from the printed book *or* the crossover of a work from print into manuscript transmission. For the latter to be proven we should need to show that, after the work was transcribed, copies were put into circulation in manuscript. This appears to be the case, for example, with three poems by Bonaventura Ó hEódhasa printed at Louvain in or near 1614, from which there was a substantial manuscript descent. More surprisingly Míchéal Ó

⁵⁸ Campbell to Lhwyd, 17 January 1705 (Sharpe, ‘Lachlan Campbell’s letters’, 260).

⁵⁹ For example, in 1936 R. A. B. Mynors thanked R. W. Hunt for an article by J. de Ghellinck, adding, ‘it must have been a bore copying it out’ (M. Winterbottom in his memoir of Mynors, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 80 (1991), 371–400, at p. 380).

Cléirigh's *Foclóir nó Sanasán nua*, printed at Louvain in 1643, achieved some circulation both in print and in manuscripts copied from the printed book, implying an audience for archaic vocabulary.⁶⁰ Although each manuscript copy must be traceable back, at however many removes, to a copy of the printed books, it would be natural for manuscript copies of these Old Irish poems, a very small segment of Colgan's large Latin work, to occupy a rather different reader's niche. Establishing how far rare and expensive Latin tomes were owned by vernacular scribes is all but impossible, but it may be more sensible to think in terms of loans. The points at which such Latin books were available to feed a vernacular appetite would be very interesting, if we had any meaningful means of perceiving them.

The number of copies of the poem extant in Irish manuscripts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is not insignificant. There are twenty-five copies in the list below, which we need to appraise:

- 1728 TCD MS 1356 (H. 4. 15), p. 390 (34qq) [Irish and Latin; also *Ní car Brigit*]. Stephen Rice, 1727–8. Ó Neachtain circle.
- 1729 TCD MS 1361 (H. 4. 20), p. 80 (34qq) [Irish and Latin; also *Ní car Brigit*]. Tadhg Ó Neachtain, 1725–9. Ó Neachtain circle.
- 17— BAV MS Borgianus Lat. 96 (s. xviii), fols. i–ii, 1–18 [from Colgan and including his commentary]. NLI Microfilms n. 2893, p. 2514.
- 1757 RIA MS 23 C 12 (cat. 375), pp. 85½–86 (4qq only) [in Irish and Latin 'ad sensum litterae', also the Hymn of St Secundinus, both from Colgan]. St Fiacc. Seán Ó Conaire, Cloyne (Co. Cork). Betham CXV. 1847 Betham 37. O'Brien circle.
- RIA MS 23 H 29 (cat. 713), pp. 318–19, 320–21 (34qq) [Latin and Irish]. 'Himinn Padraig'. Two worn leaves in the handwriting of Seán Ó Conaire, bound at the end of a copy of *Foras Feasa*, written by Donnchadh Ó Conaire, Cloyne (Co. Cork), 1779. O'Brien circle. 1855 Windele 1.
- 1759? Dublin, Jesuit Archives, MS IL 1 (*Clár*, ii. 70–76), between parts (b) and (c), single leaf [Latin only]. Mícheál mac Peadair Uí Longáin. O'Brien circle.
- 1761 RIA MS 23 N 15 (cat. 490), pp. 90–92 [Latin only, following other extracts from Colgan, pp. 79–90, including *Ní car Brigit*]. Mícheál mac Peadair Uí Longáin. Betham XVIII. 1847 Betham 22. O'Brien circle.
- 1786? RIA MS 23 L 16 (cat. 32), pp. 57–9 (30qq). The present book is composite, but this section is closed by a draft certificate dated 1786 (p. 63). 'Himinn Phadraig sonn'. There is some modernization in the text. The manuscript passed through the hands of Thomas Walsh, Waterford, 1814, and later of Amlaoibh Ó Súilleabháin, Callan, Co. Kilkenny. 1844 Hodges & Smith 185.
- 18— NLI MS G 785, a bifolium, written late eighteenth or early nineteenth century [Irish text, 34qq.]. Removed from G 591, D. Horgan, 1838, though the context is nearly meaningless. Dirty and ragged condition tells that it had some history, but its Latin heading sources it to Colgan, 'versa in Latinum ad sensum litterae apud Colganum'.

⁶⁰ Manuscript copies derived from print are included in the entries for these editions in R. Sharpe & M. Hoyne, *Clóliosta. Printing in the Irish Language, 1571–1871* (Dublin, 2019).

