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CLASSICAL LITERATURE AND LEARNING IN MEDIEVAL IRISH NARRATIVE

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CLASSICAL LITERATURE AND LEARNING IN MEDIEVAL IRISH NARRATIVE

Edited by
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Fig. 1. MS St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 136, p. 230 (Prudentius, *Hamartigenia*), reproduced by permission of the Stiftsbibliothek St Gallen (Switzerland) through the e-codices project (www.cesg.unifr.ch/en/) 107

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ABBREVIATIONS

For full references, see Bibliography.

Aeneid	Fairclough, *Virgil*
DIL	Quin, *Dictionary of the Irish Language*
Heldensage	Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*
ODNB	Matthew and Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
Odyssey	Murray, *Homer: The Odyssey*

For a chronology of the classical adaptations discussed, see pp. 13–16.

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DEMONOLOGY, ALLEGORY AND TRANSLATION: THE FURIES AND THE MORRÍGAN

Michael Clarke

The literary classifications of a century ago still loom over us. When *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (The Cattle-Raid of Cooley) was recruited as the 'primary epic' of a national literature,[1] and when the texts associated with it were called a Heroic Cycle,[2] they were uprooted from the cultural context that gave them meaning. We are only beginning to undo the damage, and to re-learn how to listen to the medieval Irish construction of the ancient past. In this paper, I offer a case study taking this corpus as the record of a remarkable adventure in cross-cultural translation.[3] Where the medieval scholar-authors' engagement with Graeco-Latin models and analogues has been studied, it has usually been understood as a process of emulation and imitation between literatures;[4] it has been approached less often in terms of mapping between languages, and this paper attempts to move the discussion in that direction.

I begin from the hunch or working hypothesis that the extended texts based on Classical sources – *Togail Troí, Imtheachta Aeniasa*, *Togail na Tebe, In Cath Catharda* – resemble the more famous narratives set in Ireland, notably the so-called Ulster Cycle texts and the *catha* and *cathréimeanna*, 'battles', 'battle-surges',[5] not only for literary reasons but because both genres are concerned to re-imagine the pagan past of the human race, Irish or Greek or Trojan as the case may be. Such works to all appearances present themselves not as the productions of poetic imagination but as a kind of elevated historiography[6] – realistic in the sense that it supposedly derives from the record of those who witnessed it, in accordance with Isidore's definition of *historia*.[7] For the Latin-based narratives, translation and modification adjust the discourse in each case to produce a more-or-less consistent stylistic level despite the heterogeneous range of underlying sources. Some, like *In Cath Catharda* (The Civil War) or *Togail na Tebe* (The Destruction of Thebes), are founded on high epic poetry with elaborate artistic and mythical embellishments, while others like *Togail Troí* (The Destruction of Troy) derive from prose accounts whose authority

[1] For the once-conventional classification, see for example Dillon, *Early Irish Literature*, 1–3; and for a critique of the now-problematic term 'primary epic', see Martin, 'Epic as genre', 9–11.
[2] See Clarke, 'Achilles, Byrhtnoth'; Poppe, *Of Cycles*, especially 3–15.
[3] I have attempted a more impressionistic study in Clarke, 'Translation and transformation'.
[4] Miles, *Heroic Saga*, is now the fundamental work in this area.
[5] Mac Gearailt, '*Togail Troí:* ein Vorbild'.
[6] See Toner, 'The Ulster Cycle'; Clarke, 'An Irish Achilles'; Poppe & Schlüter, 'Greece, Ireland'.
[7] Isidore, *Etymologies* I.41.1–2; compare *ibid*. VIII.7.9–10 (in Lindsay, *Isidori Etymologiarum Libri*, I, 81, 321).

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came originally from the very fact that they were plain and unadorned;[8] others again, notably *Imtheachta Aeniasa* (The Adventures of Aeneas), minimize the artistry and rhetoric of the poetic original to produce a more down-to-earth account of events.[9]

Despite these different bases, in the resultant Irish texts the narrative conventions, canons of style, and even specialist vocabulary are largely consistent across the group. Given the historiographical character of the genre, it is a potential source of tension and ambiguity that the discourse so often shifts from concrete reality towards the fantastic, the imagined or the demonic – as, for example, in passages where a warrior undergoes a preternatural transformation in battle, like the *riastrad* ('distortion') of Cú Chulainn in the *Táin*[10] or the transformation of Murchad in *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* (The War of the Irish against Vikings).[11]

Allecto and the Morrígan in the Táin

This tension is the subject of the most famous metaliterary commentary surviving from medieval Ireland, the Latin colophon to the *Táin* in the Book of Leinster.[12] Its author vacillates on assigning the *Táin* to history or myth, twice using *historia aut fabula* as alternative designations, and he assigns unacceptable parts of the work to a series of problematic categories: *praestrigia demonum* ('bewitchments made by demons' or 'bewitchments consisting in demons');[13] *figmenta poetica* ('poetic creations'), the opposite of *similia vero* ('things resembling the truth'); and finally mere nonsense for the delight of the foolish, *ad delectionem stultorum*. All of these labels apply to things that represent a departure from the veracity of *historia*, and they problematize the tendency of this kind of elevated narration to rise from concrete reality towards the fictive and the fantastic.

My concern in this essay will be with *praestrigia demonum*. Regardless of which way we construe the genitive *demonum*, a prominent example of such a *praestrigium* is the celebrated passage in Recension 1 of the *Táin* where a sinister being settles on a pillar-stone and prophesies the coming slaughter:

> Céin bátár didiu in tslóig oc tochim Maige Breg, forrumai Allechtu colléic, noch is í in Mórrígan són i ndeilb eúin, co mboí forsin chorthi hi Temair Cúalngi 7 asbert frisin tarb . . .[14]

[8] On Dares Phrygius's *De Excidio Troiae,* the ultimate source-text of *Togail Troí*, see Merkle, 'The truth'; Clark, 'Reading'; Kim, *Homer Between History and Fiction*.

[9] See Poppe, *New Introduction*, especially 19–28, and compare the revised views advanced by Poppe in this volume.

[10] The most famous example is that by the H-interpolator at O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, lines 2245–2315. For a recent discussion, see Dooley, *Playing the Hero*, 79–81, 132–5.

[11] Todd, *Cogadh*, sections 107–8. See further Ní Mhaonaigh in this volume.

[12] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, lines 4291–6. See Ó Néill, 'The Latin colophon', and Miles, *Heroic Saga*, 1–6 and 98, for antecedents in Latin sources for the opposition between *fabula* and *historia*, and compare the discussions in this volume by O'Connor (chapter 1) and Fulton (chapter 3).

[13] In favour of the former, Ó Néill ('The Latin colophon', 272) cites Ambrosiaster's phrase *praestigium satanae* of the vision conjured up by the Witch of Endor (Souter, *Pseudo-Augustini Quaestiones*, 54 line 12).

[14] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, lines 954–6.

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> While the army was going over Mag mBreg there came for a while Allecto, that is the Mórrígan, in the shape of a bird which perched on the pillarstone in Temair Cúailnge and said to the bull . . .

If we have shelved this work under 'Celtic literature', it is disconcerting to see the name of the Irish phantom or battle-deity Morrígan being matched with Allecto, one of the three Furies of Classical mythology. The passage has been much fought over. For Thurneysen, it indicated direct emulation of a passage in Virgil where Allecto appears;[15] for some modern scholars, more subtly, it signals the thematic aspiration of the *Táin* to the status of a national epic,[16] or makes a programmatic statement about the overall pattern of Virgilian *imitatio* in the context of prophecy.[17] Significantly, there is evidence for further classicizing references in the archaizing passage that follows: Corthals has convincingly suggested that *coigde* there is based on *cocytia virgo* 'the virgin from the river of Hades' in a nearby passage of the *Aeneid*.[18]

As I will try to suggest, the choice between such analyses may be less fundamental than the strategy of cross-cultural translation that motivates the text's choice of words. The equation between Allecto and the Morrígan is essentially a gloss: yet it is also more than that, because it reflects a practice that deserves to be called comparative mythology. It brings two naming systems and thus two worlds of storytelling – the Gaelic and the Roman – into parallel with each other and establishes an equivalence. It is especially remarkable that *Allechtu* is in the main text and *in Morrígan* is the interpretative aside: the Classical Fury has walked from the lore of the pagans to the landscape of county Louth, and the insight or explanation that translates her into an Irish-language spectre is a way of making sense of her presence against that background.[19] I will try to show how this belongs in an overall strategy of matching up phenomena in the old pagan lore of the Irish language with corresponding phenomena in the old pagan lore of the Mediterranean nations – a strategy which is the word-by-word microcosm of the literary project that establishes *Togail Troí* and *Táin Bó Cúailnge* as each other's counterparts in the grand narrative of pagan antiquity. Allecto and the Morrígan and are both part of the world of pagan delusion, whether that is seen in terms of mistaking demons for gods or of adorning language with vain fantasies.[20] The *Táin* belongs in that pagan world no less than the *Aeneid* – the *Annals of Tigernach*, for example, specify that Virgil died in the year of the cattle-raid itself[21] – so it makes sense in principle that a divinity described at that time in the language of an island at the edge of the Atlantic should correspond to one described by a poet of the same era in the heartlands of the south.

