

*The Memory of the Norse
in Ireland in Middle Irish
Dynastic Narratives*

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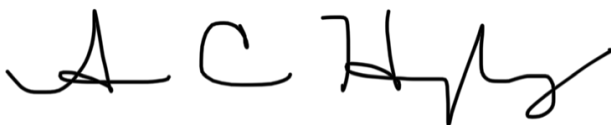
Ann Caroline Humphrey

Declaration

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Ann Caroline Humphrey

Summary

Three dynastic propaganda narratives written to valorise the ancestor of a Gaelic patron feature a complicated career against, and at times alongside, Norse speakers operating in Ireland. These are the Cerball of Osraige saga c. 1030 embedded in the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, written for Donnchad mac Gilla Pátraic; *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* c. 1100, most likely written for Muirheartach Ua Briain; and the *Cathréim Chellacháin Chaisil* c. 1130, written for Cormac Mac Carthaigh. These narratives are written in Middle Irish and organised in a chronological fashion to emulate annals and appear authoritative, though their precise relationship to annalistic history material is debatable and probably demonstrate poetic reaches for literary appeal and dramatic tension.

This thesis explores several key themes concerning the depiction of the Norse found in all three texts. The language of the sources is analysed for word-level understanding of contemporary opinions by Gaels concerning the Norse operating in Ireland. The first chapter covers specific names and terminology for Norse speakers in Middle Irish, including but not limited to Danair, Lochlannaigh, geinte, gall, and *Northmannus*. Norse towns in Ireland are considered, specifically Dublin, Limerick, and Waterford, and towns in general, as well as the literary treatment of fleets and trade. One chapter covers the roles of Norse and Gaelic women, following specific named characters and in general; and also differing forms of Gaelic versus Norse masculinity. The final thematic chapter covers miscellaneous issues arising from religious and cultural differences between Irish- and Norse-speaking communities in Ireland, and supernatural and miraculous events in the sources.

Overall, the treatment of Norse figures is as complicated and nuanced as any Gaelic figure in these texts. While villains are antagonised, Irish speakers who cross the narratives' heroes are also shown as deplorable, and the Norse allies are given respect and humanity.

The Norse in Ireland are depicted as different and foreign from the Gaels, but they are able to communicate, reason, make military and marriage alliances, and otherwise function as people. These dynastic propaganda tales may have inaccurate historicity for the ninth and tenth centuries they depict, but they are valuable windows into contemporary Gaelic opinions at the time of their composition in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries.

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I. Introduction: Dynastic Propaganda as Source Text for the Norse in Ireland

When the Vikings arrived in Gaelic Ireland at the end of the eighth century, they encountered a complex web of political dynasties, rival kingdoms, and socio-linguistic connections with territories across the Irish Sea Region. The Uí Néill dynasties of the north-east, the Eóganachta of Munster, and other established ruling families operated alongside powerful monastic settlements in the uneasy but functional patchwork of early medieval Ireland. The establishment of Norse towns and kingships during the ninth and tenth centuries complicated the already dynamic mechanics of Ireland by autonomous co-operation with Gaelic military leaders against other extant power bases. Intermarriage and strategic alliances brought the descendants of the Scandinavian invaders fully into Irish politics of the tenth and early eleventh centuries.

By the mid-eleventh century, Norse Ireland was an important outpost of the wider Scandinavian world. Simultaneously Gaelic Ireland was a burgeoning island nation dependent on the trade and wealth of its towns, particularly Dublin. The involvement of the Norse in this rudimentary unification, around and against the figure of the celebrated high-king Brian Boru, is recounted in several late eleventh and early twelfth century Irish-language texts. Their history is recounted, with some bias and interruption, in monastic documents known collectively as the Annals, particularly the Annals of Inishfallen (Munster), the Clonmacnoise-group texts, the Annals of Loch Cé (modern Co. Roscommon), and the Annals of Ulster. The veracity and use of the annals is discussed further below. The history of the Norse is also recounted in the Cerball of Osraige saga in the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* (FAI), the *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* ('The War of the Gaels Against the Foreigners', henceforth abbreviated *Cogadh*), and the *Caithréim*

Chellacháin Chaisil ('The Victorious Career of Cellachán of Cashel', henceforth abbreviated *Chellacháin*¹).

The collection known as the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* was edited and translated by John O'Donovan in 1860, and again by Joan N. Radner in 1978, both from a single manuscript preserved in Brussels. This paper manuscript was copied by Dubhaltach Mac Fir Bhisigh in 1643 from a lost vellum manuscript written by the scribe Giolla na Naomh Mac Aodhagáin, who died in 1443. The extant Annals in Mac Fir Bhisigh's hand include five chronological sections, but it is unclear whether his source produced a complete record and his manuscript fell apart afterwards, or if Giolla na Naomh himself was copying a defective source.² Before the fifteenth century, then, the Annals have to speak for themselves based on their language and narrative.

The fourth fragment of the Annals includes a comprehensive tale about Cerball Mac Dúnlainge, who ruled Osraige for over four decades in the mid-ninth century. Larger narratives about the Norse in southern Ireland are woven into the more standard annalistic fare of diseases and notable deaths, setting the stage for Cerball to appear as the hero of Gaelic Munster and Osraige as he plays Norse factions against each other and reigns supreme. Because of this, it is known as the 'lost Cerball of Osraige saga', and has been argued to be composed for the descendant Mac Giolla Phádraig dynasty of Osraige, most likely Donnchad mac Gilla Pátraic who died in 1039.

Cogadh, Chellacháin, and the Osraige chronicle are chronological narratives detailing centuries of events by short chapters in imitation of the annals. They are blatant propaganda for the families who financed their production: descendants of Brian Boru,

¹ While the 14th century *Cathréim Thoirdhealbháigh* does not appear elsewhere in this thesis, its frequent abbreviation in scholarship on Irish history to 'Cathréim' has influenced my choice to use the second word of *Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil* as its referent.

² Radner, *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*.

Cellachán, and Cerball of Osraige respectively. But as historical literature they preserve a crucial window into the world-view of their eleventh and early twelfth century authors. Utilising New Historicist theory, these documents provide a snapshot of contemporary attitudes to, and beliefs about, the gradually-Hibernicizing Norse residents of Ireland, including assumptions as to their place in the Irish ‘story’. The objective therefore is to understand the cultural integration of the Norse in Irish society by analysing the attitudes, biases, and assumptions of these authors regarding their historical narrative. The evidence includes vocabulary choice, decisions as to what to omit from the annalistic records and what to emphasise from it, and other indications of bias and intention by the authors in the organisation and production of their works. This will be performed by careful comparison of the specific language used throughout the Osraige chronicle, *Cogadh*, and *Chellacháin*.

Literature Review

Cogadh in particular has lain the basis of Irish Viking Age historiography for the past nine hundred years. In his ‘The Vikings in Ireland: A Historian's Perspective’ published over twenty years ago, Howard Clarke pronounced it ‘a single and singular work of medieval propaganda’ that is uniquely responsible for ‘gross distortion’ of the history of the Norse in Ireland. As the text most often used by historians to consider the impact of the Norse in Ireland, the imprint of the *Cogadh* has been subtle but enormous, influencing historians well-known by the public from Geoffrey Keating to the present day. Yet existing literature generally utilises it in a piecemeal fashion, mining a small number of entries or even a single a passage in support of the scholar’s argument. Many authors, particularly political historians, take the document at face value as a factual account without considering the biases and authorial intent inherent in this text. Intense, comprehensive study of *Cogadh* is underrepresented in scholarship, perhaps because the sole edition and translation of the *Cogadh* is now over 150 years old. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, professor of Celtic & Medieval

Studies at Cambridge and author of *Brian Boru: Ireland's Greatest King?* has been working on a new edition, but no publication date is evident at this time.

While glorifying the family of Brian Boru, *Cogadh* offers extraordinary insights into contemporary attitudes about the Norse and the Hiberno-Norse within Gaelic Ireland at the time of its composition, dated to the first quarter of the twelfth century. The descendants of the Vikings in *Cogadh*, the Hiberno-Norse of the Kingdom of Dublin and other Norse-founded towns, were a fundamental part of contemporary society. Norse influence on Irish art and artefacts, and vice versa, are well documented; the role of archaeology in my thesis is discussed below. As my methodology concerns historical literature, the *Cogadh* (and its companion text *Chellacháin*) offers a window into early twelfth-century attitudes by the use of its language and rendering of events. The prejudices and presumptions of the Gaelic Irish are encoded in their narrative of how the once-feared Vikings acculturated into a vital component of medieval Ireland.

Current scholarship on the *Cogadh* is vast, as evidenced by the pages of secondary sources listed in the late Donnchadh Ó Corráin's catalog of Irish texts, *Clavis Litterarum Hibernensium*.³ Most aspects of this story of the Hiberno-Norse, as presented in the *Cogadh* up to the Battle of Clontarf in 1014CE, have been studied in depth, and a literature review follows below. *Chellacháin*, on the other hand, was the subject of an intensive article in 1974 by Ó Corráin, who found it tedious,⁴ and it has attracted no further scholarship. The need to re-analyse this document, which appears in excess of two dozen manuscript and paper copies today, is apparent. *Cogadh*, for all its importance to Irish history, only survives in two manuscripts and a paper copy. Furthermore, with notable exceptions, the bulk of scholarship concerning *Cogadh* deals with its depiction of people

³ Ó Corráin, *Clavis litterarum Hibernensium*.

⁴ Ó Corráin, 'Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil: History or Propaganda?'

or events in the time period it purports to describe. Another significant fraction of attention is on its production and contemporary purpose. A New Historicist reading of the text as signifier has yet to be produced for either *Cogadh* or *Chellacháin*.

Empirical research rooted in close textual analysis of primary source documents is the foundation of history. My work participates in this framework entirely. Word-by-word inquisitions of *Cogadh* or *Chellacháin* as whole texts have not yet been attempted, and my exposure to these narratives is at a level which previous scholars have not yet achieved. This thesis uniquely collates identifiers of ethnicity, culture, otherness, and distinction between Gaels and Norse. The particular difficulties of historical research into identity will require careful examination of these sources which were generated after the events they describe in order to create an understanding for posterity. The veracity of these ‘historical’ narratives is not in question. Rather, this study is of the ways they indicate the authors’, patrons’, and readers’ understanding of their own and others’ identities.

The annals of contemporary Ireland are also under consideration. These documents are terse but exhaustive, operating in a similar fashion to the better-known Anglo-Saxon Chronicles.⁵ Like their English cousins, the Annals are written in the vernacular in a chronological entry format. While not composed with the same intent of clarity and relevance as a modern archival product, they nonetheless offer the documentation closest to ‘history’ as is available in early medieval Ireland. The Annals provide a framework for understanding contemporary texts less beholden to objectivity, such as a modern newspaper of record may be compared to a novel written at the same time. This forms one corner of my methodology: the matching of quantitative historical entries to literary narratives of history in order to obtain the latter’s quality of artistic bombast. Importantly, the annals were written immediately or soon after the events they record. This does not necessarily

⁵ Savage, ed. and trans., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*.

make them 'true', but it indicates that what is being described is closer to reality than how the events are remembered in popular consideration, generations after the event.⁶

The theoretical framework of this thesis is one of otherness and acculturation - or rather, transculturation, a two-way process on the part of the Norse and the Gaelic Irish. Therefore, the attendant aim is to construct a paradigm which is of value to the analysis of the medieval historiography of the Viking Age in Ireland. As such, one is required to define the usage of terms like 'Viking', 'Scandinavian' and 'Hiberno-Norse'. In this thesis 'Viking' to refer to sea-borne raiders utilising the ships, and operating within the idiom, of Scandinavian naval transport and warfare. Hence, when Vikings settle and found towns, the term no longer applies to them. It is confusing that Viking can be used to describe the age as a whole, resulting in such oxymorons as 'a Viking house', when a more precise appellation would refer to Scandinavian culture or Norse language. This way 'Viking' is reserved for a marine occupation, which will be discussed further below. 'Scandinavia' is a complicated term for the pre-modern world, but it is used here as an amorphous northern region overseas from Ireland and Britain rather than a clearly delineated territory. 'Norse' refers to those speaking Old Norse in the 9th to 12th centuries. 'Norse-Gaels' is a category of Norse speakers within a Gaelic world-view, including people and culture from outside of Ireland such as in the Hebrides and the Isle of Man. 'Hiberno-Norse', therefore, refers exclusively to the Norse within Ireland.

It is also important to distinguish 'Irish' and 'Gael'. Just as 'Norse' and 'Viking' are used interchangeably to their detriment, not all Gaels are Irish and not all Irish are Gaels. Irish is used in this thesis to mean of Ireland – whether born or a long-term, permanent resident – and Gaels refers to people who speak the Gaelic language, known as Middle Irish from the 9th century to beyond the scope of the thesis. The world of Gaeldom and

⁶ McCarthy, *The Irish Annals*.

Ireland are not the same, as there were Gaels outside of Ireland. In this manner, when this thesis uses the term ‘Irish’, it means people living in Ireland – whatever language they spoke. And when Gael or Norse is used, it is not *necessarily* referring to someone born in Ireland or in Scandinavia respectively. The first thematic chapter goes into further detail on contemporary terms and their best modern translations.

While the inclusion of the towns and their hinterlands is the most noticeable difference in the political landscape of Ireland before and after the arrival of the Norse, inter-Gaelic conflict also made dramatic changes in the shape of kingdoms and provinces. This was not a static island community conquered by an invading force, but a sophisticated social interchange on either side of the linguistic divide. As such, the language used by the Gaels to describe the Norse is foundational for the study of their perceived differences. The words are plentiful and descriptive, if not always easily understood. These terms include: ‘*Dana(i)r*’ or Danes, although it is unknown whether these actually came from what is now Denmark; ‘*Ga(i)ll*’, originally associated with the Gauls of the continent but now referring to foreigners and Norse speakers; and ‘*Lochlannigh*’ or people of Lochlann, a poorly-defined area that may have been Norway or Scotland, regions also given the name *Laithlind*. The terms ‘*finn-*’ and ‘*dubgenti*’, translated as ‘light’ and ‘dark’ ‘-gentiles/pagans’, have elicited a scholarly furore. Whatever ‘*finn/dub*’ refers to, and several possible translations are referenced in the literature review below, it was a marked dichotomy of apparent importance to the medieval authors. The analysis of these words is a linguistic treatment of the authors’ conception of history.

Language is not equal to culture, but the literature written during this period demonstrates that the use of Norse or Gaelic language affected people’s ability to participate in Scandinavian-origin or Gaelic societies in both positive and negative ways. To know a language past a pidgin business repertoire requires knowledge of its origin

culture, and therefore users of Gaelic or Norse presumably understood cultural values in common with other Gaelic or Norse speakers, respectively. As the inhabitants of medieval Ireland are unavailable for commentary on their identity, language is an important insight - but not the final declaration - as to how people felt they fit into society.

Limiting my study to texts from the first half of the twelfth century ensures I am dealing with a narrow yet cohesive breadth of historical narrative in medieval Ireland, which allows me to produce worthwhile conclusions about this efficient focus. In addition, dealing with documents that are written just before the Cambro-Norman Invasion explores an under-served period of Irish history following the celebrated Battle of Clontarf. This thesis utilises texts as exemplars of the cultural milieu of their authors' society, regardless of their intent in composition. The attempt of the authors to other the Vikings and their descendants in fact lionises and redeems them, revealing an admiration for the history of the Hiberno-Norse. This is due to their importance in twelfth-century Ireland. This work understands the cultural context of documents and their narratives in order to reveal the intellectual history of the authors who produced them.