- 1804 RIA MS 23 E 16 (cat. 491), pp. 329–31 (34qq.). ‘Himn’ Phátraig’. Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin, 1804 × 1808. Uí Longáin circle. Betham X. 1847 Betham 10.
- 1807 UCC MS 128 (Ó Leighinn ix), pp. 107–114, written in Cork city by Seaghan Ó Leighin, of Scart (Co. Cork), 1807 [from Vallancey’s *Grammar*] (*Journal of the Ivernian Society* 7 (1914–15), 105).
- 1812 Maynooth, MS C 22, p. 46 (34qq). Amlaoibh Ó Súilleabháin, Callan, Co. Kilkenny. Owned by Eugene O’Curry.
- 1813 Maynooth, MS C 70 (c) (34qq). Watermark date. Owned by Eugene O’Curry.
- 1816 Maynooth, MS M 101, p. 396 (34qq) [Irish and Latin]. Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin for Bishop John Murphy. Uí Longáin circle.
- 1816 RIA MS Stowe F. vi. 1 (cat. 252), fol. 86v (34qq). Ascr. Seachnall mac Darerca. Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin. Uí Longáin circle.
- 1818 RIA MS 23 C 28 (cat. 393), pp. 1–18 (34qq). Richard Plunket’s text and facing Modern Irish translation, with title-page dated 1784, ‘air na mineadh go deigneach san nuaghaidhilig re Riostard Pluinthead san mbliadhain d’aois an Tighearna 1784’. John Leo Nicolas, Cross Keys (Co. Antrim). Betham XCVII. Via Eoghan Caomhánach?
- 1820 RIA MS Stowe F. ii. 3 (cat. 255), p. 56 (34qq). Ascr. Secundinus. Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin for James Roche. Uí Longáin circle.
Maynooth, MS M 56 (d), p. 268 (34qq). Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin for Bishop John Murphy. Uí Longáin circle.
- 1822 Maynooth, MS M 72, p. 142 (34qq). Himinn Phattraicc. Tadhg Ó Conaill for Bishop John Murphy. Uí Longáin circle.
- 1822 RIA MS 23 B 10 (cat. 495), p. 42 (1q only). Himn Phadruic. Arthur Murphy of Grottoplace Castle (Co. Louth). 1853 Hudson 50.
- 182– NLI MS G 345, pp. 46–57 (34qq) [Irish and English, ‘From holy Tours the sainted Patrick rose’]. Unknown, but not before 1820, the date on the poem marking the death of Fr Paul O’Brien (p. 16). Ó Casaide 12. [Eoghan Ó Néill, *The Golden Vale of Ivowen* (Templeogue, 2001), 410, attributes this translation to Pádraig Ó Néill (1765–1832), quoting the first quatrain in Irish and English from this manuscript].
- 1833 RIA MS 23 K 6 (cat. 207), p. 111 (34qq). Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin for Uilliam Ó Duinnín. Here in company with a Life of St Patrick in Irish. Uí Longáin circle.
- 1824 RIA MS 23 O 79 (cat. 1388), pp. 197–206 (34qq). Richard Plunket’s text and facing Modern Irish translation, with title-page dated 1784, ‘air na míneadh go déighneach san NuadhGhaoidhlig re Riostard Plancéad san mbliaghan do aois an Tiagharna 1784’. John Finegan, Co. Meath, 1821–4
- 1834 Maynooth, MS C 10, p. 36 (34qq). Eugene O’Curry for himself.
- 184– NLI MS G 111, p. 113 (3qq only) [Irish and Latin]. Pól Ó Longáin. Uí Longáin circle. Phillipps 13743.
- 184– NLI MS G 306, p. 7 (34qq, ‘S. Fieco Episcopo Sleptensi Authore. AD 434 Versa in Latinum ad sensum litterae. Apud Colganum’) [Irish and Latin]; pp. 149–58 (18qq only, ‘Himinn Phattruig sonn. Beinignus Naomhtha cct. AD 456’). Pól Ó Longáin (& others). Uí Longáin circle. Phillipps 13721.
- 185– Maynooth, MS CE 32 (*Leabharlanna na Cléire*, i. 41–5), p. cclxx (34qq) [Irish and English, ‘Patrick was born in Holy Tower’, from O’Brennan (1855)]. Margaret Kiely, Tramore (Co. Waterford).

Two copies dated 1728 and 1729, made by scribes in Dublin in what has long been known as the Ó Neachtain circle point towards the use of a copy of Colgan's book. This is reinforced by their inclusion of both hymns. There were copies in the capital, and Seán Ó Neachtain's friends may have had easy access to one.

Bishop O'Brien surely possessed a copy of Colgan's book. He cites the *Acta* by title and he draws on a note of Colgan's on one of the Latin Lives of St Patrick.⁶¹ In his introduction he refers to 'the learned and judicious Colgan' for the dates of St Fiacc and St Broccán, authors of our hymns.⁶² We also find extracts from Colgan in the writing of two of O'Brien's literary associates, Mícheál mac Peadair Uí Longáin and Fr Seán Ó Conaire. It is certainly possible that the extracts made from Colgan by Mícheál Ó Longáin in 1761 came from the bishop's copy; if not they must attest another copy available to him. These are now RIA MS 23 N 15 (cat. 490), pp. 79–92, and they comprise the Hymn of Secundinus, *Audite omnes amantes; Ní car Brigit* with Colgan's Latin version, 'Non dilexit Brigida'; and the Latin version of *Génair Pátraicc*, 'Natus est Sanctus Patricius Nempturi'. Fr Seán Ó Conaire also wrote a few lines of the poem *Génair Pátraicc* in Irish and Latin, together with the start of Colgan's commentary, now RIA MS 23 C 12 (cat. 375), p. 85½–86 (4qq only). He copied the whole of *Génair Pátraicc* in Latin and in Irish on two leaves, now bound with RIA MS 23 H 29 (cat. 713), a copy of *Foras Feasa*, the work of Donnchadh Ó Conaire, Cloyne (Co. Cork), who must be connected.⁶³ It is the most complete of the Cloyne copies. I have designated them in my list as coming from the O'Brien circle.

Some other eighteenth-century manuscript copies may derive from different copies of the printed work. The copy now in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana has no context, except that Colgan's *Trias* is the source. By contrast, RIA MS 23 L 16 (cat. 32) shows touches of modernization that point much more towards vernacular assimilation.⁶⁴ It is a Munster book.

From the very early nineteenth century we can see a whole series of copies associated with Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin and his sons. They were

⁶¹ *Focalóir*, 236b (referring to a note on the Life of St Molaga in *Acta*), 412a (s.v. *sabhall*, from a note in *Trias*).

⁶² *Focalóir*, pp. xli, liii.

⁶³ B. Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí 1700–1850* (Dublin, 1982), 50, noting that one of the several manuscripts in which his handwriting appears was mainly the work of Séamus Ó Conaire, who in turn was a close associate of Seán Ó Conaire.

⁶⁴ I have not attempted full textual comparison, but in q. 4, for example, Colgan's 'As bert Uictor' is here 'Aduhairt Uictor'; q. 5, Colgan's 'Do faid tar Ealpa uile', here 'Do ch(uaidh) tar Alpa uile'. Plunket's *Modern Irish* reads 'Dubhairt Uictor' and 'Do chuaidh tar na Alpa uile', but there is no overall similarity to judge this copy to be in debt to his version.

prolific copyists, and no fewer than nine copies in the list can be associated with what I call the Uí Longáin circle between 1804 and the 1840s. This includes not only the family but also men such as Tadhg Ó Conaill, who worked to help them fill a large commission for Bishop Murphy of Cork.⁶⁵ It is just possible that their text was derived from the work of Mícheál Óg's father, Mícheál mac Peadair, rather than independently from a copy of Colgan's *Trias*, but it is easier to hypothesize access to the printed book. The new attribution, to Seachnall mac Darerca, known in Latin as St Secundinus, is no doubt the invention of Mícheál Óg, who has taken over the supposed author of the Latin hymn to St Patrick. He recognized the interest of such ancient texts, also picking out *Brigit bé bithmaith*, which he knew not from the *Liber Hymnorum* but from the Book of Lismore.⁶⁶

This leaves us with a number of other nineteenth-century copies that may be independent. One that includes an English translation, now NLI MS G 345, is a collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century verse, showing no trace of contact with Colgan's book: this probably represents real manuscript transmission. Two were owned by Amlaoibh Ó Súilleabháin, in Co. Kilkenny, one incomplete, the other complete. It was the latter that passed into the hands of Eugene O'Curry, who also made a copy for himself. Arthur Murphy in Co. Louth had only one quatrain, which tells us little. The copy made by Margaret Kiely in Waterford is accompanied by the English translation by Martin O'Brennan, which had been printed for the first time in 1855, evidence that this was a very late crossover from print to manuscript.