In terms of literary practice, the scholar-author who set up the equivalence was participating in a project whose roots lie far back in the history of European literature,

[15] Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, 96–7, adducing *Aeneid* VII.323–6. All references to the *Aeneid* in this chapter are to the text in Mynors, *P. Vergilii Maronis opera*. A more subtle interpretation of the possible Virgilian echo is advanced by Bernhardt-House, 'Interpretatio Hibernica', 49–51.

[16] Ó hUiginn, 'The background', 44.

[17] Miles, *Heroic Saga*, 148–9, 145–93.

[18] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, line 961, with *Aeneid* VII.479: see Corthals, 'Early Irish *retoirics*', 23–4, with Miles, *Heroic Saga*, 149.

[19] Intriguingly, the Book of Leinster versions of this and other passages name the Morrígan as *ingen Ernmais*, the daughter of Ernmas. Although Ernmas is well attested as a female member of the Túatha Dé (see e.g. Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, 124), her name in its written form is similar to *Erinnas*, the expected form in this period of the Furies' Greek name *Erinys*.

[20] Compare Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, 18–64.

[21] See Stokes, *Annals of Tigernach*, 406.

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and specifically in the classicizing yet Christian poetry composed in the first heyday of Christian Latin literature in the fifth and sixth centuries.[22] These poets regularly use the vocabulary of pagan mythology to name things that are part of revealed Christian truth about the world. Much of this vocabulary is cosmographical: Heaven is called *Olympus*, Hell *Tartara*,[23] and this may be seen as merely decorative, metaphorical, ornamental. But the effects can be more tricky. For a pagan Roman poet like Ovid, one of the epithets of Jupiter is *Tonans,* the Thunderer:

> Hac iter est superis ad magni tecta Tonantis
> regalemque domum . . .[24]
>
> Here lies the celestial ones' road to the abode of the great Thunderer
> and the royal house . . .

The Christian poet Prudentius uses the same name for the true God,[25] and Caelius Sedulius does likewise in his epic narrative of the Gospel story:

> Nec enim vindicta Tonanti
> conveniens humana fuit . . .[26]
>
> But human vengeance was not suitable for the Thunderer. . .

In the exordium of his poem, Sedulius explicitly compares his Christian poetic purpose with the bombastic *figmenta* of the pagan poets, in contrast to whom he will address himself to the genuine *dominum tonantem*, 'the Lord who thunders'.[27] People were still sacrificing to Jupiter so named in the lifetimes of these poets, and the naming strategy begs to be taken seriously. The God of the Bible *is* the god of the storm, just as Zeus was said to wield the thunderbolt; arguably, to give Him this name is to suggest in miniature that the Gentiles were reaching unguidedly towards the truth that was revealed to the Chosen People. Alternatively, the echo can be seen in terms of literary appropriation, with the Christian poets recruiting the forms of pagan poetry for a new purpose: it speaks to the theme Prudentius sets out when he recasts the Virgilian prophecy of Rome's eternal greatness as an assertion of the destiny of the Christian city.[28]

As we move further into the development of Christian Latinity, every such instance prompts the same question: is this a mere elegant equivalence, or is it something more? Carolingian poetry repeatedly foregrounds this problem. In a poem of about

[22] Bernhardt-House, 'Interpretatio Hibernica', compares medieval Irish cross-linguistic comparisons with the Classical technique of *interpretatio Romana*, whereby the names and identities of barbarian deities were routinely matched to their Graeco-Roman equivalents. His approach is complementary to that followed here: all three strategies are versions of the same cross-cultural approach to religious discourse. Compare Egeler, 'Condercum', on the dedication *LAMIIS TRIBVS* ('to the three Lamiae') at the Roman fort of Condercum on Hadrian's Wall.

[23] Prudentius, *Hamartigenia* 824, in Thomson, *Prudentius*, I, 262–3.

[24] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I.170–1, in Miller, *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, I, 14–15.

[25] E.g. *Hamartigenia* 669, *Psychomachia* 640, in Thomson, *Prudentius*, I, 250–1, 324–5.

[26] *Carmen Paschale* V.72–3, in Huemer, *Caelius Sedulius*, 119.

[27] See *Carmen Paschale* I.17–36, and compare II.205 (*ibid*., 16–17 and 58).

[28] Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* I.541–2 (in Thomson, *Prudentius*, I, 390–1), with Virgil, *Aeneid* I.278–9, cited by Roberts, 'Poetry and hymnography', 632.

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AD 798, the Northumbrian scholar Alcuin again calls God *Tonans*:[29] is this a trivial elegance, *variatio*, or does it reflect a thoughtful look at ancient recognitions of divine influence behind the weather, which is indeed the context in which he uses the name? Any participant in this cross-linguistic practice is somewhere between these two extremes, and the answer may be different in different contexts, even within the work of a single poet. For us, the question is all the more important because there is ample evidence that poets like Caelius Sedulius and his successors were read and studied by Irish intellectuals in the formative centuries of the tradition.[30]

This background gives us a new context for understanding the *Táin*'s equivalence between spectral females from two different linguistic traditions. The Morrígan, to synthesize the evidence of earlier and later medieval sources,[31] goes with her sisters Machae and the Badb to make up a trio virtually identified with each other, and they are further associated or identified with Nemain or Bé Néit, 'the wife of Néit'[32] who can drive an army into panic or confusion[33] and whose husband is glossed *dia catha la gentib Gaedel*, 'the god of war among the pagan Irish'.[34] These beings take to the battlefield in bird-like form and are associated with rending and harrying the slain. This role is clear in an entry in *O'Mulconry's Glossary*, a text probably from the eighth century: *Machae .i. badb. No así an tres morrígan, unde mesrad Machae .i. cendae doine iarna n-airlech* ('Macha, viz. Badb. Or: she is one Morrígan of three; whence "Macha's nut-harvest", viz. the heads of people after they are slain').[35]

The kenning that makes the heads of the slain their 'harvest of nuts' can only imply that they seize and feast on corpses. The version in the related *Irsan* glossary cites a quatrain ascribed to Dub Ruis:

> Garbæ adbae innon fil,
> i llomrad fir Maiche mes,
> i n-agat láichliu i llés,
> i lluaidet mná trogain tres.[36]
>
> There are rough places beyond, where men cut off the nut-harvest of Macha, where they drive young calves into the fold, where the raven women instigate battle.

[29] See the verses beginning *O mea cella* at line 15, in Godman, *Poetry*, 124.

[30] Herren, 'Literary and glossarial evidence', 52; Wright, 'The *Hisperica Famina*'. Note also the presence of a glossary to Sedulius in Laon MS 468, discussed below.

[31] I draw extensively here on the scholarship of Jacqueline Borsje, especially 'The "terror of the night"' and 'Demonising the enemy'. See also Egeler, *Walküren*, especially 143–4.

[32] Nemain is glossed as the Badb at O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, e.g. line 210; and Bé Neit is commonly conjoined with the three sisters, as *badb ⁊ bé Neit ⁊ Néamain* (*ibid*., lines 3942, 4033). For the later tradition, see especially O'Donovan, *Cath Maige Rath*, 241–2.

[33] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, lines 2085, 3537; O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, lines 2133, 4149.

[34] See *Cormac's Glossary*, Y965. Unless otherwise indicated, all glossary entries cited in this chapter refer to texts in the online Early Irish Glossaries Database (Arbuthnot *et al.*, *Early Irish Glossaries*, www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/irishglossaries/, last consulted 14 February 2013) and follow its referencing system.

[35] *O'Mulconry's Glossary*, text OM1 from the Yellow Book of Lecan, no. 820. Discussion by Borsje, 'The "terror of the night"', 86 n. 49.

[36] *Irsan Glossary*, no. 180.

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They take the forms of carrion crows or ravens, and many of their names can be used non-mythically to label such birds;[37] but there is also a sense in which they are demons, as is clear from an entry in *Sanas Cormaic* (Cormac's Glossary), the most extensive and authoritative of the early Irish glossaries: *Gúdemain .i. úatha 7 morrígnae* ('Evil-demons, viz. horrors and *morrígnae*').[38]

Prophecy, shapechanging into the form of birds, death in war, and three sinister divine sisters with merging identities: these features of the Irish-language beings are also characteristic of the Classical imagery of the Furies, and this is evidently the basis of the correlation between the two sets of sisters – Morrígan, the Badb, Macha and Allecto, Tisiphone, Megara – with Bellona and Nemain on the edges of each group. It might be thought obvious that the Latin sources for such imagery would be poetic, including such passages as the celebrated appearance of Allecto in the *Aeneid* discussed above: but we will find a more direct and tangible route for this lore in the compilation and transmission of mythographic commentary in the period *before* the Irish heroic sagas were formed as we know them.