Modern scholarship on the *Cogadh* as a historical document began in 1867 with the publication of James Henthorn Todd's edition and page-by-page annotated translation. This was part of a project produced by the Master of the Rolls with funding from HM Treasury intended to catalogue and make readily available 'chronicles and memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages'. Todd's interpretation of the *Cogadh* is comprehensive: his introductory preface is longer than the edited text and English translation combined. This book serves a pivotal role in the historiography on the *Cogadh* as Todd's historical pronouncements and editorial and linguistic choices, while outdated now, were ambitious and rigorous in the mid-nineteenth century. Todd's edition serves as

the bedrock for subsequent scholarship, and his intellectual achievement has likely fostered the popularity of *Cogadh* due in no small part to the relative readability of his translation.⁷

In contrast to *Cogadh*'s popularity, *Chellacháin* was published as an edition and translation by Alexander Bugge in 1905, and as previously written has attracted little scholarship. One article published in 1941 evaluated its historical setting, the Rev. John Ryan mostly agreeing with Bugge but framing the 'Cathréim Ceallacháin[sic] Caisil' better in contemporary politics. In his 1974 article on *Chellacháin*, Ó Corráin evaluated Bugge's work with great criticism: 'the translation is unsatisfactory, the historical notes wildly inaccurate, the indexes incomplete, and his evaluation of the historicity of the text fatuous'. The *Chellacháin* becomes invisible in the scholastic landscape after this point, probably due in no small part to Ó Corráin's disdain for the text itself. Benjamin Hudson briefly considers it in his 2002 'The Practical Hero', claiming that while the text is clearly a response to *Cogadh*, Cellachán's success lacks the supernatural and miraculous as Brian's does and thus he should be considered one of the essay's 'heroes'. Otherwise *Chellacháin* is rarely mentioned in discussions about *Cogadh*, which are numerous. This is a notable lacuna in the scholarship bearing further study, both to re-evaluate *Chellacháin* for its own sake as well as to examine it as a parallel text to the *Cogadh*.

For this reason, the rest of this literature review will consider *Cogadh* in isolation, alongside the general historiography of the Norse in Ireland. Antiquarian and archaeological studies had previously speculated about the dispersal of artefacts across northern Europe, most notably in the Danish archaeologist J. J. A. Worsaae's *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland, and Ireland* published in 1852. Worsaae's work was extremely ambitious and explored questions of classification that are still under consideration today, although of course most of his conclusions about the Norse

⁷ Todd, *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*.

in the Irish Sea Region have been superseded.⁸ Between 1900 and 1905, around the time of his edition of *Chellacháin*, Bugge published several articles in Norwegian and an astonishing three-volume book in English about the Norse in Ireland.⁹ Nationalism coloured his interpretation of the *Contributions to the History of the Norsemen in Ireland*, as could be expected in the years that Norway achieved independence.

Further literary treatments of Norse-Gaelic culture emerged in the 1930s. Another Dane, Reidar T. Christiansen, published *The Vikings and the Viking Wars in Irish and Gaelic Tradition* in 1931 which considered ballads and sagas as medieval folklore, key to understanding contemporary concerns and attitudes.¹⁰ Within the discipline of history, a foundational text is A. J. Goedheer's *Irish and Norse Traditions about the Battle of Clontarf*, published in 1938. The Battle of Clontarf, which had recently served nationalist purposes in Irish independence movements,¹¹ was and remains a cornerstone of the history of the Norse in Ireland. Goedheer systematically assessed the depictions of Clontarf in the Icelandic *Brennu-Njáls* and *Orkneyingar* sagas versus that in *Cogadh*, and provides evidence of a now-missing saga about the conflict, entitled *Brjans saga* or 'The Saga of Brian [Boru]'.¹² The relationship of Clontarf to studies about the Norse in Ireland, or indeed the Irish Sea Region, enters a chicken-and-egg conundrum: is Clontarf famous because important literature was written about it, or do we elevate literature concerning Clontarf into medieval Irish canon?

The study of the Norse in Ireland reached an important milestone in 1962, when the proceedings of the inaugural International Congress of Celtic Studies were published. The Congress had met in Dublin in 1959 to discuss, somewhat incongruously, the impact of the

⁸ David, ed. *Viking Ireland*.

⁹ Bugge, *Contributions to the history of the Norsemen in Ireland*.

¹⁰ Christiansen, *The Vikings and Viking Wars in Irish and Gaelic Tradition*.

¹¹ For instance, a Sinn Féin poster on display in The Little Museum of Dublin which lists Brian Boru as the earliest person to 'vote for independence'.

¹² Goedheer, *Irish and Norse Traditions about the Battle of Clontarf*.

Norse on the areas where Celtic languages had been spoken.¹³ There, D. A. Binchy posited in his ‘The Passing of the Old Order’ that the Norse had been single-handedly responsible for the obliteration of early medieval Ireland. This was evidenced not only in the development of towns and changes in political structuring, but also in the significant linguistic changes that divided Old Irish from Middle Irish in around the ninth century. Binchy’s argument was that pre-Norse Gaelic Ireland had been a complicated but peaceful, or at least predictable, society which was suddenly ‘faced with an alien foe that respected none of the traditional conventions’.¹⁴ His assessment of the ‘golden age’ ending on account of foreign invasion was a culmination of decades of pride in early medieval (i.e. ‘independent’) Ireland and made a pat explanation for its demise. Binchy’s article became a new standard for the field of Norse and Gaelic relations, but like Sigurðr’s banner at the Battle of Clontarf, it attracted attention and served as a potent target for future scholarship.

A. T. Lucas, a folklore collector for the Irish Antiquities Division at the National Museum of Ireland, produced two essays in the late 1960s which deftly responded to the anachronistic nationalism in the scholarship of the Norse in Ireland. In his ‘Norse-Irish relations: time for a reappraisal?’ he specifically cites *Cogadh* as fabricating an anti-Christian element to Viking attacks and a fervid Gaelic resistance to Norse settlement, which is not supported archaeologically or in other documentation from Viking Age Ireland.¹⁵ His second article, ‘The plundering and burning of churches in Ireland’, tabulates the sacking of ecclesiastical settlements from the seventh through the sixteenth centuries, and finds equal numbers of attacks carried out by the Gaels as by the Norse during the Viking Age. Lucas also points out attacks made *in tandem* by Norse and Gaels working

¹³ Ó Cuív, ed., *Proceedings of the First International Congress of Celtic Studies*.

¹⁴ Binchy, ‘The passing of the old order,’ 128.

¹⁵ Lucas, ‘Irish Norse relations.’

together.¹⁶ This is a straightforward refutation of Binchy but Lucas's work does not appear to have made an impression in scholarship as much as Binchy's did. Peter H. Sawyer's similar assessment of Ireland's part in *The Age of the Vikings*, 1962, also did not attract much fanfare at the time.¹⁷

The late 1960s and early '70s were the watershed for scholarship on the Norse in Ireland, due in no small part to new value placed on physical evidence. R. H. M. Dolley studied *The Hiberno-Norse Coins in the British Museum* in 1966, and while nationalism imported from Scandinavia which is now considered anachronous coloured his conclusions, his monograph brought numismatics into scholarship.¹⁸ Françoise Henry's 1967 reconsideration of *Irish Art during the Viking Invasions* is ambitious and still valuable for its catalogue of extant artefacts, but suffers from relying on Binchy-style assumptions of a cultural cataclysm. Archaeology became a new frontier for understanding the Hiberno-Norse, particularly in Dublin, where the National Museum of Ireland had sponsored excavations from 1962 onwards.¹⁹

The most prominent landmark in the twentieth century concerning the Norse in Ireland, indeed among those concerning medieval Ireland as a whole, is *Ireland Before the Normans* by the aforementioned Donnchadh Ó Corráin. Published in 1972, it was intended as a handbook for students of history, and even today Berkeley Library at Trinity has over a dozen copies on the shelf, all of which demonstrate frequent (ab)use by undergraduates. Ó Corráin's chapter on Viking Age Ireland is extraordinary for a number of reasons. It was written just before a bounty of physical evidence wrought dramatic changes to the understanding of the on-the-ground relations between Gaelic and Norse culture, but sticks

¹⁶ Lucas, 'The plundering and burning of churches in Ireland.'

¹⁷ Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, 24-7.

¹⁸ Dolley, *The Hiberno-Norse Coins in the British Museum*.

¹⁹ Henry, *Irish Art during the Viking Invasions*.

so effectively to source criticism that it weathers the archaeological reports well. Ó Corráin utilises Lucas's and Sawyer's points and provides further evidence to dispel Binchy's depiction of a traumatic shift in Irish society, displaying instead a nuanced assessment of the Norse impact on a Gaelic Ireland already in flux. *Ireland Before the Normans* has become a new lightning rod for criticism, but this is a testament to the popularity of the tertiary-level textbook.²⁰

In 1973 the Seventh Viking Congress brought scholars from overseas to Dublin and the proceedings published in 1976 reveal international interest in and treatment of Viking Age Ireland.²¹ The 1970s also saw national engagement with Hiberno-Norse archaeology in the form of the Wood Quay excavations and protests. In a newspaper article about his book on the 'hurried and in some ways compromised' excavations, former National Museum director Patrick F. Wallace states, 'It is important to continue to engage with the thousands who marched behind Father FX Martin to "Save Wood Quay" if we are to foster an interest in our archaeological heritage.'²² Wallace's book is intended for a popular audience, but it is also intended to be the evidence that Martin needed to halt the construction of government buildings on Wood Quay, albeit forty years too late.²³ The damage is done, but the result has been a vigorous appreciation for the archaeology of Dublin, now on display at the National Museum and interpreted for a popular audience at Dublinia beside Christchurch in city centre. The Friends of Medieval Dublin society also provide public history lectures throughout the year and a one-day symposia in the spring, culminating in regular proceedings volumes.²⁴

²⁰ Ó Corráin, *Ireland Before the Normans*.

²¹ Almqvist and Greene, eds. *Proceedings of the seventh Viking congress*.

²² Wallace, 'Why I wrote *Viking Dublin*.'

²³ Wallace, *Viking Dublin*.

²⁴ Friends of Medieval Dublin, fmd.ie.

The first to wed physical evidence and documentation of the Norse in Ireland on the grand scale was Alfred P. Smyth. In 1975 he produced two volumes on *Scandinavian York and Dublin* comparing the kingdoms' archaeology and history,²⁵ and in 1977 he put forward a study of thirty years of *Scandinavian kings in the British Isles*.²⁶ Smyth was also the author of monographs on Alfred the Great and a nineteenth century Irish priest, suggesting that his interests ranged more widely than most scholars' today, and while criticism of his works from the 1970s has been frequent, his attempts to marry artefacts and archaeological sites with historical documents at least established a baseline for further scholarship to use both. Ó Corráin capped the decade with an extensive riposte to Smyth entitled 'Vikings, High-kings, and Other Kings', challenging the methodology and therefore many of the conclusions of the latter's work.²⁷

After the 1970s, the quantity of scholarship on the Norse in Ireland skyrockets and this review of the literature must focus on publications dealing with Norse-Gaelic identity and ethnography, especially the *Cogadh*. The breadth of questions asked of the documents and physical evidence is changing as international studies and sociological and anthropological concerns become more important in all of the humanities. The academic conversation is constructed thematically rather than chronologically, although of course key articles and monographs are considered in the order in which they were published. Most of the recent scholarship of the Norse in Ireland follows several major routes: physical evidence compared to documentation (on a much smaller scale than Smyth); the historical context of the *Cogadh*, particularly concerning Clontarf; and identity markers in historical documentation, wherein the following doctoral thesis resides.

²⁵ Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*.

²⁶ Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles*.

²⁷ Ó Corráin, Donnchadh. 'High-Kings, Vikings, and Other Kings.'

Marilyn Gerriets brought numismatics back into the discussion of the Hiberno-Norse in her 'Money Among the Irish' in 1985. Here, she argues that the coin hoards which Dolley interpreted as exclusively Norse were found in areas of powerful Gaelic lordship, and therefore coin usage was not limited to Norse usage in Ireland.²⁸ This is an important statement because after Dolley, the appearance of coins had been used as a sign for Viking occupation or Norse settlement in archaeology. In his 1990 'The bloodied eagle: the vikings and the development of Dublin', Howard B. Clarke weaves a much better supported, and far more readable, interpretation of Dublin archaeology in thirty pages than Smyth achieved in several hundred. It is the first straightforward correlation of documentation to physical evidence in Hiberno-Norse historiography, although Clarke of course benefitted from decades of urban excavation reports and artefacts unavailable to prior scholars.²⁹

While this thesis rests on textual evidence rather than archaeology, it is crucial to keep abreast of discoveries and theories about the Norse in Ireland from wherever they derive. In this manner, literary analysis about what was added or omitted from medieval 'history' rests on firmer ground than debating the veracity of sagas and annals. Very recent work on physical evidence complicates the story of the Norse in Ireland, due in no small part to the individualistic nature of bodies and artefacts. Historical documentation usually follows powerful people and the actions of groups as a whole in a simplified manner for a purpose, whereas archaeology studies the preserved accidental detritus of everyday life. From archaeology, it is apparent that on-the-ground integration of Norse and Gaels was a fact, and it is up to historians to consider the documentation such as *Cogadh* and *Chellacháin* in light of this physical evidence.

²⁸ Gerriets, 'Money among the Irish.'

²⁹ Clarke, 'The bloodied eagle.'

First, however, special mention must be made for Poul Holm's 1994 article 'Between apathy and antipathy', a historiography of the Norse in Gaelic and Scandinavian literature from the medieval to the modern. Holm performs the gruelling task of fitting early modern antiquarianism into the fortunes of medieval transmission and the production of modern history, with more than a little influence by nationalism in the scholarship. This systematic study results in Holm's identification of 'schools' of thought about the Norse in Ireland and the *Cogadh* in particular emerging from the twentieth century, mostly setting Smyth and Ó Corráin as opposing titans. Hardly an article written after the mid-'90s does not reference this essay from *Peritia*, and Holm's dire predictions for the future of Viking Age Ireland studies have mercifully proved unfounded.³⁰

In a 2015 collection entitled *Vikings in Ireland and Beyond*, most articles consider the archaeology of the Norse in the Irish Sea Region, three of which are of particular interest to this thesis. Linzi Simpson discusses 'A Viking warrior grave from Dublin', specifically four young adult male skeletons buried together; osteological evidence demonstrates that two of the men were raised in Scandinavia while two grew in Ireland or Scotland. Simpson writes that these four men were 'representatives of a consortium of communities, rather than the members of an army mustered from a single place',³¹ therefore undermining the idea of the Norse as a foreign bloc moving into Dublin. Andy Halpin's essay on 'The Ballinderry Bow' provides questions rather than answers on the incongruity of a typologically Norse weapon having been recovered from a crannog in Meath, clearly a settlement in a Gaelic idiom far outside of a Norse town.³² Christina Lee's 'Costumes and contact: evidence for Scandinavian women in the Irish Sea region' at first appears a straightforward discussion of Norse-Gaelic textile evidence. However her work with

³⁰ Holm, 'Between apathy and antipathy.'

³¹ Simpson, 'A Viking warrior grave from Dublin,' 144.

³² Halpin, 'The Ballinderry bow.'

diaspora theory, discussed below, allows Lee to interpret the local production of textiles across northern Europe, an exclusively female occupation according to documentation, as evidence of the migration and cultural adaptation of women.³³

This volume was part of a rise in interest in the Norse in Ireland around the thousand-year anniversary of the Battle of Clontarf, and any discussion involving the *Cogadh* must consider current scholarship on Brian Boru. Ní Mhaonaigh's aforementioned *Brian Boru: Ireland's Greatest King?* from 2009 is the most in-depth academic consideration of the high king, his ascension, and his family. Specifically, Ní Mhaonaigh posits that Brian's high-kingship had to be confirmed by his legacy, not just earned within his lifetime; it was the success of his descendants that made his memory.³⁴ The scholarly consensus before Denis Casey's 'A reconsideration of the authorship and transmission of *Cogadh*' in 2013 was that the text had been written for Muirchertach ua Briain, including a snub of his great-uncle Donnchad that better legitimises his own claim as heir. Casey argues that *Cogadh* actually shows Donnchad favourably, and demonstrates manipulation in copies made later for Donnchad's descendants.³⁵

The volume written by Seán Duffy on *Brian Boru and the Battle of Clontarf* specifically for the anniversary in 2014 weaves all documentation available on this topic into a rich narrative, nonetheless written for a public audience. In this book Duffy, a long-time supporter of Dublin city history and archaeology, has produced a complex synthesis for mass consumption on the same principles, if not the same scale, as Ó Corráin's *Ireland Before the Normans* forty years earlier.