There is clear evidence here that the poem, with or without Colgan's Latin translation, was copied and read in settings where one would not expect to find Colgan's book. While we can see some channels for its transmission from print to manuscript, we cannot see all of them. As a point of definition, we must remember that texts circulating in manuscript should not be perceived as universally available without strong evidence. Keating's works circulate so widely that we can allow that all potential readers must have known that they existed and could be got. This was very likely so with much popular late seventeenth- and

⁶⁵ Among Bishop Murphy's manuscripts now in Maynooth, MSS M 61–71, written by Tadhg Ó Conaill, are uniformly bound and date from 1818–20, alongside the major commission filled by Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin, M 1–50, with other assistants; M 72–76 are also Ó Conaill's work, while M 82 and M 89 reflect his interaction with Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin.

⁶⁶ The poem, edited from *Liber Hymnorum* by Stokes & Stachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, ii. 323–6 (and by them dated to the seventh century), is found written in large letters, at the end of the homily on St Brigit in the late medieval Book of Lismore, fol. 58v. It appears among Mícheál Ó Longáin's transcripts from that book in RIA MS 3 B 7 (cat. 810), p. 148, and he also selected it for inclusion in an early nineteenth-century assemblage, now RIA MS 24 M 30 (cat. 612), p. 218.

eighteenth-century poetry, which would have benefited also from oral familiarity. That can hardly have been the case, I think, with *Génair Pátraicc* or with *Ní car Brigit*, both of them impossible to understand on hearing. The fact that the Latin was often copied is itself a sign that help was needed to make sense of the text. The distribution we can see reflects pockets of availability, perhaps deriving independently from different copies of the printed book, which, in terms of numbers, was probably more widely available than copies in manuscript, even if only in the hands of Latin readers with (as Charles Plummer put it) a long purse.⁶⁷

RETURN TO PRINT

What is most unusual about *Génair Pátraicc* and *Ní car Brigit* is the manner of their return to print with a Modern Irish paraphrase. Both texts were copied by one Richard Plunket, whom I have supposed to be most likely a schoolmaster.⁶⁸ He once appears with the title *máighster*. It seems likely that he can be identified with ‘Richard Plunket of Dunderry bridge chapel school’, whose name appears at the front of an Irish catechism printed in 1784.⁶⁹ In the list of manuscripts above, RIA MS 23 C 28 (cat. 393), pp. 1–18, dated 1818, and RIA MS 23 O 79 (cat. 1388), pp. 197–206, dated 1821–4, copy the text of *Génair Pátraicc* with Plunket’s paraphrase and the date 1784. Here is clear evidence that the work was made no later than that year. They both carry what resembles a title-page that names ‘Riostard Pluinthead’ as the translator. This text and *Ní car Brigit* were printed as a booklet of thirty-two pages in 1791, with the Old Irish text on the left, the Modern Irish paraphrase on the right. These are the earliest examples of such a paraphrase, and the edition represents an effort to make these ancient texts accessible in a vernacular context. The texts have come from Colgan, and the paraphrase is based on Colgan’s Latin—we may guess that Plunket had direct access to a copy of *Trias*—but it is none the less a vernacular publication. The wording of the manuscript titles with the date 1784 matches that of the printed booklet from seven years later, they share the headlines on the facing pages *Seanghaoidhilig* and *Nuaghaoidhilig*, but the footnotes in the manuscripts are fewer than those in the printed work. The layout anticipates printing. It is tempting to conjecture that there had been an

⁶⁷ ‘Scarce seventeenth-century books like Colgan’s *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* and Fleming’s *Collectanea Sacra*: works which require a long purse for their acquisition, and ample shelf-room for their accommodation’ (C. Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford, 1910), vol. i, p. iii).

⁶⁸ R. Sharpe, ‘Richard Plunket (fl. 1772–1791): “a neglected genius of the county of Meath”’, *Ríocht na Midhe* 28 (2017), 191–203.

⁶⁹ BL 3505.a.9.(2.), a copy of Butler’s Catechism in Irish, *Suim Athghar an Teagasg Criosduighe* (Dublin: Printed by J. Boyce, Bookseller, No. 29, Merchant’s-quay near Bridge-street, and sold by Miss Everard, Navan, 1784), top of p. 3.

earlier printing in 1784, from which these were copied, even though there is no mention of such an edition anywhere. Most of the poems copied by Seán Nioclas were taken from printed books, Joseph Cooper Walker's *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards* (1786) and Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789). John Finegan was also copying from other printed books. The alternative involves a seven-year gap between the making of the paraphrase with the intention of printing and the actual printing. It also requires us to suppose that manuscript copies were put into circulation and reached this copyist in Antrim more than thirty years later, far away from Plunket's context in Co. Meath.

Little indeed is known of Richard Plunket beyond what this booklet conveys, but it bears out Edward O'Reilly's description of him as 'a neglected genius of the county of Meath'.⁷⁰ He advertised translations made by himself from Latin and Greek, which he clearly aspired to print. It is entirely in keeping with Irish practice that Plunket's printed booklet gave rise to manuscript copies, such as NLI MS G 228, pp. 356–69, 396–403, made by Fr John Murray, PP, Killallon (Co. Meath), in 1817, most likely from a borrowed copy of the booklet, in order to have the texts for himself.