Furies and demons in Carolingian glosses

The earliest surviving witnesses to this particular example of confrontation between international learning and Irish-language lore are not in vernacular sources at all, but in Latin manuscripts from the world of Carolingian and post-Carolingian intellectualism in which the Irish *peregrini* participated. A remarkable example survives at St Gall in a tenth-century manuscript of Prudentius, the early Christian poet whose speciality is extravagant personifications of virtues, vices and abstract forces. The manuscript is glossed liberally in Latin and German, but has no other obvious Irish connection. In the poem *Hamartigenia* (The Origin of Sin'), Prudentius is describing the alluring figure of a temptress: *crinibus aureolisque riget coma texta catenis* ('Her hair is stiff, woven with tresses and golden bands').[39] Beside this line appear the words *scot*ice *Neman*, '*Nemain* in the Irish language' (Fig. 1).

As Pádraic Moran has pointed out to me, no one word is being glossed here, and it seems that the overall description has prompted the comparison with this item from Irish cultural baggage. If so, presumably the glossator's comparison has been prompted by the *visual* appearance of the seductress whose image the poet has conjured up, and it is intriguing to speculate that he may have been aware of a comparable depiction of Nemain herself.

The gloss finds a striking correlate in the vernacular Irish manuscript tradition of the succeeding centuries. On the top margin of a page of *Lebor na hUidre* (The Book of the Dun Cow, *c.* 1100 AD) there appears a quatrain of difficult poetry concerning the Badb, in the hand of the main scribe M:

[37] In the entry for *Macha* in the later *O'Clery's Glossary*, the collocation *Mol Macha* is explained as *cruinniughadh badhb, nó feannóg* ('a meeting of *badba*, or crows') (Miller, 'O'Clery's glossary', 19). This glossary also gives two entries for *Némhain*, first *dásacht no mire* 'fury or madness' and then *badhb catha no feannóg* ('*badb* of battle, or scaldcrow') (*ibid*., 29). The same ambiguity is seen in the glossary on *Bretha Nemed Déidenech*, which identifies the scaldcrows (*fennóga*) as *morrígna* and thus as demons of the air not demons of hell (see Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, II.604.1–4; cited by Borsje, 'The "terror of the night"', 88).

[38] *Cormac's Glossary*, Y698.

[39] Prudentius, *Hamartigenia* 271, in Thomson, *Prudentius*, I, 222–3.

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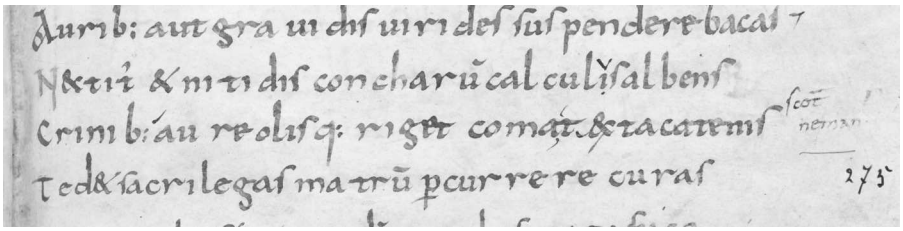


Fig. 1. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek MS 136, p. 230 (Prudentius, *Hamartigenia*) reproduced by permission of the Stiftsbibliothek St Gallen (Switzerland) through the e-codices project (www.cesg.unifr.ch/en/); see Stokes & Strachan, *Thesaurus*, I.233.

Mac Lonan dixit
Mían mná Tethrach a tenid,
slaide sethnach iar sodain;
suba luba fo lubaib,
ugail troga dír drogain.[40]

Mac Lonan said:
The desire of the woman of the scaldcrow are her fires,
the slaughter of the body thereafter;
juices, body under bodies,
eyes, heads belonging to a raven.

Much of the vocabulary is obscure, and nearly every word carries a gloss in the hand of the same scribe: *mná Tethrach* is glossed *badb*, and *drogain* is glossed *fiaich* ('raven'), with an echo to the quatrain from the *Irsan* glossary discussed above. The overall image plainly refers to the supernatural females of the battlefield; and it has been forcibly argued that the quatrain is meant to resonate with the main text on the page, *Serglige Con Culainn* (The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn), at a passage in which a poem of regret and desire is spoken by Fand, the beautiful Otherworld woman who tried to seduce Cú Chulainn and who originally took the form of a bird when she appeared before him.[41] While it would be fanciful to suggest a direct link between this and the *Neman* gloss on Prudentius, it is remarkable that in both cases a passage concerned with a sexually alluring phantom woman prompts a gloss concerned with the supernatural females of the Irish battlefield.

The *Neman* gloss was presumably culled from a commentary written by an Irishman or someone in touch with Irish lore; and indeed there is contemporary evidence for at least one Prudentius commentary with marked Irish associations,[42] containing (for example) an extended version of the note (best known from the ninth-century

[40] Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 E 25 (*Lebor na hUidre*), p. 50a; transcription in Best & Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, 124. I adapt Borsje's translation from her 'The "terror of the night"', 86.

[41] Findon, 'Dangerous siren', with further discussion by Borsje, 'The "terror of the night"', 85–7. The passage is at Dillon, *Serglige Con Culainn*, lines 767–818.

[42] Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, MS Lat. 13953 (10th century), and Vatican, MS Palatinus Latinus 235 (11th or 12th century); edition by Burnam, *Glossemata*; on the origins of the collection see Manitius, 'Zu den Prudentiusglossen'. At *Psychomachia* 532 (see Thomson, *Prudentius*, I.316–17) there is a learned etymology of the word *parapsis*, and the same etymology appears in a commentary attributed to Remigius of Auxerre (Burnam, *Commentaire*) with the introduction *Johannes autem Scottus dicebat parobsis* ('Indeed Johannes Scottus said "parobsis"'). This suggests that Johannes Scottus

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Bern scholia on Virgil) that associates the body-painting of the Scythian *Geloni* tribe with that of the Scotti, that is the Irish.[43] Given this possibility, it is remarkable that the closest thematic parallel for our *Neman* gloss is a well-known item in the mid-ninth-century biblical glosses of Johannes Scottus Eriugena.[44] Where Eriugena uses Irish words it is usually for precision, as with animal and plant names, or occasionally to specify legal phenomena for which accurate terms exist in Irish, such as *éric* and *imthadacht* ('fine', 'concubinage');[45] but in this case the parallelism is more daring. The context is the passage in Isaiah where strange monsters are described as inhabiting the ruins of Babylon and Edom after their destruction, and among them is Lamia, a demon of infanticide and abortion: *Ibi cubavit Lamia et invenit sibi requiem* ('there the Lamia has made her bed and found rest for herself').[46] Eriugena's note reads as follows: *Lamia: monstrum in feminae figura,* id est *Morrigain* ('Lamia: a monster in the shape of a woman, viz. Morrígan').[47]

What was the basis of the parallel? Haymo of Halberstadt (died AD 853) comments on this same passage of Isaiah with the information that Lamia has the face and body of a beautiful woman but the legs of a horse,[48] suggesting a vaguely comparable kind of human–animal hybrid: this lore has an antecedent in the writings of Gregory the Great,[49] and was presumably widespread. However, there is a stronger clue in Paschasius Radbertus's contemporary (or slightly later) commentary on the Lamentations of Jeremiah, where he gives an etymology of *Lamia* from the verb *laniare* 'rend', with the information that she tears apart her whelps, varying Isidore's information that she steals and rends apart human children.[50] This last image bears comparison with the idea of the Morrígan and her sisters seizing the heads of the slain, 'Macha's nut-harvest', in *O'Mulconry's Glossary*.[51] Presumably some such image

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Eriugena might actually have been the author of the glosses (thus Silvestre, 'Jean Scot'; but compare the sceptical assessment by Cappuyns, 'Jean Scot').

43 Where Prudentius mentions the tribe of the Geloni (*Apotheosis* 430, in Thomson, *Prudentius*, I.152–3) the *Glossemata* (see last note) has a comment on the name: *Gentes Scythiae stigmata ut Servius dicit more Scottorum sibi furentes* [leg. *ferientes*?] ('Pagans of Scythia who incise tattoos into themselves, as Servius says, in the manner of the Irish', Burnam, *Glossemata* 41). Compare Servius at *Georgics* II.115 and *Aeneid* 4.146 (Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Commentarii*, III.i, 229 and I, 490), and Isidore, *Etymologies* IX.2.103, in Lindsay, *Isidori Etymologiarum Libri*, I, 358. The closely related note in the Bern scholia to Virgil, a text with clear Irish affinities, is discussed by Miles, *Heroic Saga*, 29.

44 The identification of the glossator as Johannes Scottus Eriugena was long dependent on the attribution 'IOH' marked in the glosses themselves, along with multiple lines of circumstantial evidence. Independent confirmation that Eriugena was their author has since been found: see Contreni & Ó Néill, *Glossae*, 28, citing Lendinara, 'On John Scottus's authorship'.

45 Contreni and Ó Néill, *Glossae*, 97, 456.

46 Isaiah 34.14.

47 The parallel between this gloss and the Allecto of the *Táin* was highlighted by O'Rahilly in her note at *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, line 955. See further Ó Néill, 'The Old-Irish words'; Borsje, 'The "terror of the night"', 93; Bernhardt-House, 'Interpretatio Hibernica', 51–3.