Colmán Etchingham asks modern questions about identity markers of the Norse in his 2009 essay '*Laithlinn*, "Fair Foreigners" and "Dark Foreigners"', using the appearance

³³ Lee, 'Costumes and contact.'

³⁴ Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru*, 46.

³⁵ Casey, 'A reconsideration of the authorship of *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh*.'

of these terms in the *Cogadh* to determine the origins and relationships of Norse groups operating in the Irish Sea Region in the ninth century.³⁶ Clare Downham replies to this explicitly in her 2011 ‘Viking Identities in Ireland’, arguing that it is impossible to tell ninth century Norse political allegiances and regionalisms using a twelfth century Gaelic text.³⁷ Etchingham appears to respond directly to Downham in his 2014 ‘Names for the Vikings in the Irish Annals’, but he does not cite her at all. Instead he considers himself making a ‘pace’³⁸ with the older scholar David Dumville, who wrote about ‘Vikings in Insular chronicling’ in a 2008 collection. Whether or not Etchingham is omitting Downham intentionally, it is a dreadful lacuna in his argument.

Downham herself has produced a number of articles which touch on Norse-Gaelic identity following the publication of her 2007 *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1020*. These include asking ‘The Viking Slave Trade: Entrepreneurs or Heathen Slavers?’ in 2009, and 2012’s ‘Religious and Cultural Boundaries between Vikings and Irish’. Her methodology involves literary analysis and close textual reading of an array of documentation, but little engagement with physical evidence.³⁹ Downham has also utilised theory of diaspora, the vitality and performative nostalgia for the ‘homeland’ among dispersed populations, in her 2016 ‘Coastal Communities and Diaspora Identities in Viking Age Ireland’.

⁴⁰In his 2009 ‘Bilingualism in Viking Dublin’, Ó Corráin references the possibility that the *Cogadh* was written not only for a descendant of Brian Boru, but also with the Hiberno-Norse of Dublin in mind. He argues for a bilingual elite in Ireland, not only among the Hiberno-Norse familiar with the Irish language, but also Gaelic leaders fluent in Norse.

³⁶ Etchingham, ‘*Laithlinn*, “Fair Foreigners” and “Dark Foreigners”.’

³⁷ Downham, ‘Viking Identities in Ireland.’

³⁸ Etchingham, ‘Names for the Vikings in Insular Annals,’ 37.

³⁹ Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland*; ‘The Viking Slave Trade,’ and ‘Religious and Cultural Boundaries between Vikings and Irish.’

⁴⁰ Downham, ‘Coastal Communities and Diaspora Identities in Viking Age Ireland.’

Ó Corráin's argument rests partially on the lost Old Icelandic '*Brjáns saga*' in the form suggested by Goedheer, which demonstrates fluency in Irish by the skilful transliteration of Gaelic names into Norse. This is evidenced by the retention of these names in the *Brennu-Njáls* and *Orkneyinga* sagas, extant descendant sagas of *Brjáns*. However, Ó Corráin writes that there must have been a significant 'invasion' of Norse in Ireland to achieve this saturation of culture sufficient to engender bilingualism. Mass migration out of Scandinavia and into Ireland, possibly by secondary points such as the Hebrides, has so far been taken as fact.⁴¹

The latest work concerning the theoretical **Brjans saga* is 2019's *Norse-Gaelic Contacts in a Viking World*, written as a monograph by Colmán Etchingham, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, and Elizabeth Ashman Rowe. The language in the Icelandic material suggests that it was composed after Old Norse literature fell out of favor in Ireland. This, plus a contemporary Manx interest in the political inheritance of Brian Bóruma, leads the authors to argue that this Irish-centred saga was actually written on the Isle of Man, or possibly in the Hebrides, rather than Dublin as previously thought. This work also considers Gaelic, and supposedly Gaelic, personal names in the recensions of the Icelandic *Landnámabók* and *Íslendingabók*. In addition, there is Irish annalistic material which may have influenced later Icelandic historical writing. This is organised around identifying the Icelandic ancestor-figure "Kjarvalr *Írakonungr* ('king of the Irish')" who appears in the genealogies of several prominent settlers. In doing so, this book provides the most comprehensive analysis of Gaelic and pseudo-Gaelic names in Icelandic sources yet available. Finally, the authors give fresh insights into the reconstructed Osraige saga as a potential source for the later Icelandic interest in "Kjarvalr".^{42, 43}

⁴¹ Ó Corráin, 'Bilingualism in Viking Dublin.'

⁴² Etchingham, *et al.*, *Norse-Gaelic Contacts in a Viking World*.

⁴³ Portions of this paragraph also appear in Humphrey, 'Review of *Norse-Gaelic Contacts in a Viking World*.'

In 2006, a collaboration between universities in the United Kingdom, with funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom, generated the *Viking Identities Network* in order to 'stimulate both academic and popular discussions about the creation of "Viking", "Norse" and "hybrid" identities in the Viking Age, and their 21st-century legacy'.⁴⁴ Judith Jesch is one of the core members of this organisation, and her work was published in 2015 as *The Viking Diaspora*.⁴⁵ According to Lesley Abrams, Jesch pioneered the term 'Viking diaspora', and with help from conferences produced by the *Viking Identities Network* this academic theory burst onto the scene of Norse scholarship just over a decade ago and shows no sign of losing momentum. Several articles have been produced directly from conference proceedings, or indirectly influenced by this nascent scholarship, on the concept of 'diaspora' in Norse society.⁴⁶

Abrams's plenary at the 2010 'New Directions in Medieval Scandinavian Studies' conference at Fordham University in New York City introduced the concept to an American audience. The positions she put forward were published in *Early Medieval Europe* in 2012. Once used solely for studies of Jewish dispersal, diaspora theory now informs discussion about the relationships between originating, emigrant, and hybridised cultures across the globe and throughout history. Abrams questions if it is appropriate and useful for the study of the Viking Age and early medieval Norse society. After careful consideration, including a healthy recognition of its limitations, she deems diaspora theory 'an exploratory concept that offers a new perspective', in particular providing 'the overseas settlements [i.e. Dublin, etc.] a greater cultural profile and a more significant role as agents of change'.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Viking Identities Network*, <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=119471%2F1>.

⁴⁵ Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora*.

⁴⁶ Stig-Sørensen, 'Gender, Material Culture, and Identity in the Viking Diaspora.'

⁴⁷ Abrams, 'Diaspora and identity in the Viking Age'.

Previously, in 2004, David Griffiths published a book article called ‘Settlement and Acculturation’ which began to explore a different scholarly concept about the Viking Age. Griffiths begins the arc of his argument by presenting evidence that cultural exchange between the Gaels and Norse went both ways, with Norse-produced metalwork taking on an insular character in the Irish Sea Region. Therefore, he posits, to find a ‘purely’ Norse settlement by archaeology is impossible, as Norse settlers quickly adapted and adopted local building styles and other living patterns in the Irish Sea Region. Nonetheless, objects of Scandinavian origin were preserved and recreated, not as slavish homesickness but as items of exotic prestige that thereby bore cultural capital in addition to wealth. The concept of ‘Viking’ as a lifestyle, not an ethnicity, is finally being recognized by the public and consequentially affecting scholarship.⁴⁸

Griffiths developed this concept further with his 2015 article ‘Irish Sea identities and interconnections during the Viking Age’. He problematises the extent and longevity of Scandinavian motifs and Norse language in the Irish Sea Region, of which Dublin is a key part, in comparison with a lack of evidence for a mass or sustained migration of people from Scandinavia. His elegant solution is that the story of the Norse in Ireland is ‘the construction of an inherited “expatriate” mythic or ancestral past’ bolstered with prestige items and Scandinavian-culture art forms, which he describes as ‘theatrically equipped with curated, “heirloom” artefacts.’ The Hiberno-Norse generated their own history as integrated outsiders, and defined themselves *not* as an ethnic ancestry, but as *participants* in a Scandinavian-inspired culture. Not only was ‘Viking’ an occupational title, but ‘Norse’ itself a *cultural* rather than an *ethnic* term.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Griffiths, ‘Settlement and Acculturation’.

⁴⁹ Griffiths, ‘Irish Sea identities and interconnections during the Viking Age’, and *Vikings of the Irish Sea*.

Combining this with the evidence of bilingualism, Norse language was willingly adopted by Gaels in Ireland to join Hiberno-Norse society. This theory is particularly useful today to combat nonsense on the order of assigning genetics or innate racial characteristics to Norse society. While Griffiths's argument is archaeologically-based, there is evidence for this in the *Cogadh* itself. Recall that it is an early twelfth-century document purporting ninth to early eleventh century history. While its details are muddled or outright fictional, it was a contemporary belief that the *Cogadh* was true. The Hiberno-Norse, the descendants of the Norse settlers and their cultural inheritors, had to become a part of Ireland somehow, and the *Cogadh*'s production and perseverance among the bilingual elite indicates that its depiction of this process of becoming Irish was generally accepted as true.

Within the *Cogadh*, there are all kinds of oddities going on and exceptions to the general given model of the predatory foreigners coming to Ireland, struggling against the Gaels with their strange ways, then civilising and becoming participants in Irish society. One example are the '*Gall-gaedhel*' (several spelling variations occur) who first appear in the years 856-8, whose very name is paradoxical: 'foreign Gael'. Todd translated and described this phrase as 'apostate Irish', categorising the *Gall-gaedhel* as 'the descendants of mixed parents, the Scandinavian Irish, who had lapsed into paganism, or having been brought up among the then heathen Norsemen, were never under Christian instruction' (xxx).

Why would native Gaels take up Norse cultural values and go a-Viking? The obvious answer is money: within the *Cogadh* and its contemporary annals, the pre-Viking Age Irish are no strangers to predation including the ransacking of monasteries. Joining the latest most powerful band of raiders makes sense for Gaels at all levels of society. In particular, ship technology attracted young free men to take on the personae of, and established political leaders to ally themselves with, the Norse in the Irish Sea Region.

Several key battles written about in the annals and in the *Cogadh* are won by naval supremacy, and while the author does not connect the dots for the audience, within the narrative Brian's success was due in no small part to the fleet of Limerick and other Norse settlements under his control.

In sequential chapters of a 2015 *festschrift* written for Ó Corráin, Holm and Etchingham lay out particulars of the effects of Scandinavian ship technology on Ireland. Holm first calculates the population of Hiberno-Norse Dublin by the size of its fleet multiplied by the crew and on-shore support staff required per ship. He quantifies the naval power that the king of Dublin had at his disposal, but more importantly, lays out the massive financial outlay such a fleet would require. Holm utilises this information to suggest that Dublin was much larger than archaeology so far has suggested, perhaps including an undiscovered barracks or additional town land.⁵⁰ The sheer number of people required to maintain a royal fleet necessitates the involvement of Gaels, beyond their presumed taxation and indirect support of the town. Etchingham then demonstrates literary and linguistic evidence for the lack of a significant Gaelic maritime power *before* the Vikings, followed by the rapid ascent of Gaelic forces who recruited Norse ships in their arsenal. Dendrochronological analysis of the wood of the Danish Skuldelev 2 ship shows an Irish origin, indicating that the construction of Norse ships was also a part of Norse culture in Ireland.⁵¹

But even after the initial raids were over and the ship-ports of Dublin and Limerick became towns, why would Gaels learn Norse and participate in Hiberno-Norse society? Likely, the answer is still money: Old Norse language anywhere plugs its speaker into Norse culture everywhere, and aboard their iconic ocean-going vessels, participants could

⁵⁰ Holm, 'The naval power of Norse Dublin.'

⁵¹ Etchingham, Colmán. 'Skuldelev 2 and Viking-age ships and fleets in Ireland.'

travel and trade across the breadth of the North. The ships that empowered the Viking Age also maintained the Norse world of long-distance trade and communication, and the Hiberno-Norse were a key part of this 'international' presence. By learning Old Norse, living in or regularly visiting Dublin, Limerick, Waterford, or another Hiberno-Norse centre, and perhaps by picking up a craft like knotwork-carving or ship-building, a Gaelic person could become part of the wider Norse world and tap into its wealth, prestige, and far-sightedness.

In an essay published in 2015, Dumville asks the intentionally mind-boggling question, 'Did Ireland Exist in the 12th Century?' This title is meant to conjure wonders of some kind of massive medievalist conspiracy or street magician-type concealment, but the question itself concerns the polity of Ireland before the Cambro-Norman Invasion of 1168-72. Dumville posits in his historiography that the characterisation of the early medieval Irish political structure splits even today on modern nationalist lines: Irish Republican scholars paint Ireland as a proto-feudal kingdom in the making whose invariable centralisation was disrupted, whereas scholars from the United Kingdom read the evidence as a chaotic battleground of warrior-chieftains who would have never united without an outside force.⁵² Both assessments, however, neglect the relationship of Ireland to the rest of the Norse-speaking world via the Hiberno-Norse.

The *Cogadh* and *Chellacháin*'s memories of the Norse in Ireland characterises them as fierce and bloodthirsty in their initial movements, then becoming settled and a seamless part of Irish politics. Inter-Norse struggles are recorded within Ireland, and the international component of the Battle of Clontarf, attracting participants from throughout the Norse world, makes much of its fame. Dublin's prestige and the cultural reach of the Hiberno-

⁵² Dumville, 'Did Ireland Exist in the twelfth century?'

Norse is indicated by Magnús the King of Norway's attempts to incorporate Dublin into his kingdom, and the regular appearance of Dublin and Gaels in Icelandic historical texts, such as sagas and literature concerning the history of settlement.

The dating of *Cellacháin* is also brought into question in a recent review of Ó Corráin's *Clavis*, published in 2017. Reviewers Breatnach and Etchingham rightfully point out that Ó Corráin's dating the *Cellacháin* to 1127x1134, namely the reign of Cormac Mac Carthaig, relies solely on Ó Corráin's 1974 article and the one readily available edition, by Bugge in 1905, which this thesis also utilises. This is meta-reference and sidestepping potential disagreement by quoting prior material as *quod erat demonstrandum* rather than utilising linguistic analysis or other methods of dating Irish material, but there is nothing that removes *Cellacháin* from the twelfth century in composition. Breatnach and Etchingham state simply that 'much research remains to be done on the different versions of *Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil*, on their dates of composition and on the nature of their transmission', but this is one of a long litany of their complaints that 'reflects the deficiencies of the *Clavis* as a reliable reference work.'⁵³

This thesis seeks to undermine the concept of the Hiberno-Norse as an alien intrusion into Gaelic Ireland, and to comprehend the attractions and implications of joining the 'foreign Gaels', as well as what that meant to people whose ancestry was from Scandinavia but whose birth and upbringing was wholly in Ireland. Even before the Cambro-Norman Invasion which brought the island into English and continental politics, Ireland had a broad horizon in the form of the Norse-speaking world. The *Gaill* may have been 'foreigners', but nonetheless they were described as '*goidel*' or Gaels, and foreigners in this phrase is an acknowledgement of their connections beyond the sea.

⁵³ Breatnach and Etchingham, 'Review: Ó Corráin,' 268.