Plunket's interest in the poems certainly depends on their supposed authentic voices dating back to the fifth and seventh centuries. There is, however, no antiquarian display about his edition of Colgan's text nor his rendering into Modern Irish. Despite its learned background and its relatively high production-values, this is still meant as a vernacular book for Irish readers to own and enjoy. Whether the extreme rarity of copies now means that they were sold out, and perhaps worn out too, without ever reaching the security of a gentleman's library we cannot say for certain. They may have stuck in the author's hands, unsaleable. There is very little secondary evidence for the booklet. Edward O'Reilly owned a copy and J. H. Todd had certainly seen one.⁷¹

What is certain is that *Génair Pátraicc* rapidly outstripped *Ní car Brigit* in popularity, which we may measure in the number of editions produced. As early as 1844 an anonymous reviewer could write, 'A very beautiful hymn by Fiech, one of the first Christian bishops, has often been published. It is a metrical life of the apostle, to whose zeal and missionary

⁷⁰ Edward O'Reilly, *A Chronological Account of Nearly Four Hundred Irish Writers*, *Transactions of the Ibero-Celtic Society*, Vol. 1, Part 1 (Dublin, 1820), p. ccxx.

⁷¹ *Bibliotheca Hibernica. Catalogue of the library of the late Edward O'Reilly, Esq.* [...] *be sold by auction, by order of the executors, at the large sale-room, No. 33, Anglesea-Street, Dublin, on Tuesday, November 30, 1830* (Dublin, 1830), lot 484. Todd, *Book of Hymns*, ii. 288–9n, describes the booklet, which he says, 'is an exceedingly rare tract'; I do not find a copy listed in the sale of his library by J. Fleming Jones, Dublin, 1869, though it may have disappeared among the unlisted contents of pamphlets.

labours his country was indebted for its conversion from paganism'.⁷² The character of the editions varies, reflecting aspects of the history of printing in Irish, but all of them seek to appeal to antiquity as well as to nationhood and piety.

- 1773 Charles Vallancey [1725–1812], *A Grammar of the Ibero-Celtic or Irish Language* (Dublin, 1773), 166–71 [Irish text in Moxon type, Colgan's Latin]. Todd, *Book of Hymns*, ii. 288n, comments on Edward O'Reilly's reference to this as containing an English translation and suggests that Vallancey may have chosen to cancel the relevant sheets. If that were so, it does not appear how O'Reilly could have seen them. More plausibly an error. *Google Books* Charles Vallancey, *A Grammar of the Ibero-Celtic or Irish language. The second edition with many additions. To which is prefixed, An Essay on the Celtic language* (Dublin, 1781, 1782) [two variant states of the same edition, both lack the poem and other examples of continuous text]. *Google Books*
- 1788 Anthony Coyle [1728–1801], *Collectanea Sacra, or Pious Miscellany* (Strabane, 1788), 48–61 [from Colgan but in roman type, with loose metrical English version, 'The great St Patrick was at Nemptur born']. *Google Books*
- 1791 Richard Plunket [fl. 1772–1791], *An Hymn, on the Life of St Patrick: extracted from the ancient Scytho-Celtic dialect into Modern Irish, by Richard Plunket, late translator of the New Testament into Irish, who has now the manuscript in his possession* (Dublin, 1791); *Himhin Phadruig absdal. Do cumadh ré Feiche easbuig Shleibhte a gCondae na Banrioghna, disciobal agus fear comhaimsire do Phadruig fein. Air na mhineadh go deighneach san Nuaghaoidhilig, Re Riostard Pluncead A mBeulathecliath: ar na chur a gclo san mbliadhain MDCCXCI*. [from Colgan but in roman type].
- 1810 [Patrick Lynch, ?1768–1818], *The Life of St Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, to which is added, in the original Irish character, the celebrated hymn, composed above 1200 years since, by his disciple, Saint Fiech, comprehending a compendious history of his life* (Dublin: H. Fitzpatrick, 1810), 325–47 [from Colgan, Irish text above the Latin with facing English translation, 'Patrick was born at heavenly Tours | As it is ascertained in stories'].
- 1814 Charles O'Connor [1764–1828], *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores* (Buckingham, 1814), vol. i, *Prolegomena, Pars I* [i.e. the second series of roman page-numbers], pp. lxxxviii–xc [comment], xc–cv ['ex codice peruetusto Dungallense', F; Irish from Colgan but in italic type, Latin based on Colgan but modified].
- 1818 W. A. O'Meara OSF, *A Sermon preached in the church of St Isidore, in Rome, on Monday, March 17th, 1817, being the festival of Saint Patrick, apostle of Ireland, to which is added, The Hymn of St Fiech on the life of St Patrick, translated by the Right Rev. Dr Coyle* (Dublin: Re-printed and sold by J. Coyne, 74, Cook-Street, 1818), 31–6 [in English from Coyle]. [Copies in RIA and Killiney].
- 1819 William Hales [1747–1831], rector of Killeshandra (Co. Cavan), *An Essay on the Origin and Purity of the Primitive Church of the British Isles, and its independence upon the Church of Rome* (London, 1819), 93–102 [Latin only, from O'Connor, whose version he regarded as 'removing many obscurities in

⁷² *The Dublin Review* 16 (No. 32, June 1844), 463–82, at p. 465. The reviewer offers a brief history of poetry in Irish, and I suspect he was Thomas Crofton Croker.