48 *Lamia monstrum est, habens faciem totumque corpus femineum perpulchrum, pedes tamen habet equinos* ('Lamia is a monster who has the face and entire body of a very beautiful woman but has the feet of a horse'): Haymo Halberstatensis, *Commentarium in Isaiam*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CXVI, col. 893.

49 Gregorius, *Moralia in Iob*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, LXXVI, col. 0707.

50 *Lamia, quasi lania a multis sonare dicitur, eo quod dilaniat catulos suos* (Paschasius Radbertus, *In Threnos sive Lamentationes Ieremiae*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CXX, col. 1205). Compare Isidore, *Etymologies* VIII.102 in Lindsay, *Isidori Etymologiarum Libri*, I, 342. I am grateful to Jacqueline Borsje (pers. comm.) for suggesting this aspect of *Lamia* as a clue to the linkage with the Morrígan.

51 There is further evidence for glossing *lamia*, but it seems to be the idea of a witch rather than a demonic spirit. In a very early Hiberno-Latin text, the 'First Synod of St Patrick', it is laid down that

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motivates Eriugena's gloss. This comparative strategy is closely paralleled elsewhere in the same section of Isaiah: *Et habitabunt ill strutiones et pilosi saltabunt ibi* ('Birds will live there and the wild ones will dance there').[52] Eriugena's gloss reads: *Pylosi, daemonum genera vel* geltig ('*Pilosi*, types of demons or *geltig*').[53] The shaggy wildness of another of Isaiah's demons in the ruins prompts the commentator to set up an equivalence with the wild men known in Irish as *geltig*. For us, of course, *geltig* suggests the Irish lore of the bird-like wild man living in the trees, as in *Buile Shuibhne* (The Frenzy of Suibhne); but although that text is too late to be directly relevant here, Suibhne Geilt is associated with wild outdoor living as early as the Carinthia *Codex S. Pauli* of about AD 800, which identifies him as the speaker in the poem celebrating the wild isolation of the hermitage of Túaim Inbir.[54] Does the featheriness of the woodland *geltig* chime with the shaggy wildness of the *pilosi* identified as fauns?

The strategy of mapping such a word from language to language has venerable antecedents in the history of biblical commentary, and it is backed up by the authority of St Jerome himself, the central authority-figure for exploring and problematizing the relationships between different languages in reading and elucidating the words of Scripture. As Borsje has pointed out,[55] Eriugena's movement across languages to Irish equivalents emulates Jerome's discussion in his *Commentary on Isaiah*, which is known to have circulated among the Irish *peregrini* and was excerpted by Josephus Scottus very early in the 9th century.[56] Jerome lists various ways to understand the *pilosi*: as spectres of nightmare (*incubones*), as types of demons (*daemonum genera*), as satyrs (*satyri*) or as *silvestres quosdam homines, quos nonnulli fatuos ficarios vocant* ('certain people of the woods, whom some call the crazy ones of the fig-trees').[57] Later in the commentary, he characterizes Isaiah's beasts in the ruins as figures from pagan story and poetic invention: *Onocentauri, et pilosi, et lamia, quae gentilium fabulae et poetarum figmenta describunt* ('Onocentaurs, and shaggy ones, and the Lamia, which the tales of the pagans and the fictions of the poets describe').[58]

For Jerome, as for the author of the colophon to the *Táin*, there is a parallelism or even an ambiguity between pagan demons and poetic *figmenta*. In his account of Lamia in the same passage, Jerome develops the sense of cross-linguistic equivalence: *lamiam (quae hebraice dicitur Lilith; et a solo Symmacho translata est Lamia, quam quidam hebraeorum erinun, id est furiam, suspicantur)* ('Lamia, who is called Lilith in Hebrew; and by Symmachus alone it is translated *Lamia*, which some of the Hebrews interpret as [Greek] *Erinus*, that is [Latin] *Fury*').[59] Where Jerome brings the three sacred languages together, Eriugena makes a further cross-cultural leap and adds the Irish comparandum as a fourth member in the series of languages. This is

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any Christian is to be anathematized who believes there is such a thing in the world as a *lamia* . . . *quae interpretatur striga* 'a *lamia*, which [word] is interpreted as *striga*' (Bieler, *Irish Penitentials*, 56, section 16). Bieler in his note on the passage translates *lamia* as 'vampire' and *striga* as 'witch', citing the seventh-century Lombard *Edictum Rothari* for a prohibition on killing a *striga* because 'no-one should believe that a woman should be able to devour a living man within'.

52 Isaiah 13.21.

53 Contreni & Ó Néill, *Glossae* no. 290 = Stokes & Strachan, *Thesaurus*, I, section 2.5.

54 St Paul in Lavanttal (Carinthia, Austria), Archiv des Benediktinerstifts, Cod. 86 b/1. Stokes & Strachan, *Thesaurus*, II, 294; Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics*, 223–5.

55 Borsje, 'Omens', 23–4; compare Egeler, *Walküren*, 141.

56 Josephus's text (Lapidge & Sharpe, *Bibliography*, no. 649) is unpublished. There are only limited indications that Eriugena used Jerome directly (Contreni & Ó Néill, *Glossae*, 31–3).

57 Jerome, *Commentarii in Isaiam* 5.13, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, XXIV, col. 159.

58 *Commentarii in Isaiam* 10.34, in *ibid*., col. 373.

59 *Ibid.*

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the equivalent in exegetical discourse of the lexicographical discipline followed by the authors of the early Irish glossaries, discovering or inventing systematic parallelisms between Irish on the one hand and Greek, Latin and Hebrew on the other.[60]

Fulgentius and the study of mythology: Irish scholars and the Ratio Fabularum

It is no accident that demons, *daemonum genera*, are the subject of these cross-linguistic leaps. From the viewpoint of an early medieval intellectual, one supernatural hostile female is self-evidently akin to another, whether you construct her as a sinister inhabitant of Edom, as the enemy of an ascetic monk,[61] or as an evil presence in a battlefield depicted in a narrative of the pre-Christian past. Such mapping depends on the principles of allegory: specifically, on the recognition that the forms of mythical and poetic discourse are underlain by simpler and more essential realities independent of the superficial codes of language and imagery. The key authority here is Fulgentius, the profoundly influential North African intellectual of the late fifth century AD who used this strategy to try to find a place for pagan mythology in a Christian universe.[62] Fulgentius's technique is to go behind the surface story about gods or goddesses or heroes to pinpoint an underlying meaning concerned with physics, or ethics, or the physical furniture of the world. His *Mitologiae* is a compilation of such interpretations, often arranged by threes and often assigning each trio of mythical beings to three successive stages in a universally recurring process. I give a typical example with his interpretations of Cerberus the hound of Hell:

> Cerberus vero dicitur quasi creoboros, hoc est carnem vorans et fingitur habere tria capita pro tribus aetatibus, infantia, iuventute, senectute, per quas introivit mors in orbem terrarum.[63]

> Cerberus is so called as if [Greek] *creo-boros*, that is 'devouring meat'; and he is imagined as having three heads for the three ages – infancy, youth, old age – through which death has entered into the world.

Fulgentius turns up repeatedly in the scholarship of the Carolingan *peregrini*.[64] A remarkable example survives in the manuscript Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale 468,

[60] Russell, '*Graece* . . . *Latine*'; Moran, 'Hebrew'; Moran, 'Greek'.

[61] Brakke, *Demons*.

[62] The principal modern student of Fulgentius is Gregory Hays: see especially Hays, 'The date and identity', and additional resources and bibliography at http://people.virginia.edu/~bgh2n/fulgbib.html. Hays's work will culminate in his much-awaited edition and commentary on the *Mitologiae* and Fulgentius's other works.

[63] Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* I.6, in Helm, *Fulgentii Opera*, I, 20. For a modern reprint of Helm's text of the *Mitologiae* with French translation, see Wolff & Dain, *Fulgence*.

[64] Evidence for such influence is clearly seen in Eriugena's commentary on Martianus Capella: see most recently Herren, 'John Scottus', who shows how Eriugena associated the Fulgentian approach to myth (*fabula*) with Neoplatonic allegorical discourse. Compare Laistner, 'Fulgentius'. In his discussion of the names of the Furies (Ramelli, *Scoto Eriugena* . . . *Tutti i Commenti*, 160), Eriugena cites but distances himself from Fulgentius's etymological explanations of the names. The *Scolica* formerly attributed to Martin of Laon also include much Fulgentian material: see Laistner, 'Notes on Greek', with Contreni's demonstration ('Three Carolingian texts') that Martinus Hiberniensis was not personally responsible for this text.

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a learned miscellany compiled under the supervision and partly in the hand of one of Eriugena's contemporaries and acquaintances, Martinus Hiberniensis of Laon.[65] In this manuscript, there is much Virgilian commentary and a set of glosses on Sedulius, including explanations of pagan mythological terms comparable to those discussed above, as *potentem* for *Tonantem* and *inferna* for *Tartara*;[66] but the most instructive item for our purposes is the remarkable text headed *Ratio fabularum*, 'the system/explanation of myths'. This work is an index of names and motifs from Classical mythology. Much of the material is from Isidore, but there is also plenty from Fulgentius, who is even named in one of the marginal notes,[67] suggesting that the authors and/or users of the text had access to a fuller version.