Western scholarship is increasingly aware of its privileged state and Eurocentrism, but the study of medieval European history is still of great use to world affairs. This research can dramatically advance understanding of ninth to twelfth century Ireland, particularly in the formation of political entities, cultural assimilation, and identity issues. The objective is to discern the contemporary attitudes of Irish language speakers about their neighbours and allies, based on their depiction in historical literature. Ultimately, this information can be applied to identity politics in the early medieval period as well as throughout human history. The theoretical framework is one of otherness and acculturation - or rather, transculturation, a two-way process on the part of the Norse and the Gaels. Themes of cultural assimilation, multilingualism, and syncretism are central to pressing modern issues such as globalisation, language policy, immigration, and social integration.

II. Names for the Norse

Introduction

This thematic chapter is best to introduce the differences between the three texts under consideration. While ostensibly written within a century of each other and demonstrable awareness of the earlier text(s) by the authors of latter ones, and displaying many tropes in common with each other (explored in later chapters), these three sources use notable and in some cases contradictory terminology for Norse speakers operating in the Irish Sea region. As considered in the literature review, considerable work has been published on the meaning(s) of terms such as *Danair* and *Finnгаill*. However, a multi-source overview, particularly one not based on the Annals of Ulster or the Annals of Inishfallen, has not yet been produced in scholarship. Because of this lack, the demonstrable fact that literary depictions of the Norse vary dramatically based on their author and/or audience has not been stated, nor the implications for this variance explored. This chapter both provides data concerning word choices for the Norse as well as qualified, preliminary explanations for the differences shown.

In brief, the differences are as follows. In *Osraige* (c. 1030) the Norse are carefully delineated into three types, as outlined by Downham in 'The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly'. *Normannaigh/-ach*, derived from Frankish annal sources, is the term used for Norse speakers in general, but only appears a handful of times within *Osraige*. *Cogadh* (c. 1115) uses *Gall* and its variants most frequently for the Norse; its sheer length allows for many other terms to appear, including words that are not specifically for the Norse in the corpus of Irish literature but used exclusively for them here, such as *dibergach* (bandit) and *allmarach* (pirate). *Cellacháin* (c. 1130) almost exclusively uses *Lochlannaigh* to describe all Norse operating in Ireland, which is at odds with the specified meaning the term bears in *Osraige* and to a lesser extent in *Cogadh*. The importance of *Lochlannaigh* is particularly curious for the subsequent lack of the word *Gall*, given the close relationship between *Cellacháin* and *Cogadh*.

Understanding the contemporary Middle Irish linguistic usage of these terms is paramount to understanding Gaelic Irish attitudes and categorisation of the Norse. For example, interdisciplinary

work on the relationship between Irish language and Scandinavian archaeology has revealed a potential Irish preservation of the name of an otherwise unrecorded early western Norwegian kingdom. Scholarship over the last century has attempted to match Irish terms with Welsh and Anglo-Saxon terms for the Norse in order to trace cross-Irish Sea region developments, some more successfully than others. To support this informative charge on Irish documents, great care and precision must be given to the actual terms in use. While no author or compiler seems to have been a mastermind of modern-style objective Norse history, the way they present the history in their narratives must use one word or another and their choices reflect their subconscious biases for how to tell a story about the Norse in Ireland. One text from Osraige, one from north-western Munster, and another from central Munster demonstrate a remarkable flexibility in their linguistic rendering that may reflect their locale as much as their generation. At the very least, the apparent differences in these texts written within a hundred kilometres of each other and inside of a century prove that the popular history of the Norse in Ireland was not a monolithic, static narrative.

The Cerball of Osraige Chronicle

The section of the Fragmentary Annals of Ireland (FA) which include the missing Osraige Chronicle begin with a plethora of names for the Norse with a clear distinction between warring factions. The *Lochlannach/Lochlonnaigh* and several other variations are established in FA 233 (*K.* 851).⁵⁴ Here they are introduced, ‘the sentinels of the Lochlannaigh were looking attentively across the sea (*imorro na Lochlannach mar ro bhattar go frithgnamhach ag feaghadh an mara uatha*)’.⁵⁵ In the same entry arrives their antagonists, the Danair, presumably to the coast of Ireland. However, this is not explicitly established, merely that the triumphant Danair remove the Lochlannaigh’s ‘goods they had taken from the churches and holy places and shrines of the saints of Ireland (*maith rugsat a ceallaibh 7*

⁵⁴ The Fragmentary Annals bear both modern numeration (FA) as well as medieval *kalends* numeration (*K.*), which is intended to represent the year but is often several years off modern AD/CE encoding. FA numeration is consistent throughout while not all entries include *K* so the first is always used, and the second included when available.

⁵⁵ Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, 88-9.

nemeadaibh 7 sgrínib naomh Eireann)'.⁵⁶ Either way, this *in-media-res* start to the *Osraige* saga establishes the Lochlannaigh as the established defenders in this territory and the Danair as the new arrivals. This entry also incorporates the term *Aunites* as a synonym for Danair which will be discussed further below.

This first entry also includes dialogue between the Lochlannaigh and Danair, albeit written in Irish; this implies that they were understood to have a common language. As the Danair take the booty of the Lochlannaigh, that which they had originally taken from the Irish, the annalist explains that 'the Danair Lord took from them (*an Coimdhe uatha amhlaidh sin*)'.⁵⁷ This establishes the concept of the as the redeemable Norse displaying semi- or proto-Christianity, the 'good' of Downham's trichotomy. FA 235 (*K. 852*) features Danair praying to St. Patrick and abstaining from meat and women so that they are able to defeat the Lochlannaigh despite a significant number disadvantage. They give (some of?) their booty as thanks; therefore returning (some of) the wealth to the Irish.

However, this is after the Lochlannaigh are victorious. The full sequence in the *Osraige* chronicle is thus: the Lochlannaigh are established on land, the Danair attack them by sea and win; the Lochlannaigh counter-attack and win; finally, the Lochlannaigh join with the Ulaidh king Matudán, while the Danair rally with St. Patrick in the spiritual sense, and the latter are victorious. 'Now this battle brought good spirits to all the Gaels because of the destruction it brought upon the Lochlannaigh (*Tug tra an cath so meanma maith do Gaoidhealaibh uile ar an sgrios so do thabhairt ar na Lochlannachaib*).'⁵⁸ Here the Lochlannaigh are given as a common enemy to all the Gaels, although there is not enough information to discern if this implicitly excludes the Ulaidh from the celebration.

⁵⁶ Radner, 90-1.

⁵⁷ Radner, 90-1.

⁵⁸ Radner, 93-4.

Within this text, the Lochlannaigh are an unwanted force while the Danair are the ‘helpful’ Norse worth alliance for the Gaels. This is reverse to the overall scenario within the *Cogadh*, although both narratives depict the Lochlannaigh as the first wave or entrenched force. The term Danair appears so infrequently within *Cellacháin* as opposed to the prevalence of Lochlannaigh within the text that no comparison can be drawn, but mostly Danair serves as an alliterative synonym for the Norse.

The intermediate FA 234 (K. 851) also includes a curious aside about inter-Gaelic kingly warfare in the face of Norse incursions. Cináed mac Conaing, king of the Cianacht (*rí Cianachta*), is summoned by the Uí Néill Máel Sechlainn (I) under the pretence of discussing ‘the matter of the Danair (*caingin*⁵⁹ *na n-Danar*)’.⁶⁰ Máel Sechlainn causes Cináed to be killed after quipping, ‘Why did you burn the oratories of the saints, and why did you destroy their holy places and the books of the saints, along with Lochlannaigh? (*Cid, ar sé, mara loisgis dirthíge na naomh 7 cid mara mhillis a nemhadha 7 sgreaptra na naomh 7 Lochlannaig lat?*) his nor Sechlainn elám neither While ⁶¹ accomplice Tigernach of Brega are innocent of plundering churches, Cináed’s collusion with the Lochlannaigh specifically leads to his ignoble death. The annalist does not miss the cruel irony of Máel Sechlainn calling Cináed in the first place to discuss *caingin na n-Danar*.

FA 236 (K. 852) sees Máel Sechlainn ‘defeat the pagans in battle (*cath forsna paganaibh*)’ while the Ciannachta ‘twice defeat the gentiles in battle (*cath fá dhó forsna gentib*)’.⁶² The difference between *pagan(aibh)* and *genti(b)* will be further discussed in the chapter on religion and culture; suffice to say this indicates not only two different Gaelic groups in victorious conflict with the Norse, but also two different terms to reference the Norse, suggesting a distinction between Norse groups in the area based on their religious practices.

Given immediately after a listing dated K. 849 but not dated on its own, FA 239 reads in full:

⁵⁹ From *caingen*, both a controversy/dispute and with a legal sense of a claim or case. eDIL s.v. *caingen*.

⁶⁰ Radner, 90-1.

⁶¹ Radner, 90-1.

⁶² Radner, 93-4.

...came Amlaibh Conung son of the king of Lochlann into Ireland and he brought with him a proclamation of tributes and taxes from his father, and he suddenly departed. Then his younger brother Iomhar came to levy the same tribute.

*Isin m-bliadain si bhéos, .i. in sexto anno regni Maoil Seachlainn tainig Amhlaoibh Conung, .i. mac rígh Lochlann, i n-Eirinn, 7 tug leis erfhuagra cíosa 7 canadh n-imdha ó a athair, & a faghail-sidhe go h-obann. Tainig dno Iomhar an bhrathair ba sóo 'na deaghaidh-sidhe do thobhach na c-cios ceadna.*⁶³

Amlaibh is the Irish rendering of the Norse name Áleifr or Óláfr, the relationship between which is not fully known in Norse morphology. *Conung* is Old Norse *konungr* for king, placed correctly for this language after the name. This is an early example of a fragment that may indicate bilingualism on the part of the annal writer or the community that produced this historical narrative, which is discussed by Ó Corráin⁶⁴ and later in this chapter concerning the *Cogadh*. The phrase *cíosa 7 canadh* is also language that appears in *Cogadh* and *Cellacháin* and may indicate either having read this narrative specifically, or a common phrase used when discussing the history of the Norse in Ireland.

This passage also includes the first use of the word *Lochlann* as a place in the Osraige chronicle. The real-life location of Lochlann/d has engendered lively debate, with most scholars either agreeing with Ó Corráin's earlier assessment that it is somewhere in the islands of Scotland, or following Etchingam's later inclusion of archaeological evidence in order to place it in western Norway, where copious quantities of Irish-origin metalwork have been found in eighth- and ninth-century contexts. This text alone does not offer much insight into Lochlann/d apart from it being a kingdom strong enough that multiple adult sons could work overseas on behalf of their father. In FA 243 (*K.* 852) the king himself makes a nominal treaty with Máel Sechlainn.⁶⁵ Lochlann/d does not appear a stable kingdom, however, as warfare among the brothers is reported and FA 400 sees Amlaibh returning home to aid his father against (other?) Lochlannaigh.⁶⁶

⁶³ Radner, 94-7.

⁶⁴ 'Bilingual Dublin', 64.

⁶⁵ Radner, 96-7.

⁶⁶ Radner, 144-5.

The otherwise unnamed king of Lochlann/d (*righ Lochlann*) is depicted immediately reneging on his oath with Máel Sechlainn but deriving no profit from the attempted plunder in FA 243. The following entry, continuing on the theme of treason, is worth quoting in full:

In this year moreover many abandoned their Christian baptism and joined the Lochlannaigh, and plundered Armagh, and took out its goods. But some of them did penance and came to make reparation.

Isin bliadain si dno ro treigsiot sochaide a m-baitis Críostaidhachtsa & tangattar malle risna Lochlannachaib, gur airgsiot Ard Macha, 7 go rugsat a maithius as. Sed quidam ex ipsis poenitentiam egere, et uenerunt ad satisfactionem.⁶⁷

Here is recorded something subtle but extraordinary: the voluntary adoption of Norse culture by Gaelic Irish. Later these apostates are described as the ‘Foreign Gaels (*Gall Gaoidheal*)’. It is not recorded whether the Norse literally required them to renege on their baptism to join them, or whether plundering Ard Marcha was considered too blasphemous for easy forgiveness; this is discussed further in the chapter on religion and culture. The annalist switches from Middle Irish to Latin to record the penance of the apostates, which is not necessarily given as satisfactory. Latin is also the language the entry immediately following, about the death of two holy abbots, then the annals continue in Middle Irish. This only exists in an early modern paper copy so it is impossible to tell if the Latin was written in the same hand as the Irish.

The ‘Foreign Gaels’ appear several entries later in FA 247 (*K. 856*) where they are slaughtered by Aodh king of Aillech. The annalist explains that ‘they are foster-children of the Northmen (*‘daltai do Normainnoibh iad’*)⁶⁸ *daltai* perhaps referring to voluntary students rather than people literally grown up in fosterage. The annalist also describes them as *‘scuit’* which is a grammatical variation of *Scot*, but is also a Middle Irish synonym for ‘buffoon, laughing-stock’, potentially a pun.⁶⁹ Critically for issues concerning the names of Norse-speakers in Ireland, this entry uses *Normainnigh* to refer to the lifestyle of the Norse that the ‘Foreign Gaels’ adopt: ‘sometimes they are even called Northmen

⁶⁷ Radner, 96-7.

⁶⁸ Radner, 98-9.

⁶⁹ eDIL, s.v. *scuit*.

(*tan ann ad-bearar cidh Normainnigh fríu*).⁷⁰ The scribe writes '*Normainnigh fríu*' twice, once as a footnote; perhaps helping him keep his place as the manuscript page turns, or perhaps emphasising that they are *nominal* Northmen rather than considered 'genuine'.

The annalist concludes the entry with the proclamation, 'And the *Eireannaigh* deserved that killing, for as the Lochlannaigh do, so they also did (*ra dhlighsiot na h-Eireannaigh an marbhadh soin, uair amhail do nidis na Lochlannaig, do nidis-siomh*).'⁷¹ This reveals an important trichotomy of terms: *Normainnigh* for people acting as Norse, presumably including Norse speakers from overseas themselves; *Eireannaigh* for people from Ireland, presumably originally Gaelic Irish; and Lochlannaigh for Norse who are specifically *not* from Ireland. At this time in the mid-ninth century it is possible there would be young people who had been born in Ireland but only spoke Norse, but unlikely for there to be enough to require a distinction. Therefore a rudimentary socio-ethnic difference is revealed: an *Eireannaigh* could become a *Normainnigh*, but would never be a Lochlannaigh. In this section of the Osraige chronicle, the quality of Lochlannaigh is non-transferable.

The next use of the term *Normainnigh* is in FA 250, tentatively dated K. 851, where 'The Saxons won a battle over the Northmen (*Cath do bhrisedh do Saxanoibh forsna Normainnibh*).'⁷² The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle B-text records a battle between Æthelwulf, King of Wessex, and 'heathen men (*hæþene menn*)' at Aclea ('Oak Field'?) in 853, which ends in 'the greatest slaughter of a heathen raiding-army that we have heard tell of up to the present day (*mæste wæl geslogan þe we secggan hyrdan æt þysne andweardan dæg*).'⁷³ Since there is nothing about these Northmen coming from Ireland, the Anglo-Saxon annalist uses the Old English word to describe Norse-speakers operating overseas without regard for whether they are Lochlannaigh or Danair. The very next entry

⁷⁰ Radner, 98-9.

⁷¹ Radner, 98-9.

⁷² Radner, 98-9.