- Colgan's, which rendered several parts of the poem unintelligible']. *Google Books*
- 1820 Edward O'Reilly [1765–1830], *A Chronological Account of Nearly Four Hundred Irish Writers* (Dublin, 1820), p. xxxiii, translating the first line as 'Patrick was born in holy Tours', he refers to four editions, Colgan, Vallancey, Plunket, and Lynch, and 'a very ancient copy of this poem, finely written on vellum, in the library of Trinity College' [T]. For *Ní car Brigit* (pp. xxxiii–xxxiv) he refers to Colgan and Plunket. *Google Books*
- 1828 Patrick Lynch, *The Life of St Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, to which is added St Fiech's Irish Hymn; also a copious appendix of the various ecclesiastical institutions, &c., in Ireland* (Dublin: Thomas Haydock and Son, 8, Lower Exchange-St, 1828), 300–321. *Google Books*
- 1831 *The Pious Miscellany, in verse and prose, in six books*, by the late Right Rev. Dr Coyle (Dublin: Thomas Haydock, 1831) [reprinted from 1788]. [Copies in NLI, RIA].
- 1840 James Wills [1790–1868], *Lives of Illustrious and Distinguished Irishmen, from the earliest times to the present period, arranged in chronological order*, Vol. i, part 1 (Dublin, 1840), 69–70 [Latin only, from Colgan; qq. 1–19].
- 1845 Heinrich Leo [1799–1878], *Commentatio de carmine vetusto Hibernico in S. Patricii laudem* (Halle, 1845). 54pp. [from Colgan and O'Connor, each quatrain in bold type, followed by linguistic commentary]. Todd comments, 'the author does not display any exact acquaintance either with Irish grammar or with Irish history' (*Book of Hymns*, ii. 288). *Google Books*
- 1853 Johann Caspar Zeuss [1806–1856], *Grammatica Celtica e monumentis vetustis* (Leipzig, 1853), 915 [first line used as example in discussion of accent in metre], 937–43 [citing Colgan, O'Connor, and Leo, and quoting 16 qq. in Irish and Latin]. See also 1871. *Google Books*
- 1853 *The Life of St Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, with a copious appendix, in which is given [. . .]; to which are added the Lives of Saint Bridget, Virgin and Abbess, and Saint Columba, Abbot, and Apostle of the Northern Picts* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1853), 172–88 [Lynch's text, 1828]. Murphy was reprinting from an earlier but undated Baltimore edition by Fielding Lucas Jr. Murphy's edition was reprinted several times from plates. 1868 printing: *Google Books*
- 1855 Martin A. O'Brennan [1812–1878], *Ancient Ireland: Her Milesian chiefs, her kings and princes, her great men, her struggles for liberty, her apostle St Patrick, her religion* (Dublin, 1855), 98–115 [from Colgan; 'yet there were many errors of type in Colgan's work', p. 101n; with English version, 'Patrick was born in Holy Tower | As is recorded in stories']. Reprinted in O'Brennan's *Antiquities* i (1858), 484–507 [Irish and English, 'The birth of Patrick in Holy Tower | Is the meaning (*substance*) of what is recorded in stories']. *Google Books*
- 1861 Eugene O'Curry [1794–1862], *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1861), 606 [from T; excerpt, q. 22 in Irish and English on the desertion of Tara]. *Google Books*
- 1864 James Henthorn Todd [1805–1869], *St Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, a memoir of his life and mission* (Dublin: Hodges & Smith, 1864), makes frequent reference to Fiacc's Hymn and its Scholiast, often citing Colgan but sometimes referring to the manuscript at St Isidore's in Rome, which Todd had transcribed in 1862 (p. 360n). *Google Books*

- 1866 Whitley Stokes [1830–1909], *Goedilica* [. . .] *with eight hymns from the Liber Hymnorum* (Calcutta, 1866), 71–7 [text from T, with translation, ‘Patrick was born in Nemthur, | It is this that has been declared in histories’]. *Internet Archive*
- 1868 [Bartholomew McCarthy, 1843–1904], ‘St Fiacc’s poem on the Life of St Patrick’, *IER* 4 (1868), 269–93 [Irish text from TF, with English translation, ‘Patrick was born at Emptur; | This is that history relates to us’; including prefaces from both T and F]. *Internet Archive*
- 1869 J. H. Todd, *Leabhar Imuinn. The Book of Hymns of the Ancient Church of Ireland*, Irish Archaeological Society 16, 22 (1855–69), ii. 287–304 [introduction only, ending mid-sentence, where the book breaks off, as Todd’s ill health allowed him to pass no more through the press]. Todd refers to the scholia, ‘now for the first time printed, from the Dublin MS.’ (p. 303), but this was written before 1864. *Internet Archive; Google Books*
- 1871 Johann Caspar Zeuss, *Grammatica Celtica e monumentis vetustis*, second edition, by Hermann Ebel [1820–1875] (Berlin, 1871), 937–8, 956–60 [revising Zeuss’s Irish text and Latin translation on the basis of Stokes’s 1866 edition].⁷³ *Google Books*
- 1872 Whitley Stokes, *Goedelica* (1872), 126–8 [text from T, with English translation, ‘Patrick was born in Nemthur, | It is this that has been declared in histories’; his preface acknowledges the loan of P. F. Moran’s transcripts from F]. *Google Books*
- 1874 J. T. Gilbert [1829–1898], *Facsimiles of the National Manuscripts of Ireland* i (1874), pl. xxxii–xxxiv [reproduction of T with text and translation, after Stokes, ‘Patrick was born in Nemthur: this is what is disclosed in histories’].
- 1875 John O’Hanlon [1821–1905], *Lives of the Irish Saints*, iii. 405, notes early printings.
- 1878 A. W. Haddan & W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1869–78), ii, pt 2, 356–61 [from Stokes]. *Internet Archive*
- 1880 Ernst Windisch [1844–1918], ‘Die altirischen Hymnen des Liber Hymnorum’, *Irische Texte mit Wörterbuch* i (Lepizig, 1880), 10–22, 321–2 [text from Stokes collated with T, variants from F]. *Internet Archive*
- 1884 Samuel Ferguson [1810–1886], ‘On the Patrician documents’, *TRIA* 27 (1877–86), *Polite Literature and Antiquities*, 67–134, at pp. 105–8 [English paraphrase in blank verse, ‘Born in Nemthur was Patrick, as histories tell’, based on Colgan’s Latin]; reprinted in M. C. Ferguson, *The Remains of St Patrick Apostle of Ireland* (Dublin, 1888), 58–62 [English]. *JStor*
- 1884 Heinrich Zimmer [1851–1910], *Keltische Studien ii Über altirische Betonung und Verskunst* (Berlin, 1884), 160–85 [from Leo, for the sake of a metrical study; Zimmer introduced the idea that there were fifteen original quatrains with disyllabic rhyme, qq. 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 23, 25, 27, 32, and

⁷³ It is interesting to compare how the two introduce the poem. Zeuss, 937–8: ‘Pervetustus haud dubie est hymnus in S. Patricium, sed non in vetustioribus codicibus servatus in orthographiam recentiorem transscriptus nec incorruptus in formis grammaticalibus legitur. Ex eo quae profero exempla ad demonstrandam structuram versus vetusti hibernici in scriptionem vetustiore codicum mutuo’; Ebel, 957: ‘Pervetustus haud dubie est hymnus in S. Patricium, quem Hiberni tribuunt eius discipulo Fiacco, quamquam cum ceteris, quae Libro Hymnorum continentur, interdum vitiatus est corruptela formarum grammaticarum’.