A striking entry in the *Ratio* quotes virtually word-for-word from Fulgentius on the subject of the journeyings of Ulysses: *Ulixes in modum sapientiae pontitur, et interpretatur omnium peregrinus, quia sapientia ab omnibus mundi rebus peregrina est* ('Ulysses is set down as a measure of wisdom; and he is interpreted as the wanderer of all things, because wisdom is a wanderer from all the things of the world').[68] This in turn bears a close relationship with an entry in a Munich manuscript of the second half of the ninth century, which has been the subject of an important study by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín.[69] This manuscript includes an Old Irish gloss and carries in seventy places the abbreviation 'IOH' attributing a comment to Eriugena, which is also found labelling Eriugena's biblical glosses in the collection discussed above. The Munich manuscript mentions Fulgentius by name as one of its sources,[70] and it includes his explanation of Ulysses with an additional etymology for his Greek name Odysseus, interpreting it as *ὁδος σιος* (*odos sios* 'road [of] god') – an etymology which undoubtedly looks to a genuine ancient source, as *σιός* is the Laconian form of *θεός* (*theos* 'god').[71] Such parallels encourage a working hypothesis that Laon 468 belongs in the mainstream of the intellectual life of the Carolingian Irish *peregrini*, and that transference between languages was a major concern in their engagement with the pagan past.

Triplism is a recurrent feature of the *Ratio.* An example of this practice in its simplest form is the Fulgentian explanation of Cerberus's three heads standing for *tres aetates per quas mors hominem devorat* ('the three ages through which death devours

[65] Facsimile edited by Contreni, *Codex Laudunensis*. Contreni, *Cathedral School*, remains the authoritative study on Martin of Laon and his circle: for Laon 468, see especially 118–19. There is also much Fulgentian material in the related manuscript Laon 444: see Contreni, *Cathedral School*, 120–1.

[66] Fos 53r 19 and 53v 12.

[67] On fo. 6v, in the left margin at lines 20–1 the note before a series of Fulgentian allegories reads *quae sequuntur . . . gentio sunt*, begging to be restored as *. . . [e Ful]gentio sunt* (or similar), thus 'what follows is from Fulgentius'. Other marginalia refer to Servius and Isidore, while another note on fo. 7v 30, *. . .] oetio ē*, should very likely be restored as *[e B]oetio est*, '[this] is from Boethius'.

[68] Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 468, fo. 7r 8–9, based on Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* II.8 (in Helm, *Fulgentii Opera*, I, 8–9). For further discussion of the affinities of this lore with the Irish text *Merugud Uilixis*, see Hillers in this volume, 92.

[69] Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek MS clm 14429: see Ó Cróinín, 'An Eriugenian miscellany', 'A new Old Irish gloss'. I am grateful to Dáibhí Ó Cróinín for lending me his photographs of this manuscript.

[70] On fo. 221vb there is a heading *DE LIBRIS IIII FABII FULGENTII PLANCADIS AD CALCIDIUM GRAMMATICUM*, ('From the four books of Fabius Fulgentius Planciades [addressed] to Calcidius the Grammarian'). This refers to the dedicatee of Fulgentius's short work *Explanatio sermonum antiquorum* (Explanation of Ancient Words), in Helm, *Fulgentii Opera*, II, 108, but the reference to 'four books' shows that the authors of the Munich compilation were referring to a larger body of Fulgentian material.

[71] Fo. 227r 22–9, reproduced in Ó Cróinín, 'An Eriugenian miscellany'.

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men');[72] but there are more complex examples in sets of co-ordinated names, where a single divinity or essence has a name for each of the three levels – heaven, earth, hell. A cluster of these explanations is gathered near the beginning of the *Ratio*:

> TRIA FATA quae et parcae dicunt*ur* eo q*uo*d minime parcant. Clotto. Lachesis. Atropos. Clotto dat vita*m* id *est* filat. Lachesis orditu*r* vita*m* id *est* nodat. Atropos dat mortem id *est* disru*m*pit.
> ISTAE SUNT tres furiae. Allecto. Tisiphone. Megera. Impausibiles enim interp*ret*antu*r* istae & semper furendo trahere dicunt*ur* animas in infernu*m*.
> TRES ARPIAE. Aello. Ocypete. Celeno. Arpuae eni*m* id *est* raptrices. Arpage eni*m* grece rapina d*icitur*. Istae dicunt*ur* rapere animas in infernu*m*.
> TRES DEAE in vocatione lunae. Lucina in caelo Diana in t*er*ra. P*ro*serpina in inferno. Ipsa et latonia d*icitu*r.
> TRES GORGONAE. Stenno. Euriale. Medusa. Quae tria terroris genera significant. .i. debilitatione*m*. sparsionem. caligine*m*. Quos t*er*rores Perseus interfecit. & post Athlantis regnu*m* invasit. unde in monte*m* conversus e*ss*e d*icitu*r. Istae tres fuerunt Forci regis filiae locupletes valde unde & Gorgo dicta e*st*. quasi georgico. Na*m* grece georgi agricultores dicuntur. Lege Isido*rum*.[73]

> THREE FATES which are also called Parcae because they spare [*parcant*] not at all: Clotto, Lachesis, Atropos. Clotto gives life, i.e. she stretches the thread. Lachesis spins life, i.e. she knots it. Atropos gives death, i.e. she breaks it.
> THESE ARE the three Furies: Allecto, Tisiphone, Megera. These ones are intepreted as 'unstoppable' and always by means of madness [? or 'by always stealing'] these ones are said to drag souls into Hell.
> THREE HARPIES: Aello, Ocypete, Celeno. *Arpuae* indeed, that is 'snatchers'. Indeed *arpage* is the Greek for 'seizing'. These ones are said to drag souls into Hell.
> THREE GODDESSES in calling upon the moon: Lucina in the sky, Diana on earth, Proserpina in Hell. The same one is also called Latonia.
> THREE GORGONS: Stenno, Euriale, Medusa. Which signify three types of terror, i.e. weakening, scattering, delusion. Which terrors Perseus killed. And afterwards he entered the kingdom of Athlas, from which he is said to have been turned into a mountain. These ones were three daughters of Forcus the king, very wealthy, and thus she is called Gorgo, as if *georgico*, because in Greek cultivators of the land are called *georgi*. Read Isidore.

The fourth item in this series, the names of the moon-goddesses, exemplifies the classic Fulgentian pattern where a single divinity or essence has three names for each of the three levels, heaven, earth, hell. Our concern is with Fates, Furies and Gorgons. Much of the information is commonplace: for example, there is partially similar lore in the standard Virgilian commentary of Servius, cited in many manuscripts including the Irish-authored tenth-century manuscript Bern, Burgerbibliothek 363,[74] and

[72] Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 468, fo. 6v 17–19; see Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* I.6 (Helm, *Fulgentii Opera*), discussed above.

[73] MS Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale 468, fo. 5v 17–31.

[74] Servius on *Aeneid* IV.609 and *Georgics* IV.453, in Thilo & Hagen, *Servii Commentarii*, I, 570, and III, 354; for the version of this note in Bern, Burgerbibliothek MS 363, see Hagen, *Codex Bernensis*, 229 (= fo. 115r), with the related note in the quite separate collection published as *Scholia Bernensia* (Hagen, *Scholia Bernensia*, at *Eclogues* IV.47).

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the correlation between Fates and Furies is repeated by an extraordinary letter full of Classical erudition written at St Gall about AD 850.[75] In our text, however, in the last line something unusual is said of the Furies: *istae dicuntur rapere animas in infernum*, they are said to snatch souls into Hell. Has this line been inserted by mistake from the following section about Harpies, which says the same thing? Whether or not a disorderly explanation of this kind is appropriate, it is certainly an unusual thing to say about the Furies, who may live in Hell or have sinister and Hellish associations but would not normally be described as bringing souls there.

The names of demons in Irish learning

This section of the *Ratio* finds a close parallel in the Middle Irish commentary on the authoritative Late Old Irish poem *Amra Choluimb Chille* (The Eulogy of Colm Cille). Versions of this commentary are found in many manuscripts from *c.* 1100 onwards, and it served as a repository of learning and speculation about language, theology and stories set in the receding past. The passage in question was used by Gerard Murphy in a celebrated note to show that the mention of Allecto in the *Táin* did not necessarily depend on a reading of Virgil;[76] but I hope to show that its significance is deeper still. The context is the prayer for salvation at the end of the poem, where the poet is asking for salvation:[77]

> Rodom-sibsea sech riaga .i. rom-fuca sech dem[n]u ind æeoir ad requiem sanctorum. *No* sech riaga .i. sech ingena Oircc, tres filiae Orcci, quae diversis nominibus in caelo ⁊ in terra ⁊ in inferno. In caelo quidem .i. Stenna. Euriale. Medussa. IN terra .i. Clothos. Lachessis. Antropus. IN inferno. Allecto. Micera. Tessifone.[78]
>
> May he bring me past torments! *viz*., may he bear me past the demons of the air to the rest of the saints. Or *sech riaga*, i.e. past the daughters of Orcc, three daughters of Orcus, who [are called] by separate names in heaven and on earth and in hell. In heaven Stenna, Euriale, Medussa. On earth Clothos, Lachessis, Antropus. In hell Allecto, Micera, Tessifone.