⁷³ Coates, 'The battle at "Acleah"'.

features Cerball mac Dúnlaige joining with Danair against the Lochlannaigh, and continues the careful distinction that Osraige chronicle typically exhibits between these two groups of Norse-speakers.⁷⁴

Normainnigh appears in FA 254, after several entries where *Lochlannach* is used as a synonym for *geinti* or ‘gentiles’. Cerball is called by the men of Munster to lead the Danair and ‘muster of Osraige (*tionol Osraighe*)’st the ‘*Normainnaigh* who were plundering and destroying them at the time (*na Normainneach ra badar ‘ga n-ionnradh, 7 ‘ga n-argain an tan soin*)’. This demonstrates that Cerball has the Danair under his command, of which his neighbours are aware, but the Norse speakers are not considered part of the military strength of Osraige. This distinction is maintained through the passage, when *Cerball* leads ‘*Danaraibh 7 ...Osraighibh*’. Then, their common enemy is described as ‘*Lochlannach*’, perhaps specifying the less precise term *Normainnigh* to distinguish them from the Danair. The Lochlannaigh are faced by a ‘great host of Danair and Gael (*slógh mór Danar 7 Gaoidheal*)’ led by Cerball.⁷⁵

Cerball speaks of the men of Munster versus the Osraige in similar language to the way he compares Danair and Lochlannaigh, as sometimes allies but longterm rivals: *namhuid bhunaidh dhuibh*, from *bunad* ‘origin, base, stock/of families, hereditary’ and *náma(e)* ‘enemy, foe’ plus an archaic dual-person locative. This brings the men of Munster and Osraige together as ‘Gael’, and then incorporates the Danair:

Then answered all between Danair and Gael that neither cowardice nor weakness would be seen in them. Then they rose up as one man to attack the Lochlannaigh.
Ra freagrattar uile edir Dhanaru 7 Ghaoidhealu na fionnfaithe treithe nó meatacht forra. Ro eirgeadur iar t-tain eirghe n-áoinfhir isin uair sin d'ionnsoigidh na Lochlannach.

Unity in the face of a common enemy brings the Munster and Osraige men together, but it is a bridge too far for the annalist to bring the Danair into their union. Rather, the allied forces fight ‘as one man’,

⁷⁴ Radner, 98-9.

⁷⁵ Radner, 100-1.

⁷⁶ implying that they could not actually be so due to their different ethnicities. This separation between Cerball and the Danair under his command (specifically, his kingship) is shown in FA 260, where he gets up to action with ‘his Danair (*a Dhanair*)’.⁷⁷

The ‘Foreign Gaels’ appear as well in FA 260, against their prior foe Máel Sechlainn who has come on expedition to Munster. The annalist writes,

... Gall-Gael who were slain there, for they were people who had forsaken their baptism, and they used to be called *Normannaigh* for they had the customs of the *Normannach*, and had been fostered by them, and though the original *Normannaigh* were evil to the churches, those were much worse, i.e. these people, wherever in Ireland they were.

... *marbadh do Ghall-ghaoidhealaibh ann, úair daoine ar t-tregadh a m-baiste iad-saidhe, & ad-bertais Normannaigh fríu, uair bás Normannach aca, 7 a n-altrum forra, 7 ger bó olc na Normannaigh bunaidh dona h-eaglaisibh, bá measa go mór iad-saidhe, .i. an lucht sa, gach conair fo Eirinn a m-bidis.*⁷⁸

While much in this passage seems a repeat of FA 247, there are several subtle differences worth emphasising. As in prior entries, the forsaking of baptism and desecration of churches are both given as evidence for the ultimate evil of the ‘Foreign Gaels’. The concept of fosterage uses a different term, *altrum*, which is more precisely used for nurturance from a young age and is the verbal noun of *ailid* ‘nourishes, rears, fosters’. The *Normainnigh* who are not *Eireannach* in 247 are here described as ‘*bunaidh*’ or ‘original, hereditary’, further evidence that the annalist uses *Normainnigh* and related terms as a lifestyle rather than ethnic reference. *Lucht* refers to a ‘class of persons’.⁷⁹

Despite two recorded wholesale defeats by Máel Sechlainn, the ‘Foreign Gaels’ persist in the Irish Sea region, indicating that they were not a unified or consolidated force. FA 263 (*K.* 858) reports that Cerball and Íomhar are victorious over ‘Foreign Gael’ in ‘*Aradhaibh Tíre*’. Radner identifies this *Ara Tíre* as Ara/Duhara in Co. Tipperary,⁸⁰ but why would *Normainnigh* operate so far inland, and why would Cerball and Íomhar go into battle with them? Rather, it would make more sense for the

⁷⁶ Radner, 100-1.

⁷⁷ Radner, 102-3.

⁷⁸ Radner, 102-3.

⁷⁹ eDIL s.v. *ailid* and *lucht*.

⁸⁰ Radner, 104-5.

'Foreign Gaels' to operate in a naval milieu and thus threaten the southeast of Ireland by sea. Could *Ara Tíre* refer to the MacIntyre peninsula of western Scotland? Or Tíree in the Inner Hebrides?

The immediately following entries, 264 and 265 (*K.* 858 and 859), offer two more glimpses at the variety of words for the Norse in use within the Osraige chronicle. The first offers simply that the king of Cashel was 'captured by the *Normainnigh* and died in captivity among them (*do ghabhail do Normannoibh, 7 a écc a l-laimh acca*'); as shown, this could refer to any of the Norse-speaking groups in the area including the 'Foreign Gaels'. The second entry offers a surprising turn of events in that Cerball goes into battle with a Lochlannaigh army (*slúagh Lochlannach lais*), against Máel Sechlainn. This leads the annalist to add a short aside: 'it is pity for the *Eireannach* that they have the bad-custom of fighting themselves and do not rise all together against the Lochlannaigh (*as truagh dona h-Eireannchaibh an mibhés doibh tachar eaturra féin, 7 nach a n-aoineacht uile eirgit a c-ceann na Lochlannach*). *Eireannach* here clearly refers to the Gaels Cerball and Máel Sechlainn, indicating that they 'ought' to see the Lochlannaigh as a common enemy.⁸¹ As Cerball does not take up Norse military culture but merely uses Lochlannaigh and Danair as auxiliary forces, he does not become a 'Foreign Gael' or a *Normainnigh*, retaining his *búnaidh* designation as *Eireannach* according to the annalist.

Several entries later but given the same calendar year, Cerball makes a submission to Máel Sechlainn. This entry specifies that 'Cerball had been in *Irarus*, along with the son of the king of Lochlann, for the previous forty nights destroying the territory of Máel Sechlainn (*ar m-beith do Cearbhall reimhi sin a n-Irarus, 7 mac rígh Lochlann maille fris, ra ceathrachait aidhche og milleadh fhearainn Maoil Seachlainn*).' While not named, this *mac rígh* is likely the same Íomhar that Cerball teamed up with against the 'Foreign Gaels' of *Ara Tíre* rather than the also already-named Amlaibh. *Irarus*, modern Irish *Ioraras*, is a historical name preserved in folklore referring to an area in modern

⁸¹ Radner, 104-7.

counties Meath and Westmeath; this fits Máel Sechlainn's seat in Mide at this point in the narrative. The Lochlannaigh are thus the Norse speakers prominent in this portion of the Osraige chronicle, and their specific east-coast predations include Lusk (FA 272, *K.* 856) and Sláine (FA 275).⁸²

Cerball's alliance with the Lochlannaigh appears to persist until FA 277, when 'the men of two fleets of *Normainnigh* (*lucht da chobhlach do Normannaibh*)' attempt to plunder Osraige. Their identity is specified in the speech of Cerball's counsellors as '*Lochlonnoighibh*'. The chronicler moves from the general to the specific for dramatic effect, heightening the tension of an attack by the Norse by revealing that they are Cerball's former allies.

FA 278 features a dramatic scene in Port Láirge, discussed further in the chapter concerning towns. Two leaders from Luimneach are described as 'of fully noble stock of the great race of Lochlann/d (*saorchlanna dno iad d'erchiniudh Lochlann*)'. *Saor-chlanna*, literally 'free-family', and *ér-chiniud* meaning 'noble-race/kind'⁸³ indicate a Gaelic conception of nobility on the part of these non-*Eireannach* men. While their highly-born qualifications originate overseas in Lochlann/d, those qualities are transferable to Ireland in order to magnify the victory of Munster over these Lochlannaigh.

There is a notable break in the description of the Norse at this point in the Fragmentary Annals, which may indicate a lacuna in the Osraige chronicle, or simply nothing of interest for the annalist to report. Apart from a victory in FA 279 by Máel Sechlainn and Cerball mac Dúnlaing which included 'Amlaibh along with Áed in this defeat (*Amlaibh If-farradh Aod 'sin maidhm sa*)', and a massacre of 'Rodol's followers [/family] (*mhuinntir Roduilbh*)' in 281,⁸⁴ there is no further information about the Norse, and entries 279-291 include none of the Middle Irish terminology for the Norse under consideration. The sequel to Áed and Amlaibh's defeat occurs in 292 (*K.* 862) when their 'great host

⁸² Radner, 106-7.

⁸³ Radner, 108-9.

⁸⁴ Radner, 110-1.

of Gael and Lochlannaigh (*slóghaibh móra Gaoidhiol 7 Lochlannach*)⁸⁵ return. Their alliance is explained by Amlaibh's marriage to Áed's daughter, but the timeframe is not given, such as whether this was recent, or before their first military forays together.

There is another series of entries without any mention of the Norse, then the preservation of the Osraige chronicle picks up again at 308 (K. 862).⁸⁶ Cerball and his nephew defeat 'Rodolb's fleet, which had come from Lochlann/d shortly before that (*longus Rodlaibh, 7 bá gairid remhe tangattar a Lochlann*). 'However, 281 states that Rodolb was defeated after plundering 'Lethglenn',⁸⁷ so his hasty return trip from Lochlann/d implies regular or fast travel between there and Ireland, for the eleventh-century audience of the Osraige chronicle. Entries 309-311 offer a trifecta of names for the Norse: Lochlannaigh (*Lochlannachaibh*), the Foreigners (*na n-Gall*), and gentiles (*gentibh*), respectively.⁸⁸ Why does the annalist use these terms, scarce elsewhere in this narrative, rather than the better-attested *Normainnigh*? *Genti* appear again in FA 320,⁸⁹ as does *gall* in 329 (K. 866).⁹⁰ Is the annalist carefully distinguishing groups of Norse speakers, or just alternating terms for literary purposes?

FA 314 (K. 864) features a dual usage of the term Lochlannaigh. First, the Laighin Gaels 'gathered the Lochlannaigh (*ro thionolsad...Lochlannaig*)' to help them fight Osraige. In retaliation, Cerball 'then mustered a force of Irish and Lochlannaigh (*ro thionol iaramh slóigh Gaoidheal 7 Lochlannach*)'.⁹¹ The same verbal noun of *do-inóla* is used for each summoning of the Lochlannaigh, but unless these are pure mercenaries, these must be separate groups operating alongside the Laighlin (from Dyflin) and with the Osraige (likely from Waterford). Lochlannaigh remains the term of

⁸⁵ Radner, 112-3.

⁸⁶ Radner, 114-5.

⁸⁷ Several places may match this name, but are none accessible by sea.

⁸⁸ Radner, 114-5.

⁸⁹ Radner, 116-7.

⁹⁰ Radner, 118-9.

⁹¹ Radner, 116-7.

importance for entries 326 to 328, wherein they are slaughtered (*deargár na Lochlannach*) in two areas and successfully plunder and take hostages in a third.⁹²

A new force of Norse speakers arrives in FA 330, the most surprisingly international entry.

There are a panoply of ethnonyms so it is worth quoting extensively, underlines for emphasis:

867. At this time came the Aunites (that is, the Dane-men) with innumerable armies to York, and they sacked the city, and they overcame it; and that was the beginning of harassment and misfortunes for the Britons; for it was not long before this that there had been every war and every trouble in Lochlann/d, ...Ragnall stayed there then, with his youngest son. The older sons, however, filled with arrogance and rashness, proceeded with a large army, having mustered that army from all quarters, to march against the Franks and Saxons. They thought that their father would return to Lochlann/d immediately after their departure.

867 K. iii. *Is in aimsir si tangattar Aunites, .i. na Dainfir, go sluaghaibh diairmhidhibh leo go Cáer Ebroic, gur ro thoglattar an cathraigh, 7 go n-deachattar fuire, 7 ba tosach innidh 7 docrach móir do Breatnaibh sin; uair ní fada d'aimsir remhe so ro bhaoí gach cogadh 7 gach glifit i Lochlainn, ...Ro thairis iaramh Ragnall ann sin, 7 an mac ba sóo dhó. Tangattar imorro na mc. ba sine go sluagh mór léo, ar t-tionol an t-sluaigh sin as gach aird, ar na líonadh na mc. sin do dhíomus 7 do mhearsacht, um eirge i c-ceann Frangc 7 Saxan. Ra shaoilsiod a n-athair do dhol i Lochlainn fo céadóir dara n-éis.*⁹³

Why does this text go from *Aunites*, which are equated with *Danfhir* (why not *Danair*, or was that relationship given) to a tale of Lochlann/d? Why are (only?) the Britons bothered by the *Aunites* in York and then why are Franks and Saxons (from Saxony or now-England?) involved in the later conflict, or perhaps why do the Lochlannaigh brothers fight against them – in northern now-Germany/Denmark? Following this is the tale about the Lochlannaigh brothers going down to Mauretania in northwestern Africa, engaging in warfare with the king and his men, then bringing back captives to Ireland. Does this reflect Gaelic anxiety about enslavement by the Norse? The implications of this passage are covered more thoroughly later in this thesis.

Among entries 337-342 are named and general Lochlannaigh, using no other names for the Norse.⁹⁴ The siege of Dumbarton (*K.* 870) in 388 is recorded as performed by the 'king of Lochlann/d (*rígh Lochlann*)'⁹⁵ but this appears to be Amlaibh and Ímar from Dublin rather than their father or another literal king of an overseas territory, since they are recorded as coming 'back from Scotland

⁹² Radner, 118-9.

⁹³ Radner, 118-9.

⁹⁴ Radner, 122-5.

⁹⁵ Radner, 142-3.

to Dublin (*aridhsi a h-Albain go h-Ath Cliath*)' with captives in FA 393 (K. 871).⁹⁶ Perhaps this title was meant more as 'king of the Lochlannaigh [of Ireland]', particularly as only '*Lochl~*' is written in the manuscript.⁹⁷ The aforementioned FA 400 further muddies the use of Lochlannaigh as a type of person:

Amlaib went from Ireland to Lochlann/d to fight the *Lochlandaigh* and help his father, Gofraid, for the Lochlannaigh were warring against him, his father having sent for him. *Amhlaoibh do dhol a h-Eirinn i Lochlainn do chogadh ar Lochlandachaib & do congnamh rá a athair, .i. Gofridh, uair ra bhatar na Lochlannaigh ag cogadh 'na cheann-saidhe, ar t-tiachtain ó a athair ara cheann.*⁹⁸

While the medial *-d-* of the first instance could suggest a difference between Irish Lochlannaigh and literal residents of Lochlann/d ('Lochlanders'?) it may also be a scribal error, particularly as the more familiar form is used for the rest of the entry. The scribe tantalisingly refuses to write more about this overseas conflict, suggesting that it is irrelevant for his task of recording Irish history, and further remarks that 'the Irish suffer evils not only from the Lochlannaigh, but they also suffer many evils from themselves (*ní namá fuilngid na h-Ereannaigh uilc na Lochlannach, acht fuilngnid uilc iomdha uatha fein*)'.⁹⁹ Within a single entry, therefore, Amlaibh and the Norse of Dublin are both the enemies of the Lochlannaigh (of Lochlann/d) as well as the Lochlannaigh (generic Norse speakers) against the *Eireannaigh*. All non-Irish Norse are Lochlannaigh within the Osraige chronicle, and the Norse of Ireland are either within or without this term, depending on their enemy.

Latin *Northmann* appears in the bilingual entry 395 (K. 871), 'Ailill mac Dúnlaing, king of the Laigin, is killed by the Northmen ([Middle Irish:] *Ailill mc. Dunlaing, rí Laighean, a* [Latin:] *Northmannis interfectus est*)'.¹⁰⁰ 407 (K. 872) concerns an attack 'by the kings of the Foreigners (*do rioghaibh Gall*)' but these multiple kings - Amlaibh and Ímar? - and their origins are unspecified.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Radner, 144-5.