- 34, and that the rest with other rhymes represented later interpolation; repeated by Atkinson]. *Internet Archive*
- 1885 Whitley Stokes, 'On the metre *rinnard* and the Calendar of Oengus as illustrating the Irish verbal accent', *Revue celtique* 6 (1883–5), 273–97 (at pp. 295–7) [edited text set out to illustrate points of orthography and accent for comparison with the editions by Windisch and Zimmer].
- 1885 Rudolf Thurneysen, 'Zur irischen Accent- und Verslehre', *Revue celtique* 6 (1883–5), 309–347 (at pp. 327–36) [discussion of date and metre and of Zimmer's argument; RT dates the hymn to the ninth century].
- 1887 Whitley Stokes, *Tripartite Life of St Patrick*, RS (1887), ii. 402–427 [text and scholia from F, translation, 'Patrick was born in Nemthor, this hath been declared in stories'].
- 1898 J. H. Bernard & Robert Atkinson, *The Irish Liber Hymnorum* (1898), i. 96–104 [text and scholia from TF, translation of Irish]; ii, pp. xl–xlix, 31–5, 175–87.
- 1903 Whitley Stokes & John Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* (Cambridge, 1901–3), ii, pp. xxxvii–xxxviii, 307–321 [text edited from TF with scholia from both manuscripts, translation of Irish].
- 1905 J. B. Bury, *The Life of St Patrick and his place in history* (London, 1905), 264–5 [in English, following Atkinson amended in deference to Stokes & Strachan; Bury presents only the fifteen supposedly authentic quatrains].

It will be observed that until after 1860 all the editions represent the reprinting of Colgan's text. Bishop Coyle and the schoolmaster Patrick Lynch attempted English translations, while Plunket provided a Modern Irish version, all following Colgan's Latin.⁷⁴ These books were intended to reach the hands of ordinary readers, unlike Vallancey's Irish grammar or O'Connor's expensive limited edition of Irish annals, distributed by his patron the marquess of Buckingham. Haydock's reprinting of Lynch's work in 1828 and of Coyle's in 1831 was a well-intentioned Catholic enterprise, not necessarily a sign of good popular sales, while O'Brennan's work was certainly intended for a popular audience. Fr Bartholomew McCarthy's edition aimed to put a helpful text and translation in front of those Catholic priests who subscribed to the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*.⁷⁵ In his introduction he refers to his use of 'the

⁷⁴ After James Hardiman's death, we learn that John O'Donovan had borrowed a copy of Lynch's *Saint Patrick* from him, along with other books, RIA MS 24 O 39/JOD/ 139 (xvii). Nothing better had appeared in the intervening years.

⁷⁵ It was perhaps McCarthy who had already sent this journal a text of *Ní car Brigit*, 'Ancient Irish hymn of St Brogan Cloen in praise of St Brigid', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 4 (1868), 221–37, submitted from Dublin, as we infer from reference to 'the Cardinal Archbishop of this city' (p. 221). That was the first item in the February issue, Fiacc's hymn opened the March issue, in each case the month in which the saint's feast falls. In the case of St Brigit, however, the editor printed a Latin translation, based on Colgan's but 'with many corrections [...] in accordance with the more literal version of Mr Stokes' (and with acknowledgement of help from Brian O'Looney). Issues from April and May carried the hymns of St Sanctan and St Colman, *IER* 4 (1868), 318–25, 402–9.

O'Curry manuscripts at the Catholic University'.⁷⁶ And McCarthy's edition was the first to have made use of F, at St Isidore's in Rome, while the editor was a student in the Irish College. This article has been for too long too obscure to have been used, but the Internet Archive may now help to change that.

Todd's edition would have represented a claim to academic ownership of a text which had, for two hundred years, in manuscript and print, circulated mainly for the benefit of those who were not close readers of early Irish. Of the edition, however, little can be said, since Todd's work breaks off before the end of his introduction to *Génair Pátraicc*. He had transcribed F, still at St Isidore's in Rome, in 1862, but, failing to publish, he was overtaken by McCarthy.⁷⁷ Todd had the help of Eugene O'Curry in dealing with the Irish, advice also from John O'Donovan and William Reeves. He even had a copy of Stokes's vocabulary culled during his reading of early Irish texts.⁷⁸ In what exists of Todd's introduction to *Génair Pátraicc* there is no mention of Stokes's work, first published in 1866, nor of McCarthy's, which appeared in 1868. The publication date on Todd's work, 1869, masks his having put this part of the book into type five or more years earlier.⁷⁹

It was Stokes who reshaped the study of the Irish verses from the *Liber Hymnorum*, and it is on Stokes's work that we still depend. We are almost able to see the transition from old to new in the surviving correspondence between the young Stokes and the by then eminent Dr John O'Donovan.⁸⁰ Stokes, seeking to test Zeuss's results on texts in manuscripts in Ireland, opened the correspondence with a letter from

⁷⁶ McCarthy, 'St Fiacc's Hymn', 281 (§ 17). To what does he refer? Two manuscripts that include the poem are among O'Curry's collection, bought by St Patrick's College, Maynooth, in 1866. The O'Curry papers now at UCD were still with his family.

⁷⁷ J. H. Todd, *St Patrick, Apostle of Ireland* (Dublin, 1864), 360n; he offers as the date of the manuscript 11th or 12th century (p. 289).

⁷⁸ This last was listed among the Irish manuscripts when his library was auctioned, 1869 Todd 1444; it is now CUL MS Add. 705–6 (de Brún & Herbert, 116–17, no. 61). It appears to have been made about 1860 from Stokes's annotated copy of O'Reilly's Dictionary for Dr Carl Lottner, TCD, and was bought from him by Todd for £12.

⁷⁹ In his book *Saint Patrick, Apostle of Ireland* (Dublin, 1864), 15, he refers to 'the scholiast on St Fiacc, whose words in the original Irish have recently been published by the Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society', giving the page-numbers, 287, 289. In the same work, the list of the Society's publications indicates that the continuation of *Book of Hymns* was in the press.

⁸⁰ Many hundreds of letters to O'Donovan are in the Royal Irish Academy, MS 24 O 39 / JOD / 1–392 (in which each number may comprise a batch of letters); under JOD/356 and JOD/357 forty-one items have been calendared as letters from Stokes to O'Donovan. Thirty-four letters have been edited by Michael Herity, 'Whitley Stokes's correspondence with John O'Donovan, 1857–1861', *Studia Hibernica* 36 (2010), 9–89, along with one letter from O'Donovan to Stokes, and other letters that shed light on their dealings. Herity provides no archival orientation and very few notes, but he makes an extraordinary correspondence easily available.