This echoes the Laon text in several ways. When the note shifts into Latin, it gives an introductory heading parallel to those in the *Ratio*, followed by a tripartite location just like with the moon-goddesses, and then lists the three trios of sisters arranged as Gorgons, Fates and Furies.[79] It is doubly striking that they are daughters

[75] Dümmler, 'Ermenrici Elwangensis epistola', section 25.

[76] Murphy, review of Carney's *Studies*, 157; see now Miles, *Heroic Saga*, 148.

[77] The peculiar words of the lemma are echoed in Ultan's hymn on Brigit: *Ron-sóira Brigit sech drungu demna* ('May Brigit save us past throngs of devils', Stokes & Strachan, *Thesaurus*, II, 325 line 17), and similarly in *Félire Óengusso* for 28 March: *Don-rogra, ron-sóera sech phíana, ron-séna* ('May she [i.e. Mary Magdalene] call us, may she save us past pains, may she bless us', Stokes, *Félire Óengusso*, 84, noted by Bisagni *ad loc.* in his forthcoming commentary on the *Amra*).

[78] Commentary on *Amra* X.3, in Stokes, 'The Bodleian *Amra*', pp. 414–16. Here and in the notes that follow, I follow the modern system of line numbering for the poem itself, as in Clancy & Márkus, *Iona*, 96–128.

[79] Compare the distinction between demons of the air and demons of Hell in the entry on *fennóga* and *morrígna* in the glossary on *Bretha Nemed Déidenech* (see above).

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of *Orcc* – Orcus, the god of the dead: this is a comparatively rare name for Hades elsewhere but it is the one used consistently in Eriugena's commentary on Martianus Capella. These indications are sufficient to argue strongly that this item in the *Amra* commentary is drawn from a Fulgentian compilation intimately related to the *Ratio*.

This is the only burst of Classical mythology in the recension of the *Amra* commentary contained in the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B502, and at first sight it seems out of place. However, scattered throughout the commentary there are a series of references to angels and demons battling for the Christian's soul, as when pride enters Colm Cille at the convention of Druim Cett and 'the air above his head became full of demons';[80] and in particular there are several *names* of angels and demons – Axal, famously, is Colm Cille's personal angel, as Victor was Patrick's,[81] and Demal is his demon.[82] Just as Axal is a chimera born of an early form of the word for 'apostle', and *Demal* is simply recruited from a word for 'demon', so the commentary makes the poem's phrase *i-negthiar* into another proper name backed up by a quatrain:

> Nó nim-reilge ic égim i lurg demna icam breith i n-iff*ern*. INegthiar no*men* demonis c*uiusque* ho*min*is, ut d*icitu*r:
> Inegthiar ainm demain duib
> dobeir muich for cach muintir;
> nim-reilgge Dia sair *nó* siar
> hi lurg anma ⁊ i n-egthiar.[83]
>
> Or: Let him not leave me wailing in the band of demons bearing me into hell. Inégthiar is the name of everyone's demon, as is said:
> 'Inégthiar is the name of the black demon who brings gloom on every family: may God not leave me, east or west, in the band of the name [?*or* soul] in which there is wailing!'

Against this background it becomes easier to see why the commentator has listed the Classical names for Furies, Fates and Gorgons: these are the Gentile equivalents to the demonic names that he has been listing and discussing throughout the commentary. Such presences are understood as real: in the Christian world they are the enemies of the dying man's soul, in the world of the Classical pagan poet they are terrifying divinities, and in a moral sense they are vices – the qualities that will cause the sinner to be dragged down to Hell.

Thus the equivalence between Allecto and the Morrígan in the *Táin* is part of a wider, more systematic equation between the two sets of names of battlefield demons. Part of its effect, as I suggested above, is to bring the Classical Fury to the Irish heroic landscape, elevating and internationalizing the heroic past of pagan Ireland. Considered in that light, it is remarkable that the converse equation is seen in *Togail na Tebe*, the subtle and complex Middle Irish version of Statius's *Thebaid.*

[80] *corbo lan in t-aaer thuas a chind do demnaib*, in Stokes, 'The Bodleian *Amra*', 180, on *Amra* IV.10. Similarly, *de thaibsin na n-imned nduaibsech* ('because of the apparition of the hideous multitudes [of demons]', *ibid.*, 182), and similarly the Preface, *ibid.*, 42. Colm Cille is described as fighting demons in the note on *Amra* VI.6, in Stokes, 'The Bodleian *Amra*', 262; see also the marginal note on *Amra* VIII.12 (*ibid*., 402–3; compare also 428–9).

[81] Commentary on *Amra* III.1 (Stokes, 'The Bodleian *Amra*', 172); similarly on *Amra* IV.10 (*ibid*., 180).

[82] On *Amra* IV.2 (Stokes, 'The Bodleian *Amra*', 176).

[83] On *Amra*, Prefatory Prayer, 5 (Stokes, 'The Bodleian *Amra*', 154).

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Statius's original describes the Fury Tisiphone rising up to bring about kinslaying between two warring brothers:

> Iamque potens scelerum geminaeque exercita gentis
> sanguine Tisiphone fraterna claudere quaerit
> bella tuba . . .[84]
>
> Now Tisiphone, powerful over crimes, and stirred by the blood of the twin race, seeks to end the wars through the trumpet.

The Irish version runs as follows:

> Is andsin ro erig in Badb granna geranach thindesnach thuasanach .i. Tisipone, a hichtar ifirn, do thendad ⁊ do thinninus na da derbrathar sin a cend aroili.[85]
>
> Then arose the hideous, complaining, hustling, pursuing Badb, viz. Tisiphone, from the depths of Hell, to urge and incite those two brothers against each other.

Badb here cannot carry its more literal or prosaic meaning as the name of a carrion-eating bird, the black crow: the passage only makes sense if the reference is to a demonic phantom. The translational strategy is the mirror image of that followed in the *Táin*: there the Classical Fury appears on the Irish landscape and is glossed by the name of her Irish equivalent, here the Irish phantom appears in Thebes and is glossed by her Greek and Latin name.

The same strategy is followed in *In Cath Catharda*, the Irish recreation of Lucan's *Civil War*, where in Lucan's original the Fury, named in Greek, sets Rome blazing among the dire portents of coming war:

> ingens urbem cingebat Erinys
> excutiens pronam flagranti vertice pinum
> stridentesque comas.[86]
>
> The huge Erinys [= Fury] encompassed the city, hurling an upturned pine-tree, top blazing, downward, and her tresses hissing.

Here the leap from Greek to Irish completes the series of equivalences in the three languages:

> Atcithea in Badb catha gach n-aidhchi ⁊ a haithin[n]i giuis for derglassad in a láimh ⁊ a trillsi natharda nemidi ic dresechtaigh immo cend ic aslach in catha for na Romanchaibh.[87]
>
> The Badb of battle was seen every night with her torch of pine red-flaming in her hand, and her snaky poisonous tresses rattling around her head, urging the Romans to battle.

[84] Statius, *Thebaid* XI.57–9, in Shackleton Bailey, *Statius*, II, 200–1.
[85] Calder, *Togail na Tebe*, lines 4313–14.
[86] Lucan, *Civil War* I.572–4, in Duff, *Lucan*, 44–5.
[87] Stokes, *In Cath Catharda*, line 902.

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Significantly, the goddess Bellona becomes drawn into the same system of names. Statius describes her in images similar to those of the Furies:

> Prima manu rutilam de vertice Larisaeo
> ostendit Bellona facem dextraque trabalem
> hastam intorsit agens . . .[88]
>
> First from Larisa's peak Bellona showed her red torch and with her right hand sent her massive spear whirling . . .

In *Togail na Tebe* she too is the Badb:

> Et ergid in Badb catha cosnamach ⁊ rochraithistair aithindeda adanta uruada uas cathrachaibh na nGrec ⁊ na Tiauanda.[89]
>
> And the contentious Badb of battle arose, and brandished flaming baleful torches over the cities of the Greeks and the Thebans.