⁹⁷ Radner, 142.

⁹⁸ Radner, 144-5.

⁹⁹ Radner, 144-5.

¹⁰⁰ Radner, 144-5.

¹⁰¹ Radner, 146-7.

In the next entry Bárith, a *Lochlannaigh* jarl introduced in FA 350,¹⁰² is now ‘the fosterfather of the king’s son (*aitte é do mhac an righ*)’, but which king is not specified. As Áed’s reign is referenced, it appears that Bárith is connected this Gaelic king rather than Amlaibh or another Norse king in Ireland. However, this entry involves bringing ‘many ships with him from the sea westward (*longa iomdha ó mhuir síar*)’ and attacking a holy site, activities much more suited for a Lochlannaigh king’s compatriot than one allied with Áed. Finally, despite the annalist’s stated disinterest in Lochlann/d events, he records the death of Gofraid in FA 409 (K. 873), adding in Latin, ‘Thus it pleased God (*Sic quod Domino placuit*)’.¹⁰³

Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh

Cogadh survives to the modern day in three manuscripts: the fragment preserved in the Book of Leinster (c. 1160), a larger but not full fragment in Dublin circa 14th century, and the only complete version in the hand of Mícheál Ó Cléirigh c. 1635, now in Brussels.¹⁰⁴ The eldest extant version of the *Cogadh* begins in the first chapter by describing the ‘men of Ireland (*feraib hErenn*)’ in opposition to two different terms for the Norse, Lochlannaigh and Danair (*‘Lochlannchaibh’* and *‘Danaraib’*).¹⁰⁵ The third chapter uses similar language, then the fourth chapter switches to the term ‘foreigner’ (*gail*) meaning Norse speakers in general, which of course also appears in the modern title of this narrative.¹⁰⁶ The predations of the ‘foreigners’ are detailed in the following several chapters, but without any ethnonyms; simply the appearance of ‘another fleet (*tanic loinges*)’ indicates a Norse force. Chapter Nine sees Turgeis claim the ‘sovereignty of the foreigners of Ireland (*rigi gall hErend*)’, suggesting that the author sees all Norse speakers in Ireland at this time as one group or

¹⁰² Radner, 128-9.

¹⁰³ Radner, 146-7.

¹⁰⁴ Todd, *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh*, x-xiv; Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 222.

¹⁰⁵ Todd, 221.

¹⁰⁶ Todd, 222.

kind of people, if not already united prior to Turgeis's ascension. This chapter also preserves 'the prophecy of Berchán (*fastini Berchain*)' which refers to the Norse as *genti*, and in one case doubles their exoticism as 'foreign gentiles (*gall genti*)'. Finally, it includes a prophecy from Bec mac Dé warning of 'parties of Danair of the black ships (*dama Danar dubloingsi*)',¹⁰⁷ the word choice likely influenced by alliteration.

One of a few rare mentions of *Normainnigh* and its derivatives within the *Cogadh* is found in Chapter 16. The preceding chapter uses *gaill* twice, then the Boyne is beset by 'a very great fleet of Northmen (*loinges adbul mór de Northmannaib*)'.¹⁰⁸ The inclusion of the medial *-th-* is infrequent but attested in other Middle Irish texts,¹⁰⁹ although this is the only instance among all three texts under review. The Brussels manuscript of *Cogadh* uses '*Normandaibh*' in this chapter.¹¹⁰

Chapter 20 is the well-studied introduction of the Danair to the story of the Norse in Ireland, and is worth quoting both earlier and later versions for linguistic evolution as well as the unfortunate degradation of the elder manuscript. The Book of Leinster manuscript reads:

Tancatar iarsain Dub-genti Danarda...sat fo hErend, ocus rabatar oc dichor na Findgeinti...ro marbsat coic mili dona Findgenti oc Snam Aigneach.

'After that came *Dubh-genti* Danair, [and spread themselves] over Ireland, and they aimed at driving out the *Finn-genti*...they killed five thousand of the *Finn-genti* at *Snamh Aigneach*.¹¹¹

The Brussels manuscript reads:

Then came after this *Dubh-genti* Danair, and they spread themselves over Ireland, and they endeavoured to drive the *Finn-genti* out of Ireland; and they engaged in battle, and they killed five thousand of the *Finn-genti* at *Snamh Ergda*.'

*Tancadar iarsin Duibgeinti Danarda, ocus ro laeset fo Erind, ocus da badar ic iucur na Findgenti a hErind, ocus tucsat cath, ocus do marbsat .ii. mili dono Fingentib ic Snam ergda.*¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Todd, 224-5.

¹⁰⁸ Todd, 227-8.

¹⁰⁹ For instance, *Cath Ruis na Ríg for Bóinn*, also found in this MS. eDIL s.v. *Nortmann*.

¹¹⁰ Todd, 16.

¹¹¹ Book of Leinster manuscript. Todd, 229.

¹¹² Todd, 18-9.

The Dublin manuscript of *Cogadh* uses *Snamh Oengusa* and the Annals of Ulster (K. 851) further record this location as *Snamh Aidhneach*.¹¹³ While the varied second element of the place-name is unintelligible, the regular first element suggests a maritime environment suitable for swimming.¹¹⁴

The tide of battle turns in Chapter 21, as does the first appearance of *Lochlann/d* in this text. This is too corrupted in the Leinster manuscript to read, however. There, the first instance is in Chapter 23, wherein is introduced ‘Amlaibh son of the king of Lochlann/d (*Amhlaib mac rig Lochlann*)’ who, like Turgeis before him, ‘took the sovereignty over the foreigners of Ireland (*co ro gaib rigi gall hErend*)’.¹¹⁵ *Gall* in this instance clearly refers to all Norse speakers in Ireland, as Chapter 25 refers to further conflict between ‘*Findgeinti ocus Dubhgeinti*’.¹¹⁶ Amlaibh’s *rigi* is demonstrably theoretical rather than literal, but for the literary depiction of ninth-century politics, the Irish author imagines the Norse, or at least Amlaibh, visualising themselves as a unifiable body. Chapter 25 sees the expulsion of the Dubh-geinti from Ireland and records that they successfully raided Scotland.¹¹⁷

All further instances relating to Norse speakers found in the Leinster fragment utilise *Gall* and its variants. As this manuscript is the only one written before the Cambro-Norman invasion, or at least within a generation of it, the specific terms for the Norse are of most importance because they are certainly generated and used in a pre-Norman milieu, preserving the Middle Irish cultural memory of the Norse without further historical and literary complication by later colonisation.

The Brussels manuscript by Ó Cléirigh, the only complete record of *Cogadh*, will now be considered. Some slight differences of language in the chapters shared with the Leinster fragment will be analysed, then commence further tabulation and criticism of names for the Norse in the following chapters.

¹¹³ Todd, 19.

¹¹⁴ *Snám* is the verbal noun of *snáid*, to swim or float.

¹¹⁵ Todd, 230.

¹¹⁶ Todd, 232.

¹¹⁷ Todd, 232.

The most glaring difference between the manuscripts is that the younger Brussels does not use the term Lochlannaigh in its opening chapters. *Genti* is used alongside Danair to describe the whole of the Norse in Ireland in Chapter One.¹¹⁸ In Chapter Three, the people of Ireland are given trouble ‘from piratical *Danmarcaigh* and barbarous robbers (*ó Danmarcachaibh allmardhaib, ocus ó dibergaigh barbhardaib*)¹¹⁹’ which was simply ‘from Lochlannaigh and from Danair (*ó Lochlannaib ocus ó Danaraibh*)’ in the Leinster fragment.¹²⁰ The term *allmúrach* is further considered below. *Díbergach* or a bandit of the woods also has additional connotations in contemporary Irish society and is treated further in the chapter on religion and culture.

The appearance of the term *Danmarcachaibh* in Ó Cléirigh’s source manuscript indicates a specification of Danair: specifically ‘Denmarkians’, indicating an awareness of the nascent overseas kingdom of Denmark. This is an endonym, or name given by a people to themselves; *Danmork* is Old Norse for *Denmark* and attested on both Jelling stones, erected in the mid-tenth century by kings Gorm and Haraldr. In his 2001 ‘North Sea Language Contacts’, Paul Bibire emphasises that *dan(a)ir* was the term used for Norse speakers wherever they were:

The cognate terms in Norse certainly also had wider senses: the second element of the name Danmork is perhaps most likely to mean ‘border’ here, and the name should probably be translated as ‘the borderland of the *Danir*’. And in Old Norse itself, the term *dǫnsk tunga* “the tongue of the *Danir*”, is used for the language of the Vikings, Norse, whether it be spoken in Denmark, Norway, or Iceland.¹²¹

The territory of the Danar ended in Denmark, *-mork* being related to English march as in a boundary. Middle Irish *Danair*, therefore, is the rendering of Norse speakers’ endonym, and its equivalence with *Danmargach* emphasises that the later attestation of the *Cogadh* was composed in an environment that was aware of the internal framing of Norse identity.

Terms for the Norse as a whole such as *gail* and *geinti* are used instead of Lochlannaigh throughout the Brussels manuscript. In the selection of Chapter 20 examined above, *Dubh-geinti* is

¹¹⁸ Todd, 2.

¹¹⁹ Todd, 4-5.

¹²⁰ Todd, 222.

¹²¹ ‘North Sea Contacts’, 90.

explicitly linked with the Danair, but the correlation of Lochlannaigh and Find-geinti is not; rather it is assumed entirely on contemporary annalistic evidence, particularly the Annals of Ulster.¹²² Lochlann/d appears in Chapter 21, which is not preserved in the Leinster manuscript, when the Gaelic kings of Cashel and Laighin wage the ‘battle of Sciath Nechtain, where the heir of the king of Lochlann/d fell, and twelve hundred of the nobles of Lochlann/d with him (*cath Sceith Nechtain ... du i drocair tanaissi ri Lochland, ocus da cet dec doc maithib Lochland umi*)’. The ambiguity of these chapters depict military slaughter as *Dubh-* and *Find-geinti* fight bitterly amongst each other but are indiscriminately killed by Gaelic forces as well.

The *Cogadh* records no alliances with Norse speakers at this time in the narrative, but one mention in Chapter 22 of the Brussels manuscript suggests a brief accord in the face of a common enemy. After describing several Gaelic forces’ triumph over an unspecified ‘them’ (the Middle Irish is written in a passive construction), the statement is added, ‘There fell, also, three-hundred and sixty-eight by the *Find-geinti* (*Drocradar, dna, tri cet .lx.uiii. la Findgenti*)’.¹²³ This survives within the badly damaged Chapter 22 of the Leinster fragment, but with a slightly different number and new cast of characters: ‘and three hundred and seventy-eight were slain by the Hui Fidhgenti (*da rocratar dna .cclxxuuiii. la hui Fidgenti*)’.¹²⁴ The Uí Fidgente were a Gaelic dynasty in Munster,¹²⁵ which makes much more sense as allies of the Munster Eóghanachta against unspecified Norse attackers, and the similarity of the names *Fidhgenti* and *Findgenti* is purely coincidental. The later manuscript reporting the presence of the *Find-geinti* must reflect either an accidental transmission error, or a deliberate emendation; as two separate words the *g-* in *Findgenti* would be pronounced ‘hard’ while the medial *-g-* in *Fidhgenti* would be lenited, and the sounds of the medial *-d-* in both words would also differ. This is clearly a scribal alteration, but was it deliberate or accidental? The narrative

¹²² AU851.3 reports ‘dark heathens (*Dubgeinti*)’ in battle against ‘fair-haired foreigners (*Fhinngallaibh*)’, 310.

¹²³ Todd, 20-1.

¹²⁴ Todd, 230.

¹²⁵ Byrne, *High Kings*, 172.

changes dramatically depending on whether the Munstermen fighting the Norse are aided by other Munstermen, or a different group of Norse speakers.

As in the Leinster fragment, Chapters 23 and 24 introduce brothers Amlaibh and Ossil from Lochlann/d, who ‘assumed the sovereignty of the Gaill of Ireland (*gab rigi Gall Erend*)’.¹²⁶ The locale of Lochlann/d is thus part of the Brussels manuscript’s narrative, but not the term Lochlannaigh as an ethnonym apart from one use each in Chapters 74 and 117.¹²⁷ *Lochlann-* is also not used as an adjective until Chapter 92, where among all their heroic and exquisitely Gaelic arms and armour, the Gaels bear ‘sharp Lochlann axes (*limtha[recte laime?] Lochlannacha*)’ into battle against the Norse.¹²⁸ More language is available but rarely used, such as the poetic term ‘*muintir Tomair*’ meaning ‘family/people of Þórr/Thor’ in a poem within Chapter 28.¹²⁹ The narrative’s conflict between Find-geinti and Dubh-geinti is undermined by the *Cogadh*’s author repeatedly using *gail* for them both. In particular, the Lochlannaigh/Danair divide evaporates by the end of the narrative, when the author includes among the dead of Clontarf ‘a thousand plundering Danars, both Saxons and Lochlanns (*x.c. Danar dibeirgac Sacsanac ocus Lochlannac*)’,¹³⁰ presenting Lochlannaigh as a subset of Danair rather than an exclusive and opposite term.

In addition to the aforementioned *Danmargach* comes a related word, *anmargach*. These terms are used interchangeably, for instance in Chapter 74 where the Brussels manuscript uses ‘*Anmargachaib*’ while the Dublin manuscript has ‘*Danmargachaib*’.¹³¹ But why would a Middle Irish author, or later scribe, find the initial letter optional? Another word frequently used to describe the Norse in *Cogadh* is *allmúrach* meaning pirate or bandit in general, but also with a connotation of foreignness in its resemblance to *allmarda* (spelling variant *allmuir*) meaning ‘foreign, strange’.¹³² In

¹²⁶ Todd, 230-1.

¹²⁷ Todd, 130 and 206, respectively.

¹²⁸ Todd, 162-3.

¹²⁹ Todd, 30.

¹³⁰ Todd, 206-7.

¹³¹ Todd, 130, fn. 1.

¹³² eDIL s. v. *allmarda*

later medieval and early modern texts *Múrach* is used as a loan-word for ‘Moor’, but it seems more likely that the element *-múr-* relates to *muir*, the sea. This may mean the *all-* prefix is the accusative preposition meaning ‘beyond’,¹³³ or it could also be a variant of *aile* meaning ‘second’ or ‘one of two’.¹³⁴

It is notable how often *(D)anmargach* is given in addition to *allmúrach*, possibly indicating that the second term carried the intent of ‘the *other* sea-going mauraders’. In Chapter 35, Munster is filled with ‘fleets of Danmargachs and pirates (*loingeas Danmarccach ocus allmurach*)’, while the next chapter features ‘numerous fleets of *Danmarcagh* and pirates (*loinges lionmar do dhanmarccachaibh, ocus dallmurchoibh ann*)’.¹³⁵ The frontal *d-* that elides from *(D)anmargach* has now appeared in front of *allmúrach*!

Chapter 40 offers a useful glimpse into the author’s use of ethnonyms to describe his literary vision of ninth-century Ireland. Ímar Ua hÍmair and his three sons ravage Munster, then:

*...gabair braighti, ocus etiri, de feraib Muman uli eter gall ocus goedel, ocus ro tairbir fo smacht ocus fo geilsini díasneti do gallaib ocus do anmarcaibh iarsin...
...they levied pledges and hostages from all the men of Munster, both *Gall* and *Gael*; and they afterwards brought them under indescribable oppression and servitude to the foreigners and the *(D)anmargach*...¹³⁶*

Unusually, the *fer Muman* under oppression include both Gael and Gaill, presumably the Norse-speaking residents of Limerick which was plundered by Ímar and his sons. Why did the author consider the victims of Ímar to now be ‘men of Munster’? And why does this chapter differentiate between ‘foreigners and the *(D)anmargach*’ as oppressors at this point, then use only Gaill and its variants for the rest of the passage? The hyperbolic description of Munster’s hardship ends with the author’s quip that the Norse in power were ‘wrathful, foreign, purely-pagan people (*anniartha*

¹³³ eDIL s. v. 1 al

¹³⁴ eDIL s. v. 1 aile

¹³⁵ Todd, 40-1.