London, dated 13 April 1857, in which he correctly parsed for the first time *atomriug*, ‘I bind me’, the first word of St Patrick’s Breastplate, a poem that O’Donovan had transcribed and translated for George Petrie.⁸¹ O’Donovan’s reply has not been found, but on 29 April Stokes rejoiced in their shared admiration for the work of Zeuss and explained that he needed a transcript of the Irish passages from the Book of Armagh and of Fiacc’s Hymn, hoping that one of O’Curry’s sons might copy the latter for him.⁸² On 2 May he wrote with some dismay at studying Todd’s first fascicule of the *Liber Hymnorum*, published in 1855; puzzled at one false translation from *Génair Pátraicc*, he resolved its source by lighting on Colgan’s *Trias* in the British Museum, ‘& then I found my bold Dr Todd had translated this bit of Fiech’s hymn slap from the Latin version there given’.⁸³ On 11 May Stokes spent five hours in the Bodleian attempting to transcribe a passage from MS Rawlinson B. 502 for O’Donovan.⁸⁴ On 21 May he thanked O’Donovan for ‘the admirable transcript’, evidently from the Book of Armagh, then in the keeping of William Reeves, and goes on, ‘Next to the Irish in Lib. Armach. which thanks to you I now possess, I have a greater desire to see that hymn [*Fiacc’s*] than anything in old Irish literature. Do you know that Dr Leo, a German, wrote a book expressly upon it. He of course had only Colgan’s inaccurate copy to work from. I have not seen Leo’s book’. He returns his own version of St Patrick’s Hymn, i.e. the Breastplate, ‘according to the lights I have received from Zeuss’, and even ventures a comment on its form, ‘I consider the original to be poetry & not prose. There are, I believe, 12 stanzas or parts & full of rhymes and alliteration without number’.⁸⁵ A new translation of this poem was Stokes’s first published contribution to Celtic Studies.⁸⁶ Within a few days of this letter, a transcript of Fiacc’s

⁸¹ Herity, ‘Stokes’s correspondence with O’Donovan’, 29–30 (letter 1). In Petrie’s ‘History and antiquities of Tara Hill’, 57, 58, ‘a Tomriug’ was interpreted as ‘Ad Temoriam’, ‘Apud Temoriam’; Stokes takes O’Donovan for his collaborator on the basis that Petrie could not have edited the poem himself.

⁸² Herity, ‘Stokes’s correspondence with O’Donovan’, 30–31 (letter C, apparently in error for 2) [from JOD/356].

⁸³ Herity, ‘Stokes’s correspondence with O’Donovan’, 32 (letter 3).

⁸⁴ Herity, ‘Stokes’s correspondence with O’Donovan’, 37–9 (letter 6). He refers to fol. 62b, which I take for 62v: a glossed copy of *Gúbretha Caratniad* begins near the end of 62vb and continues on fol. 63 (*CIH*, vi. 2192–2203).

⁸⁵ Herity, ‘Stokes’s correspondence with O’Donovan’, 40–41 (letter 7).

⁸⁶ It was included in a notice of Reeves’s *The Life of St Columba by Adamnan*, *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* 4 (No. 97, 5 September 1857), 224–5, and reprinted by William Stokes, *The Life and Labours in Art and Archaeology of George Petrie* (Dublin, 1866), 114–16. In the review Stokes rashly proposed that *Atomriug indiu*, ‘is almost certainly older than the seventh century, and is probably the most ancient existing monument of Celtic literature’. He concludes by inviting attention to early Irish literature, ‘especially as the acquisition of the language has been rendered easy by the publication of the *Grammatica Celtica* of that admirable philologist, the late John Caspar Zeuss’.

hymn must have arrived, presumed to be the copy in O'Donovan's hand now among Stokes's papers in London, and, after this, letters dated 31 May, 2, 7, and 11 June show Stokes's explaining his understanding of the poem almost line by line, while that of 2 June includes his thanks for O'Donovan's 'criticism of my poor attempt at S. Fiac'.⁸⁷ By 11 June, it appears, 'a beautiful copy of Fiac' reached Stokes from O'Curry.⁸⁸

Wasn't it unlucky? & by this post I send him a complete version of the hymn, which Dr Todd \or anyone else/ may see if he likes. Indeed, Dr O'Donovan (thanks to your most kind assistance & corrections), I \now/ feel pretty sure of having attained \in almost every place/ to the true meaning of this difficult old hymn. *After* we have done with Tirechan I should be glad to go upon St Brogan's Hymn to Brigit, which (judging by a version of a part in Todd's Lib. Hymn. p. 67) seems not unlikely to be mistranslated.

Stokes would meet O'Donovan on an excursion to Aran in September 1857.⁸⁹ These preceding letters provide a very remarkable insight into the recovery of Old Irish—other texts are discussed at the same time—and one can only regret that Stokes did not keep O'Donovan's letters with the same care as O'Donovan kept his.⁹⁰

Stokes published *Génair Pátraicc* no fewer than five times, on each occasion seeking to make corrections and improvements. Windisch and Zimmer tackled the hymns for the same reason, applying Zeuss's work on the glosses to what were recognized as texts of similar age. Thurneysen brought a stricter approach and for the first time discussed the internal evidence for a linguistic date. Bernard and Atkinson's edition was founded on a broader understanding of the manuscript as a whole and its contents, but Bernard did not contribute to the treatment of the Irish texts, and Atkinson was no match for Stokes as an editor and interpreter of such documents. The tendency now is to turn to Stokes's final text in *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, despite the fact that among his appendixes to the Tripartite Life he presented a better structured and more easily readable text. Well over a hundred years have passed since Stokes last

⁸⁷ Herity, 'Stokes's correspondence with O'Donovan', 43. Herity reproduces the transcript of Fiac's hymn, pp. 42, 44, 46.

⁸⁸ Herity, 'Stokes's correspondence with O'Donovan', 55 (letter 11).

⁸⁹ The company, listed by M. Haverty, *The Aran Isles; or, A report of the excursion of the Ethnological Section of the British Association from Dublin to the western islands of Aran, in September, 1857* (Dublin, 1859), 5, included Dr William Wilde, Dr William Stokes and his son Whitley, their friend the artist F. W. Burton and the archaeologist George Petrie, Irish scholars O'Donovan and O'Curry, and other men of letters such as Samuel Ferguson and J. T. Gilbert.