It is thought-provoking that Bellona appears in the Munich glossary mentioned above as *dea belli apud paganos*, the goddess of war among the pagans.[90] It is easy to see how such a definition could provide a bridge to the names of the Irish phantoms of battle. For example, in *Sanas Cormaic* the husband of Nemain carries the explanation *dia catha la genti Goideal*, 'the god of war among the pagans *of the Irish*', in turn paralleling the entry for the Roman god Mars, *dia catha la geinti*.[91]

For the medieval scholars, these equivalences will have belonged to the logic of comparative religion as much as of comparative linguistics. The Classically-named Furies or demonesses belong in Irish heroic narrative not simply because they are the trappings of high epic but because they answer to cosmic and psychological realities – realities that are associated with pagan error or deception but have an unchallenged place in the Christian world-view as much as in the pagan one which informs Latin epic. So it is that both the Classical heroes and the Ulster warriors face an afterlife *i-ngrianbhrugaibh Iffirn*, 'in the sunny abodes of Hell'. This phrase names the Elysian fields,[92] which must be part of the Hell of the Christian universe;[93] and Elysium corresponds to the Christian Heaven *i ngrianbrugaibh Parrduis*, 'in the sunny abodes of Paradise'.[94] This principle informs an instructive passage of the first recension of *Togail Troí*, describing the moment when Troilus is about to be slain:

> Ní rabi cumsanadh ann, tra, co find na matne for indriud ⁊ orcain na cathrach . . . Robúrestar ⁊ robécestar Badb úasu. R[o]gáirset demna aéoir úasu chind, ar

[88] Statius, *Thebaid* IV.5–7, in Shackleton Bailey, *Statius*, I, 204–5.
[89] Calder, *Togail na Tebe*, lines 1365–6.
[90] Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS clm lat. 14429, fo. 222r column (c) 1. See above.
[91] *Sanas Cormaic* Y 965, 892.
[92] See e.g. Calder, *Imtheachta Æniasa*, lines 1199, 1326, 1416; Stokes, *In Cath Catharda*, line 4274.
[93] Compare e.g. Stokes, *Acallamh na Senórach*, lines 6249–50.
[94] Greene, *Saltair na Rann*, line 1868. The same term is used for the heavenly dwellings of the angels in the Second Recension of *In Tenga Bithnua*: see Carey, *Tenga*, sections 19.2–3, 92.7, and his note, p. 441.

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> rop aitt léo martad mar sin do thabhairt for síl nÁdhaimh, fobíth rob fórmach muinntire dóibh sin.[95]
>
> Now until the white of the morning, there was no pause to the devastation and the ruin of the city . . . Badb bellowed and roared above it (?). Demons of the air shouted above its (?) head; for pleasant it was to them that slaughter should befall Adam's seed, because there was an increase to their household.

Here the Badb is again juxtaposed neatly with the demons of Hell itself, so closely that she seems to be understood as one of their number. Whether a pagan warrior is Irish or Greek or Trojan makes little difference when he is destined for the Hell that is below his feet, and the inhabitants of that Hell are the same beings regardless of the language in which their names are given.

The Furies in Cath Maige Rath

The theme that we have sketched undergoes a remarkable development in the later stages of Middle Irish heroic narrative. As Jacqueline Borsje has pointed out in an important study, the imagery of the Morrígan and her sisters is developed with unique intensity in the linked texts *Fled Dúin na nGéd* and *Cath Maige Rath* ('The Feast of the Fort of the Geese' and 'The Battle of Mag Rath').[96]

The first example is in *Fled Dúin na nGéd,* when Congal is filled with a violent indignation that will prove his ruin, and Tisiphone enters into him:

> Ro ling dásacht 7 mire menman a Congal fri haithesc in óclaig sin 7 ro ling in fúir demnach .i. Tesifone a cumgaise a chride do chumniugad cecha droch-chomairli dó. Ro érig didiu ina sheasam 7 ro gab a gaiscead fair 7 ro érig a bruth míled 7 a én gaile for folúamain úasa 7 ní tharat aichne for charait ná for nemcharait in tan sin . . .[97]
>
> At the young warrior's speech, wildness and frenzy of mind leapt onto Congal and the demonic Fury, Tisiphone, leapt to counsel his heart in order to remind him of all her bad advice. Then he stood up and put on his armour, and his soldier's fury arose, and his bird of valour hovering over him, and he did not recognize friends or foes at that time.

The Fury here is distinct from the usual bird-figure hovering in the air: as a giver of evil counsel, it assimilates much more closely to the demons that invade the inner self of the tempted one in the discourse of monasticism.[98] Borsje is, so far as I know, the only scholar to have highlighted an extraordinary passage which takes up and re-echoes this image in the later version of the sequel text *Cath Maige Rath*, preserved in the Yellow Book of Lecan (*c.* 1390).[99] At the climactic moment when Congal and Domnall stand opposite one another for combat, the Morrígan hovers over Domnall

[95] Stokes, 'The destruction of Troy', lines 1895–7.
[96] Borsje, 'Demonising the enemy'.
[97] Lehmann, *Fled Dúin na nGéd*, lines 289–94.
[98] Brakke, *Demons*, 127–56.
[99] Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1318.

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and the Fury Tisiphone over Congal.[100] Throughout the tale, Domnall's portrayal is Christian and positive, Congal's is pagan and negative: at the comparatively late date of composition of this text, was the Classical demon associated specifically with the prospect of his damnation? One could even guess that the opposition between Fury and Morrígan is an allusion to the juxtaposition of traditions that we have been tracing through this chapter.[101] Congal has refused to listen to the advice of his friends, because the infernal enemies were preparing his destruction and attacking the citadel of his heart:

> uair nír tréicset na trí h-úire urbadacha ifernaidi eisium ó uair a thuismid co tráth a thiughbá, .i. Eleacto 7 Megera 7 Tesifóne, conad hé a siabrad ocus a saeb-forcetul sin fa-dera do-sum duscad cacha droch-dála ocus imrad cacha iomarbhais, ocus forbad cacha fír-uilc; uair is ann ro athaigestar in úir indlech, esidan, aidgill Electó ar cert-lár cleib ocus craide Congail, ic maidem cach mirúin ocus ic fiugrad cacha fír-uilc. Ocus didiu in mairch-miscnech, mírunach, mallachtnach Megéra do chosain a caladh-phort comnaidi ar cert-lár charbait Congail, ic tagra a taiblib a thengad, ocus ic buadnaisi a bunnsachaibh a briathar; ocus didiu in chenncleasach, cosaídech, conntrachta, thromda, thurrachtach, thuaithebrach Tesifóne tárraid sein ard-chomus airechais ar cúig cedfadaib comlana corparda Congail, comdís comdicra sein re forbhad cacha fír-uilc.[102]
>
> for the three contentious infernal Furies, Eleacto, Megera and Tesiphone, had not left him from the time he was born until the time of his death, so that it was their bewitchment and evil instruction that caused for him the awakening of every evil and the discussion of every transgression and the accomplishing of every true evil; for then did the slanderous, impure, and destructive Fury, Electo, visit[103] the very centre of the breast and heart of Congal, suggesting every evil resolution and presaging every true evil. And also the woeful, evil-planning, accursed Megera occupied her dwelling-harbour in the very middle of Congal's palate, vaunting from the battlements of his tongue, and threatening from the darts of his words. And the tricky, complaining, cursed, morose, calamitous, sinister Tesiphone assumed absolute sway over the five bodily senses of Congal, so that they were diligent to accomplish every true evil.

This passage looks merely wordy and overblown at first; but on a closer reading the thought is subtle and complex – in the right structural position and context, the purely mythological understanding of the Furies is combined with the psychological level of serious demonology. It continues with an allegorical interpretation which may have originated as an embedded gloss, though nothing in the manuscript marks it as such:

[100] O'Donovan, *The Banquet*, 198, noted by Borsje, 'Demonising the enemy', 36.
[101] See also Wong, 'Christianity'.
[102] O'Donovan, *The Banquet*, 166–8, checked against the facsimile by Atkinson, *Yellow Book of Lecan*, p. 304 (b), lines 5–8.
[103] O'Donovan reads *ro-thaigestar*, and takes this as an otherwise unattested verb meaning 'makes house'. However, the manuscript plainly reads *ro athaigestar,* which I take to be from *aithigid* 'visits' (compare Stokes, 'Poems', 22, poem 2 section 3, where this verb is used likewise for concourse with demons).

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> Gurob trés na húirib ifernaidi sin tuicther na trí pudracha[104] aimsiges cach aen .i. scrúdud ⁊ imrádud ⁊ gnim, feib asbert Fothud na Canóine:
>
> Electo sgrudus cach col,
> Megera fri himradud,
> Tesifóne féin co fír
> cuireas cach cáir i corp-gním.[105]
>
> By these three Furies of Hell are understood the three evils which tempt every one, viz. Thought, Word and Deed, as Fothud na Canóine said:
>
> Electo ponders every sin,
> Megera is for discoursing,
> and Tesifóne herself it is truly
> who puts every crime into bodily action.

Startlingly, this is a reworking of Fulgentius's exact words:

> Allecto enim impausabilis dicitur; Tisiphone autem quasi *tuton phone*, id est istarum vox; Megera autem quasi megale eris, id est magna contentio. Primum est ergo non pausando furias concipere, secundum est in voce erumpere, tertium iurgium protelare.[106]
>
> Allecto is said to be unstoppable, Tisiphone is like [Greek] *tuton phone*, which means 'the voice of those ones', then Megera is *megale eris*, that is 'great quarreling'. For the first thing is to conceive insane anger by refusing to stop, the second is when it bursts out in the voice, the third is the prolonging of the dispute.