¹³⁶ Todd, 48-9.

allmarda galin-gentligi sin)',¹³⁷ using *allmarda* and the adjectival form of *geinti* to blanket condemn the Gaill, with no care to distinguish the Gaill who made up the *fer Mumain* at the beginning of the passage.

The brothers Mathgamhain and Brian Bóru are introduced at this point in the narrative. Chapter 43 describes them fighting against the Norse of Mumhain, using only Gaill terminology and making no distinction between types. Finally in 44 the Dál gCais make peace with the 'nobles of the foreigners of Mumhain (*mathi gall Mumhan*)'.¹³⁸ *Gall* here is in the genitive case and as an o-stem masculine this is the plural form; therefore it is unclear in the narrative whether these are the élite of the 'foreigners' as a whole, or of separate factions. Gaill alone is used for the Norse until Chapter 48, wherein indirect speech from Mathgamhain promises war 'with [*i.e.* against] the foreigners and with the Danair (*fri Gallaib ocus fri danaraib*)'. His men reply that they will fight against the *allmarach*.¹³⁹ This suggests that *allmarach* is a blanket term but there is reason for the author to distinguish the Gaill and Danair in Mathgamhain's voice. Does this imply that the opposing groups of Norse in Mumhain had joined together, or that the Dál gCais had to specify that they were going against all Norse in Mumhain no matter their faction?

The next chapter sees Mathgamhain and his men going after 'the foreigners and their people (*Gaill ocus a muintera*)'.¹⁴⁰ *Muintera* refers to 'a family or household (including servants)...in wider sense, followers, adherents, party' and can also mean the adherents of a saint.¹⁴¹ Why are the Gaill distinguished from their *muintera*? Does the latter term refer to Gaelic wives and slaves or servants, a retinue who is not considered Gaill but still close enough to be targeted? Chapter 64 mentions the 'wives and children and women-folk of the Gaill (...*mna, ocus macama ocus bantrachta na ngall*)',¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Todd, 50-1.

¹³⁸ Todd, 58-9.

¹³⁹ Todd, 68-9.

¹⁴⁰ Todd, 70-1.

¹⁴¹ eDIL s. v. *muintera*.

¹⁴² Todd, 102-3.

and when the Dál gCais are victorious in Chapter 69 they enslave '*gail ocus gailsech*' meaning 'foreigner and foreign-woman'.¹⁴³ In these examples, is the reason for differentiation that the non-male Gaill are incorporated into battle as targets and spoils of war, or is the author careful to distinguish people among the Norse who do not wish to be there? This is further considered in the chapter on gender.

Cathréim Cellacháin Chaisil

The most immediate peculiarity about names for the Norse within *Cellacháin* is the almost exclusive use of the term Lochlannaigh and its variants. While written in an abbreviated form, the word is more unwieldy than Danair and Gaill, and apart from some alliteration with *luing* 'ships' and *laech* 'warrior' there is no readily available philologicistic explanation for its extensive use. This is particularly striking against the characterisation of *Cellacháin* as simpering fan fiction of *Cogadh*, as the language for the Norse antagonists differs more between the two texts than either text differs from the Osraige Chronicle or the Annals of Ulster. Other repetition of language and the narrative cohesion of the two early twelfth-century documents indicate that the author of *Cellacháin* was writing in the milieu of the *Cogadh*, and they are also demonstrably both Munster texts. Why, then, are the same people in the same over-arching history referred to with different language?

At first, *Cellacháin* begins similarly to *Cogadh* by placing the narrative in established Irish genealogical history, and also like in the Leinster fragment, opening with several different terms for the Norse. Chapter One uses *Lochlannaig*, Chapter Two mentions *goill*, and '*na n-gall...na n-Danar 7 na n-daer-Lochlannach*' all appear in Chapter Three.¹⁴⁴ From this point on, however, the vast majority of references to the Norse utilise Lochlannaigh terminology. When Danair do appear, they are equivalent to the Lochlannaigh rather than in opposition, as these groups appear to be in the

¹⁴³ Todd, 116-7, fn. 10.

¹⁴⁴ Bugge, 1-2.

Osraige Chronicle, the Annals, and *Cogadh*. Lochlannaigh is used over and over again to describe different, warring groups of Norse in *Cellacháin*. For example, in Sulleban's speech to the Eóganachta in Chapter Nine, he urges them to fight valiantly 'against the Danair (*re Danaraibh*)' and a few lines later, ending the same speech, he implores them to triumph over the 'champions of *Lochlann/d* (*laecraid Lochlainn*)'.¹⁴⁵

Lochlann/d is also a hazier entity in *Cellacháin* than in the other texts under consideration. Within the narrative *Lochlann(aigh)* functions as an ethnonym as well as a personal name for multiple people, an element of several place-names, and an adjective for a place outside of Ireland. This can lead to considerable confusion, such as in Chapter Eight when a warning message is sent, among other Norse names and peoples, '...to Great Lochlann, to tell them quickly to leave Limerick... (*'...gu mor-Lochlainn da radh riu Luimnech do luathfhacbail...'*).¹⁴⁶ Is this a personal name of someone who has not been introduced yet? Or has the message been sent to 'Greater Lochlann/d', that is, a non-Irish territory seen to hold some administrative power over or responsibility for the city of Limerick? *Lochlann* is a person associated with Limerick in Chapter 12,¹⁴⁷ but does not bear the *mór-* prefix anywhere else, whereas *mor-Lochlannchaibh* appears in Chapter 18 and as a dative plural must refer to a people, like the 'Munstermen (*Muimhnechaib*)' they contest.¹⁴⁸

Morann, the 'descendant of the king of cold-Lochlann (*ua righ...Fuarlochlann*)' is written about in a poem in Chapter 10.¹⁴⁹ His origin is clarified in another poem in Chapter 19 as '*a crích Leoghus Lochlonnaig*' which Bugge translates as 'from the country of Lewis of the Norsemen'.¹⁵⁰ *Crích* refers to a boundary or edge of a territory (see chapter on towns) and *Lochlannaig* here is the genitive plural, so whether or not *Leoghus* is the Isle of Lewis in the Hebrides, Morann comes from

¹⁴⁵ Bugge, 5 and 62.

¹⁴⁶ Bugge, 4 and 61.

¹⁴⁷ Bugge, 7 and 64.

¹⁴⁸ Bugge, 7-8 and 66.

¹⁴⁹ Bugge, 6 and 63.

¹⁵⁰ Bugge, 9 and 66.

the border of the Lochlannaigh territory specifically. If he is the descendant or grandson of the ‘king of cold-Lochlann’, does this mean that his birthplace was different from where his royal ancestor reigned, or that *Fuarlochlann* is a different location entirely?

Chapters 20 through 22 detail Cellachán’s destruction of the Norse in Munster and herein lies the strongest evidence for the conflation of Danair and Lochlannaigh in this text. Cork hosts ‘Danair 7 *Duibhgeinnti*’;¹⁵¹ does this refer to the same group of Norse, or two there at the same time? Immediately following in the narrative, the Gaels of Fermoy and Uí Cuanach are allied with ‘*Lochlannach*’ forces against Cellachán at the battle of Sliab Crot. In Thurles, Cellachán’s army encounters ‘*Danair*’, and in the same place ‘they killed the billeted soldiers of Lochlann/d (*romarbad na buannadh Lochlainn leo*)’.¹⁵² Then, Cashel is held by ‘*Danaruibh....na n-Danar 7 na-n-Dublochlannach*’.¹⁵³ The compound *dubh-lochlannaigh* exists nowhere else in pre-Norman Irish literature. If the *dub(h)-* and *finn/d-* prefixes started out uncontestedly associated with *Danair* and *Lochlannaigh* respectively, by the time of *Cellacháin* they have become inconsequential adjectives.

Port Láirge in Chapter 22 is both the site of the ‘women and families of the Lochlannaigh (*mna 7 muinntera na Lochlannach*)’ as well as defended by ‘*na Danaruibh*’. It is also where ‘*dluthmharbad na Danair leo 7 ro ledrad na Lochlannaig*’, which Bugge translates as ‘and the Danes were slaughtered in crowds by them, and the Norse were cut to pieces’.¹⁵⁴ This second passage is a clear demonstration of the original author’s preoccupation with alliteration — *dluth-* with *Danair* and *ledrad* with *Lochlannaigh* — over the importance of distinguishing groups of Norse speakers within the narrative. Chapter 26 also includes ‘*na n-Danar 7 na n-daerLochlannach*’ to refer to the same people,¹⁵⁵ *daer-* from *dóir* meaning vulgar or ignoble.

¹⁵¹ Bugge, 10 and 67.

¹⁵² Bugge, 11 and 68.

¹⁵³ Bugge, 13.

¹⁵⁴ Bugge, 13 and 70.

¹⁵⁵ Bugge, 16 and 74.

In Chapter 27, the Norse regroup from their defeats in Áth Cliath, and the author describes them using extensive but exclusively Lochlannaigh-themed vocabulary. Sitriuc mac Tuirgeis is described as a Lochlannaigh, which accords with the *Cogadh*, and then a list of Norse leaders are given, including some with the personal name *Lochlann*. Included are the ‘the son of the king of Fair-Lochlann, and the son of the king of Cold-Lochlann (*mac righ Findlochlainn 7 mac righ Fuarlochlainn*)’.¹⁵⁶ As these appear to be separate men, this is another indication that these various *Lochlanns* are two different kingdoms in the author’s worldview. In Chapter 29 the daughter of the ‘king of the Isles of the Foreigners (*ingen righ Insi Gall*)’, Mór, is introduced; she is the wife of Sitriuc mac Tuirgeis, who in the same sentence is the leader of the ‘*Finnlochlannaibh*’.¹⁵⁷ If *Insi Gall* is the Hebrides, as Bugge translates¹⁵⁸ (and they are still called as such in modern Scottish Gaelic), perhaps Morann from *Leoghus* (=Lewis?) in previous chapters is a relative of Mór, whose father is Áedh mac Eachach.

This would set up a dichotomy between *Finnlochlann* (=western Norway?) and *Fuarlochlann* (=the Hebrides?), which would solve the division between scholars who place *Lochlann/d* outside of the Irish Sea Region¹⁵⁹ versus those interpret it as Norse-occupied Scotland.¹⁶⁰ However, in chapter 58, Mór is described in poetry by the Gael Donnchadh as ‘the daughter of the king of the islands of the *Finn*-foreigners (*inghion Rígh innsi Fionngall*)’¹⁶¹ which may be scribal error, a fossilisation from a poem in origin outside of *Cellacháin*, a sign of the author’s carelessness with prefixes, or an indication that Donnchadh does not distinguish Mór’s people from those of her husband Sitriuc. The final reference to *Finn-lochlann* as a people associated with a place is in Chapter 89, wherein a poem

¹⁵⁶ Bugge, 16 and 74.

¹⁵⁷ Bugge, 17 and 75.

¹⁵⁸ Bugge, 75.

¹⁵⁹ Etchingham, et al.

¹⁶⁰ Namely Ó Corráin.

¹⁶¹ Bugge, 34 and 93.

the Gaelic *Ciarrage* fight ‘against *Finn-lochlann* from the northern country (re Finnlochlan on tir thuaidh)’ including the ‘king of Finn-lochlann (*ri Finn Lochlann*)’.¹⁶²

In response to the previous poem by Donnchadh, Cellacháin recites a lay that includes the quatrain:

*An briathar tuc Sitriuc thes
as i fos atá gár les
as trithi berar mé sair
dom milled oc Lochlannchaib*¹⁶³

Bugge translates this as:

The word Sitric gave in the south
Is that which is still helping us
It is because of that I am taken eastward
To be destroyed in Norway.¹⁶⁴

However, *dom milled oc Lochlannchaib* is better translated ‘I will be destroyed among/by Lochlannaigh’. The verbal noun of *millid* appearing before *oc*, a particle governing the dative, then *Lochlannchaib* in the dative plural form, refers to a people rather than a place. As Cellachán is on a ship in Dundalk harbour, ‘eastward (*sair*)’ could refer to the Hebrides as well as to western Norway — or anywhere else in Scandinavia. These more northerly places could also all claim the title of *tir thuaidh*, seen in Chapter 89, in relation to Ireland.

For the rest of the narrative, all Norse speakers in Ireland including those at war with each other are called Lochlannaigh or variants. The only exceptions are in phrases where alliteration works better with Gaill, such as ‘*na n-Gall n-gle-glas*’ in Chapter 87;¹⁶⁵ or passages where the breadth of Norse speakers in Ireland are under general attack, warranting an expansive terminology of condemnation from the author: ‘those truly heroic, broadweaponed Lochlannaigh and the darkfaced[?], sullen, terrible Foreigners, and the base, lowborn Danair (*firlaecdha lethanarmacha*

¹⁶² Bugge, 52 and 111.

¹⁶³ Bugge, 36.

¹⁶⁴ Bugge, 94.

¹⁶⁵ Bugge, 50.

Loclannaig sin 7 na Goill gnusghorma granca grainemhla 7 na Danair dhaera dhochenelcha).¹⁶⁶

The latter is the passage which also discusses *dúchas* and the Norse speakers' relation to Ireland and will be considered further in the chapter on religion and culture.

Initially it appears that the three leading terms for the Norse are used for alliterative purposes, but if so, the poetry is only visible by reading rather than recitation. *G-*, *gn-*, and *gr-* sound dissimilar in Middle Irish as do *d-* and *dh-*, but it is possible that this alliteration is designed for a literate poet or author to memorise the strings of words more easily despite their phonic differences.

In contrast to the words concerning the Norse, *Cellacháin* utilises two terms for Middle Irish speakers, both of which have also appeared in the elder texts under review. The first is *Gaeighel* which is used in Chapter 56 to describe a resident of Ard Macha able to talk with Donnchadh, who 'asked if there was any Gael in the town from whom he might get news of Cellachán. A man in the town answered him, and said that his origin was from the clans of the Gael (*Do fiarag...in raibhi nech do Ghaeighib isin mbaili o bhfuighbedh scela Ceallachain. Do fhregair fer 'sa mbaili do 7 adubhairt ba do clannaib Gaeighel a bhunadus*). author alliterative wildly the Surprisingly,¹⁶⁷' leaves the poetic contrast of *Gael* and *Gall* unused in his narrative. The other term, *Eireannaigh*, appears in Chapter 72 ('*Eirechaibh*')¹⁶⁸ to describe the actions of the sailors of Munster, who otherwise are described as 'men of Munster', 'chiefs of [south-]western Ireland (*oirrigha...iarthair Eirenn*)',¹⁶⁹ or by their dynastic families. In both cases, the need for a term to describe a Middle Irish speaker only arises in opposition to all Norse speakers. Otherwise the family 'heritage' of a Gaelic character is more important for the author to express than the self-evident fact that they are not Norse.

It is also extraordinary to note that *Cellacháin*, supposedly written in the same milieu as *Cogadh*, does not use the terms (*D*)*anmargach* and (*D*)*aunite* whatsoever. It also does not use *allmírach* or *dibergach* which are frequently utilised in the *Cogadh* to underline the marginal

¹⁶⁶ Bugge, 40 and 99.

¹⁶⁷ Bugge, 33 and 91.

¹⁶⁸ Bugge, 42.

¹⁶⁹ Bugge, 40 and 99.

subversive qualities of the Norse. While the narrative of *Cellacháin* clearly follows *Cogadh* in the form of maintaining the latter's dynastic propaganda, the literary treatment of Norse speakers down to the very words used to describe them varies dramatically.