⁹⁰ Herity, 'Stokes's correspondence with O'Donovan', 17, quotes O'Donovan to Reeves, 22 July 1857: 'I want to keep all his letters together as those of an up-springing vigorous plant in Irish lore and learning—a youth of great promise' (UCD Archives, JOD L 57).

worked on the text. It is hardly surprising that ‘a new edition of the hymn [. . .] is a desideratum’, called for on the record by Pádraig Ó Riain.⁹¹

Not the least reason is because greater clarity on the date of the text, and its place in Irish metrical composition, is much to be wished for. With most of his editions Stokes advanced no particular date for either *Génair Pátraicc* or *Ní car Brigit*, though in his youthful letters he ventured that the Irish additions that accompany the work of Tírechán in the Book of Armagh were ‘as old as (if not older than) anything in Zeuss’ (p. 32), and that ‘the language of Rawl. B. 502, 62b (so far as I could judge from the very few bits & words I could make out) is *nearly* as old as Zeuss’s glosses’ (p. 38).⁹² Judgements have fluctuated over the years. Thurneysen in 1885 rejected Zimmer’s supposition that the writer of the poem knew the Life of St Patrick in the Book of Armagh. This was no route to a date: the writer of the hymn undoubtedly knew the Life of St Patrick by Muirchú, composed *c.* 700. The copy in the Book of Armagh was made in 808, but there is no need whatever to suppose that the poet used that particular copy.⁹³ In analysing the language Thurneysen retained Zimmer’s distinction between ‘the fifteen authentic quatrains’ (‘von den 15 *echten* Strophen’) and the rest of the poem, though all were, he thought, metrically consistent. He placed the poem on the cusp between Old and Middle Irish.⁹⁴ Stokes and Strachan dated it to the beginning of the ninth century, *c.* 800, within the date-range of the Old Irish glosses, but provided limited linguistic analysis.⁹⁵ This dating has remained influential. Eoin Mac Neill went out on a limb for a much earlier date, *c.* 700, tied to an unfounded attribution to Aed of Sleaty, patron of Muirchú.⁹⁶ Paul Grosjean, who was predisposed to early dates, placed the poem at the beginning of the eighth century, soon after the

⁹¹ Pádraig Ó Riain, ‘When and why *Cothraige* was first equated with *Patricius*’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 49/50 (1997), 698–711 (at p. 708).

⁹² Herity, ‘Stokes’s correspondence with O’Donovan’, 32 (letter 3), 38 (letter 6).

⁹³ R. Thurneysen, ‘Zur irischen Accent- und Verslehre’, *Revue celtique* 6 (1883–5), 309–347 (at p. 326).

⁹⁴ Thurneysen, ‘Zur irischen Accent- und Verslehre’, 328–9.

⁹⁵ Stokes & Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, ii, p. xxxvii. Unusually, T. F. O’Rahilly followed this safe linguistic authority in his generally controversial work, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), 410, adding, ‘other evidence, which I must pass over here, would harmonize with such a date’.

⁹⁶ Eoin Mac Neill, ‘The earliest Lives of St Patrick’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 58 (1928), 1–21 (at p. 4). He was misled by John Gwynn’s regrettable emphasis on the coincidence that by the eleventh century the hymn carried a scholastic attribution to St Fiacc of Sleaty and that, three hundred years earlier, Muirchú addressed his preface to Aed of Sleaty. Gwynn saw the poem as ‘a genuine relic of Sletty tradition’ (*Liber Ardmachanus. The Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1913), p. xxx). J. B. Bury, who had sight of Gwynn’s work long before it was published, doubted this in *The Life of St Patrick and his place in history* (London, 1905), 259; Bury, 266, accepted Stokes & Strachan’s date but none the less still inclined to allow that the poet may have used Muirchú’s sources.

writing of Muirchú's Life and very likely swayed by Mac Neill.⁹⁷ James Carney was another predisposed to early dating, and he placed this poem under *c.* 725 in a chronological listing though with much flexibility.⁹⁸ (It may be added in passing that he dated *Ní car Brigit* to the mid- or late seventh century, though without discussion of its relationship to the *Vita S. Brigitae* by Cogitosus.⁹⁹) Finding some judgements too early and others too late, D. A. Binchy assigned the poem to the middle of the eighth century but kept his reasons to himself.¹⁰⁰ Most recently, twenty years ago, Pádraig Ó Riain refined the hagiographical context, seeing the equation of *Patricius* and the Irish *Cothraige* as something first made by W, a reviser of the Patrician Life, whom he dates to the mid-ninth century. Since Fiacc's Hymn shares the equation in q. 4, this became a new *terminus a quo* for the composition of the poem.¹⁰¹ The dating of W may be debated along with his perceived role between the various Latin texts of the Life and the emergent *Bethu Pátraicc*. Ó Riain's dating to the second half of the ninth century is not inconsistent with Thurneysen's, and it is disconcerting from any methodical point of view that such varied dates have been expressed in the interim.

The need now for a fuller understanding of this poem and of the others in the *Liber Hymnorum* is primary. The study of the texts in the Middle Irish period, as represented by the scholia in the manuscript, should not be ignored. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century manuscript transmission of *Génair Pátraicc*, however, is both a part of its cultural history and potentially precise evidence for vernacular engagement with the early language.

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⁹⁷ P. Grosjean, 'S. Patrice d'Irlande et quelques homonymes dans les anciens martyrologes', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 1 (1950), 151–71 (at p. 156).

⁹⁸ James Carney, 'The dating of early Irish verse, 500–1100', *Éigse* 19 (1982–3), 177–216 (at p. 178), 'slightly earlier than I have indicated, or, for that matter, slightly later' (p. 183), footnoting Stokes & Strachan, 'at the latest not much later than 800'.

⁹⁹ Carney, 'Dating of early Irish verse', 190–94. At the foot of p. 190, he implies his having an edition ready for press.

¹⁰⁰ D. A. Binchy, 'Patrick and his biographers, ancient and modern', *Studia Hibernica* 2 (1962), 7–173 (at pp. 124–5).

¹⁰¹ Ó Riain, 'When and why *Cothraige*', 707–9.