Although the name Fothud na Canóine as transmitted appears to refer to 'Fothad of the Bible', a prominent figure in the monastic renewal of the *céli Dé* to whom learned poems were pseudonymously attributed in the eleventh century,[107] it fits the context better to take this as the legendary Fothad Canainne, subject of the Old Irish poem *Reicne Fothaid Canainne* (The Recitation of Fothad Canainne).[108] According to the associated prose tale, Fothad is decapitated in battle and the poem is spoken by his decapitated head. I do not think it is a coincidence that the poem includes an account of the Morrígan gloating over the battlefield. I quote from Kuno Meyer's edition based on O'Clery's seventeenth-century copy:

> Atā[a]t immunn san c[h]an
> mór fodb asa fordercc bol,
> dreman inathor dīmar
> nodusnigh an Mórríoghan.
> Donārlaith do bil ōige,
> isi cotanasōide,

[104] O'Donovan supplies *pecadha* ('sins') and reads *pecadha pudracha* ('evil sins'), but it seems preferable to accept the Yellow Book of Lecan text with *pudrach* used substantively, as if equivalent to the abstract noun *pudraige* ('hurtfulness', 'thing of evil').

[105] O'Donovan, *The Banquet*, 168, checked against Atkinson, *Yellow Book of Lecan*, p. 304 (b).

[106] Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* I.7, in Helm, *Fulgentii Opera*, I, 20–1.

[107] Thus O'Donovan in his note on the passage, *The Banquet*, 168. See Follett, *Céli Dé*, 122–4.

[108] Text in Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, 4–21. For studies, see McQuillan, 'Finn'; Borsje, '*Fled Bricrenn*', 190–1; Borsje, 'The "terror of the night"'; and on Fothad as a legendary name see Toner, 'Authority', 75–6.

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is mōr do fhodboibh nigius
dremhan an caisgen tibhes.[109]

There are around us here and there many spoils whose luck is famous; horrible are the huge entrails which the Morrígan washes. She has come to us from the edge of a pillar (?), 'tis she who has egged us on; many are the spoils she washes, horrible the hateful laugh she laughs.

All this is familiar from the lore that we have observed for the Morrígan and her sisters: severed heads, the ominous presence delighting in corpses, and perhaps the rending or harrying of the corpses euphemistically referred to here as 'washing'. As the poem continues, the severed head speaks of its coming journey into the afterlife:

Scarfit frit cēin mo chorp toll,
m'anum do pīenadh la donn,
serc bethu cé is miri,
ingi adradh Rīgh nimhi.[110]

My riddled body must part from thee awhile, my soul to be tortured by the dark one. Save for the worship of heaven's king, love of this world is folly.

The context of this passage exactly matches what we have seen for the Classical Furies in other Irish sources: close contextual association with the Morrígan in the context not only of death but of the journey of the damned to Hell and the demons' assault upon them. The word *donn* ('dark one') here almost certainly refers to the name given to a specific supernatural being associated in other medieval Irish sources with the punishment of pagan sinners immediately after death.[111] If so, it seems likely that the quatrain in *Cath Maige Rath*, listing the names of pagan Greek demons with similar associations, comes from a poem associated in theme and content with *Reicne Fothaid Canainne*. A corroborating suggestion comes from a marginal note in the manuscript *Lebor Brecc*, where a fragmentary quatrain is assigned to a poem 'on the pains of hell' spoken by the spirit of this same Fothad.[112]

But what was the source for this lore about the three Furies? While direct acquaintance with Fulgentius's work cannot be ruled out, there is a simpler and more likely route in the commentary tradition on Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (*De consolatione philosophiae*). Pending systematic publication of the Boethius commentaries, I cite the key passage as it appears in the twelfth-century *Glosae super Boetium* (Glosses on Boethius) of William of Conches:

[109] Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, 16, sections 41–2.
[110] Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, 16, section 48.
[111] *Áirne Fíngein* mentions *Tech Duind frisndálait mairb* ('The house of Donn to which the dead gather', Vendryes, *Áirne Fíngein*, line 257). For further references to the House of Donn in *Lebor Gabála* and elsewhere, with the motif of the punishment of sinners, see Meyer, 'Der irische Totengott'; Mac Cana, *The Cult*, 222–4.
[112] *Spirut Fothaid Chanand .cc. ar tuarascbáil phēini hiffirn* 'The spirit of Fothad Canainne sang this describing the pains of hell': *Lebor Brecc* (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 16), p. 115, top margin. See Meyer, 'Der irische Totengott', 544 n. 2, cited by Borsje, 'Demonising the enemy', 91 n. 62.

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> ET DEAE SCELERUM. Deae scelerum dicuntur tres esse, quae vocantur tres furiae. Quarum nomina haec sunt: Alecto, Thesiphone, Megera, quia tria sunt quae omne malum commovent et perficiunt: furibunda cogitatio, furibunda vox, furibunda operatio. Prius enim malum cogitatur, deinde dicitur, deinde perficitur. Unde nomina conveniunt. Prima dicitur Alecto, id est impausabilis, scilicet prava cogitatio. Deinde Thesiphone, id est vox prava. Thesiphone enim dicitur supposita vox; thesis, id est positio vel propositio, phone vox vel sonus. Megera dicitur magna contentio, scilicet prava operatio.[113]

> AND THE GODDESSES OF SINS. The goddesses of sins are said to be three, who are called the three furies. Whose names are these: Alecto, Thesiphone, Megera – because there are three things which set in motion and achieve all evil: furious thought, furious speech, furious action. First evil is thought, then it is said, then it is acted. Whence the names are fitting. The first is called Alecto, that is 'unstoppable', i.e. wicked thought. Then *Thesiphone*, that is 'wicked speech'. *Thesiphone* indeed means 'speech imposed' – thesis, that is 'placing' or 'proposing', phone 'voice' or 'sound'. Megera means 'big quarrel', that is wicked action.

It is not impossible that materials in *Cath Maige Rath* could have come from this source, if they were added at a late stage in the development of the text: there are Irish glosses in a twelfth-century copy of the *Consolatio* with abundant commentary, and another Irish-glossed manuscript of the same period contains works by William of Conches.[114] For obvious reasons of dating, however, it is more likely that the relationship with William's writings is indirect. His Boethius commentary includes much lore derived from earlier commentaries and especially those of the tradition associated with Remigius of Auxerre, linked in turn to the circle of Martinus Hiberniensis and Eriugena.[115] There is evidence for Irish reading of the Boethius commentaries in the formative period of Middle Irish saga: influence on *Táin Bó Cúailnge* from one strand of this tradition has been identified by Brent Miles,[116] and although none of the known manuscripts of earlier Boethian commentary include this particular set of information on the Furies,[117] it is plausible that both William and the Irish author took this Fulgentian material from another earlier commentary that is now lost.

Conclusion

In the absence of direct evidence for the Boethian route of transmission, it is tempting to imagine a single crumbling copy of Fulgentius in a monastic library which Martin and Eriugena read before they left Ireland, and which the authors of the *Amra* commentary, the *Táin*, *Togail Troí* and *Cath Maige Rath* each consulted in turn. This

[113] Nauta, *Glossae super Boetium*, 210, at Boethius III *metrum* 12.
[114] Ó Néill, 'Irish glosses', 'An Irishman at Chartres'.
[115] See Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, 400–9; Bolton, 'Study of the *Consolation*', 64.
[116] Miles has identified affinities between mythological information in *Togail Troí* and that contained in recension K of the Remigian commentary on Boethius, whose use in Anglo-Saxon England is strongly documented (see Miles, 'Irish evidence', 138–48, and for recension K in general see Bolton, 'Study of the *Consolation*'). However, Rosalind Love (see next note) informs me that the note on the Furies discussed here is not found in the manuscripts of the K group.
[117] I thank Rosalind Love for discussion of this difficult matter, and for preparing a digest of Boethian commentaries on this passage, with advice which I summarize here.

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is speculative, but something similar can be cited from an example supported by real evidence: Greek lore in *Sanas Cormaic* has been shown to derive from a Greek–Latin glossary akin to that in Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 444, which was edited by Martin of Laon, and that manuscript was itself copied from an exemplar whose quire signatures were numbered in Irish – suggesting very strongly that that exemplar originated in Ireland.[118] The opposite extreme is simply to say that every learned man in Christendom with an interest in the relationship between paganism and Christianity read Fulgentius.

Both positions are unsatisfactory, if only because the texts exhibit not static and passive learning but analogous manifestations of a single creative activity. What draws them together is a shared mythological grammar, a grammar of syncretism. *Cath Maige Rath* expands and deepens the equation between Classical Fury and Irish battle-goddess which is represented in miniature by the glossing equivalence that we saw in the *Táin*; the Middle Irish Classical narratives ring the changes on the same equivalence with absolute consistency; and, most significant of all, the same sense of parallelism is already implicit in the Carolingian glosses of the earlier *peregrini*. If this deserves the name of tradition, it is a philological tradition that was vested in the practices of the *scriptorium* and the classroom. Once the Irish scholars accepted that the old lore of their people was defined by its paganism, it was ready to be matched with the equivalent shapes in the stories told by other ancient pagans nearer to the middle of the world. The Fulgentian approach made such cross-cultural leaps possible with deep intellectual rigour.

[118] Russell, '*Graece . . . Latine*', 413; Donisotti, 'Greek grammars', 10–13, 45–54; Contreni, *Cathedral School*, 58–9.

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