Conclusions

The side-by-side analysis of the Osraige Chronicle, *Cogadh*, and *Cellacháin* offers a systematic overview of attitudes concerning the Norse between the first third of the eleventh century and the first third of the twelfth. The hundred years between the Chronicle and *Cellacháin* provide a long-term difference of opinion while the generation between the youngest text and *Cogadh* can be examined for changes over a lifetime. Therefore, the three texts' treatments of the historical Norse in Middle Irish are remarkable for their differences rather than their consistency.

The Danair and Lochlannaigh are opposing forces in both the Chronicle and *Cogadh*, and both narratives depict the Lochlannaigh as the first wave or entrenched population. The Lochlannaigh are an unwanted menace in the Chronicle while the Danair are the 'helpful' Norse worth alliance for the Gaels, namely Cerball mac Dúnlainge. This is reverse to the overall scenario within the *Cogadh*, where the Lochlannaigh are seen as a foreign albeit communicative people and the Danair are the sudden threatening interlopers in Ireland. Does this have to do with Waterford and Wexford being Norse towns of a later founding date than the Lochlannaigh-settled Dublin, making the Danair the local and better-known group of Vikings in Osraige? The term Danair appears so infrequently within *Cellacháin*, as opposed to the prevalence of Lochlannaigh within the text, that no comparison can be drawn.

Each text, however, has terminology to describe the Norse as a culture or set of actions, especially the Osraige Chronicle which features apostates who are Gaelic Irish by birth but Norse by function. *Normannaigh* is the generic term in this text, while *Gall* is used for all Norse speakers in *Cogadh*, and Lochlannaigh performs this function in *Cellacháin*. Curiously, Lochlannaigh also has

an umbrella role in the Chronicle, where it is used several times as a poetic synecdoche for all Norse from overseas; this quality skips over *Cogadh*, particularly the Brussels manuscript, where Lochlannaigh is only used a handful of times throughout the expansive text.

There is also a site or region called *Laithlind* that only appears in the ninth century, and a long lacuna separates the handful of occurrences of this term and Lochla(i)nn. The famous poem in the margins of the Irish Priscian manuscript of St. Gallen about the ‘warriors of Lothlind’ is among these references, and dated to the middle of the ninth century.¹⁷⁰ In his 1998 ‘The Vikings in Scotland and Ireland in the ninth century’, Donnchadh Ó Corráin conflates Laithlind with Lochlann and placed it in Scotland, but archaeological evidence provides no evidence for a ninth century Norse settlement of any strength in the area. Indeed, as Etchingham writes in his 2007 article, ‘The Location of Historical *Laithlinn/Lochla(i)nn*: Scotland or Scandinavia?’, the archaeology of southern and western Norway clearly indicates a wealth of metalwork from the Irish Sea Region. In 2015, Benjamin Hudson argued that Middle Irish *Lothlinn*, literally ‘swamp-pool’, was a fantasy that even contemporary listeners would understand as a mythical bad-land to emphasise the otherworldly-ness of the spooky Vikings. But very recent scholarship has found a new possibility for the identity of Laithlinn.

In a chapter of 2017’s *Traversing the Inner Seas* entitled ‘The Norway to Be’, Arne Kruse combines archaeology, Irish material, and philology to put forth a theory that the modern region of Avaldsnes in Rogaland, southwestern Norway, was a ninth-century polity around the burgeoning leið or northern sea-passage that would eventually lend its name to the modern country. As this coastal community was united and prospered by the leið, Kruse posits that it was called *Leiðland in the Old Norse language, becoming Laithlind in Irish phonology. The reason the term doesn’t exist anywhere else, such as the much later saga material, is because **Leiðland* was swallowed up in later polities, with or without violence. Being literature-adjacent, that is, aware of literacy but not participating in

¹⁷⁰ Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian Commentary*, 12-31.

it themselves, they had no manner let alone reason to ensure the name was preserved for posterity. The importance for the term Lochlannaigh, however, is in absentia: ‘*Laithlind*’ and ‘Lochlann/d’ only exist in material that is 150 years apart. Thus Lochlannaigh and Laithlind, while possibly related, are not interchangeable.

What, then, is the relationship between Lochlann/d the place and Lochlannaigh the people? The potential ninth-century historical reality of an overseas kingdom aside, for the authors of these three narratives, the poorly-defined Lochlann/d is an extra-Irish region associated with the Norse who become associated with it on account of their shared language rather than literal origin there. *Danmörg* or Denmark is also a territory overseas, but only appears in *Cogadh* in the form of the ethnonym *Danmargach*, one from *Danmörg*.

Lochlannaigh can be compared to any number of modern nicknames or slurs for a group of immigrants based on assuming they all come from one of several possible areas abroad. *Danair*, on the other hand, is a loan-word from Old Norse to describe Norse speakers wherever they are; its use in the oldest text to distinguish the most pliant and Irish-adjacent group of Norse in Ireland suggests that the label came from regular and equitable relations with Norse speakers. The near-disappearance of *Danair* from *Cellacháin*, the youngest text, in favour of the potentially perjorative Lochlannaigh suggests that either the contemporary Norse speakers, the Hiberno-Norse, needed to be exoticised by the author — or that, by *c.* 1130, they had adopted and accepted the term for themselves.

III. Towns, Fleets, and Trade

Introduction

In 1950, Jean Young wrote, ‘The impetus the Norsemen gave to town life is clearly indicated by the reference in an eleventh-century poem [the *Lebor na gCert*] crediting them with “ the gift of habitation and commerce and abundant houses’.¹⁷¹ The relationship of the Norse towns — most famously Dublin, Waterford, and Limerick; but also Cork, Wexford, and other smaller settlements — with the rest of Gaelic-speaking Ireland is an important and nuanced aspect of the history of the Hiberno-Norse. Relatedly, the towns served as harbours of the characteristic clinker-built long ships, which were used for military purposes, overseas travel, and local and long-distance trade. Therefore, no study of the cultural memory of the Norse in Ireland would be complete without an extensive consideration of their contribution to these narratives in the form of towns, fleets, and trade.

The rise of towns in Ireland has become a larger question about the role of monasteries, mercantile activity, extra-Roman territory, and pre-charter definitions in northern Europe. Previously, as Ireland was outside of the Roman Empire, towns were considered entirely foreign and regarded as an imposition by incoming Norse and Cambro-Normans. Early medieval monastic settlements that attracted secular residents and centralised craftsmanship and trade were begrudgingly given the compromise-label of ‘monastic towns’ or the meaningless moniker ‘proto-town’.¹⁷² Recent work, however, has freed Irish medieval history from the idea that towns were imported.

British scholarship, for example, has given up the documentary requirement for defining a town (that is, a charter or act of legal distinction) and turned to archaeology instead to determine when, and perhaps why, centre-points of human interaction became ‘towns’ in the early medieval period.¹⁷³ This process removes the ability to assign a tidy year to a town’s origin, but it offers much more nuance in the reality of social coalescence. Applying these principles — the arrangement of

¹⁷¹ Young, ‘The Norse Occupation of Ireland’, 12.

¹⁷² Valante, *The Vikings in Ireland*, 26.

¹⁷³ Williams, ‘Towns and Identities in Viking England’, 15-6; Griffiths, ‘Towns and their hinterlands’, *passim*.

domiciles, the appearance of coins or standardised trade goods small enough to be used as currency, the clustering of workshops according to product, and so on¹⁷⁴ — to the Irish evidence shows that the island was just as involved in the evolution of towns as anywhere else in Northern Europe in the seventh through ninth centuries.

More to the point, however, the old joke that *the Vikings had to build towns in Ireland before they could raid them* misses the obvious problem that towns were just as nascent at the time in Scandinavia, which was also outside former Roman administration. The Scandinavian towns of Hedeby, Birka, and Kaupang are contemporary with Limerick, Dublin, and Cork; and the latter Irish towns influenced the construction and growth of the former Scandinavian towns as much as the other way around. This was not a pipe-line of North-Germanic organisational concepts dumped into Ireland fully formed. Rather, these towns were stars in the constellation of the medieval trade network that rose out of northern Europe's maritime accessibility and improved ship technology.

Dublin 'owes its importance — if not its origin — to the Norse settlement [which] may be inferred from the almost total silence of native sources regarding it in the years preceding 841. ...There may have been some kind of small settlement there in pre-Viking times (whence the *baile* of the modern name *Baile Átha Cliath*) but its development as a town is due entirely to the Norse.'¹⁷⁵

Archaeology can provide evidence of the shape and size of towns in the landscape but is unable to ascertain more sophisticated aspects of towns such as their day-to-day population and the exact nature of the relationship between a town and its 'hinterland', or nearby territory required to provide the raw materials, especially food, to keep the town in operation. Poul Holm's chapter entitled 'The naval power of Norse Dublin' makes hesitant but well-evidenced guesses about the size and population of the town in the eleventh century based on the number of people required to build and maintain the royal fleet recorded in multiple sources as being housed there: 'It is likely therefore that the population of Dublin was considerably larger than we have hitherto thought. The previous

¹⁷⁴ Boyd, 'From country to town,' 74.

¹⁷⁵ Ó Cróinín, *Early medieval Ireland*, 260.

guesstimates of total town population miss the possibility of garrisons and a naval shipyard outside the banks, possibly adding a thousand people or more.’¹⁷⁶

The emergence of towns and Viking settlement in Ireland - often conflated, albeit with good reason - is well studied and benefits from decades of documentation. The status and *ongoing* operation of towns in the pre-Norman period, however, is less understood. This is a particularly troublesome lacuna because of the relationship between Hiberno-Norse towns and eleventh and twelfth century Gaelic dynasties. Archaeology on the small and large scale cannot provide a clear picture of the relationship between Norse and Gaelic cultures at this time. The elites were likely bilingual as well as intermarried, obscuring whatever differences were between them.¹⁷⁷ The interchange between free and enslaved people inside and outside the towns is even less understood.

Contemporary literature, then, can provide some suggestion to intangible qualities like Gaelic perceptions and the appearances of Hiberno-Norse towns within Ireland in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that touch on Norse towns in Irish history, and paying attention to their descriptions, particularly their anachronisms. When the Viking settlements of ninth century Ireland have features such as walls and battlements, which are anachronistic according to archaeology, it can be inferred that the Hiberno-Norse towns of the author’s awareness are actually the ones described.

The literature also describes the movement of people within and without the towns. In the *Cellacháin* particularly, women and children are described as being strategically removed from towns before anticipated battles, even with those battles occurring outside of the city; if the side defending the town is defeated, the non-combatants will be in immediate danger. This is demonstrated in a disturbing scene in the *Cogadh* where Limerick is taken and the ‘foreign women of the foreigners (*do gailsecaib na ngall*)’ are assaulted in a mass rape.¹⁷⁸ As the female population of Limerick surely included Gaelic wives, concubines, and slaves, this was a specific attack on Norse women within Ireland.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Holm, ‘Naval power’, 75.

¹⁷⁷ Ó Corráin, ‘Old Norse and medieval Irish: bilingualism in Viking-Age Dublin’, 2009.

¹⁷⁸ Todd, 82, fn 5.

¹⁷⁹ This passage is considered in more detail in the chapter on gender.

This chapter focuses on the terminology used to depict the towns of the Norse in these three texts, whose narratives occur in the ninth and tenth centuries, with *Cogadh* pushing into the early eleventh. Limerick is the Norse town most often described, followed by Waterford and Dublin; with a few lines about Cork and singular mentions of Athlone, Armagh, Cashel, and Dundalk under (historical or fictional) Norse rule. As in other chapters, the sources are considered in the chronological order they are understood to have been composed in order to follow developments over time. After analysing the evidence the conclusion presents a synthesis of qualities about the towns across the three documents, and what this suggests about the appearance and perception of Waterford, Dublin, and Limerick in the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth centuries.

Towns in the Cerball of Osraige chronicle

Osraige abuts Waterford (*Port Láirge* ‘Lárag’s Port’, Old Norse *Veðraffjörðr* ‘Ram’s Fjord’) and therefore it is unsurprising that the most notable episode occurring in a town in this saga takes place there, or nearby. Limerick (*Luimneach* of unclear origin, Old Norse *Hlymrek* from the Irish) also features, possibly due to conflation with an annalistic encounter near Lough Gur against a Waterford fleet. An alternate name for Port Láirge, *Loch Dá Chaoch*, does not appear in the Fragmentary Annals. ‘Waterford’ is used rather than Port Láirge or Loch Dá Chaoch, which may have referred to settlements in the area such as modern Woodstown, because the town of the literature is not intended to map precisely onto the historical town.

In an entry for the year 860, previously un-mentioned Lochlannaigh leaders (*toiseach*) named Hona of Luimnech and Tomrir Torra, and their troops (*soc[h]raide*)¹⁸⁰ pass through Limerick on the way to Waterford. The narrative does not distinguish if these men are coming from the just-described battle in Osraige, which would make Limerick a far diversion indeed. In Waterford, the Eóghanachta and Araid Cliach attack Hona and Tomrir, and after a struggle ‘...go ra cuirít na lochlannaig i mbaile

¹⁸⁰ Can be used as ‘troops’ but also ‘allies’, eDIL.

beg 7 cloch dhaingean ime. Radner translates this as ‘...they drove the Lochlannaigh into a small place with strong fortification around it.’¹⁸¹ *Baile* is the rudimentary word for a ‘town’ or specified area,¹⁸² while the verb *curaid* is active for enclosing¹⁸³ (as is *ime* from *imm-fen*, to hedge or enclose¹⁸⁴); thus, this would be better translated as ‘they enclosed the Lochlannaigh in a [the?] little town and a strong pen of stones.’ This makes sense as loose stones feature in the fate of the Lochlannaigh at Waterford.

Hona goes ‘up onto the rampart (*ar an chaisiol*)’¹⁸⁵ and entreats his followers until a Munsterman comes to him and bashes a stone into his jaw. This would not make sense if this were a wall or other tall structure; how could the Gael reach him? Middle Irish *Caisel* ultimately derives from Latin *castellum*¹⁸⁶ meaning a fortress and is used for a variety of defensive structures, leading Radner to use ‘rampart’. Instead, this *caisiol* must have been the pile of stones that the Munstermen had created, allowing the offending Gael to ascend it and reach Hona. With the stones, the Munstermen kill some of the Lochlannaigh and drive the others into a nearby swamp (*‘tiaghaid fon seisgeann’*¹⁸⁷).¹⁸⁸

The literary Waterford therefore has the following resources: a small area considered a town, enough loose stones to be the immediate offensive weapon against the Lochlannaigh, and a nearby wetland. Where are the residents of Waterford, whether Norse or Gael? How did the Eóghanachta and Araid Cliach catch Hona and Tomrir’s *sochraide* unaware? It is possible this narrative is meant to take place outside of the town itself, as the narrative does not definitively state that the Lochlannaigh arrived there before meeting the Munstermen.

There is no conflict at Port Láirge or Loch Dá Chaoch during 860 that is written in other Irish annals, including those from Inishfallen, the Munster-based chronicle most likely to report such an

¹⁸¹ Radner, 109.

¹⁸² eDIL, s.v. *baile*.

¹⁸³ eDIL, s.v. *curaid*.

¹⁸⁴ eDIL, s.v. *imm-fen*.

¹⁸⁵ Radner, 109.

¹⁸⁶ eDIL, s.v. *caisel*.

¹⁸⁷ ‘Unproductive ground, a marsh, swamp, bog.’ eDIL, s.v. *sescann*.

¹⁸⁸ Radner, 109-11.

event. Waterford does not appear in this annal until 927 when its ships are brought over land to Loch Gur¹⁸⁹ in County Limerick, a small lake with no navigable water access to the sea. In the following year, the Norse of Waterford are slaughtered at Kilmallock¹⁹⁰ by Munstermen as well as Norse from Limerick (*la firu Muman 7 la Gullu Luimnich*).¹⁹¹ It is possible that some reality of this open encounter of townspeople, such as the use of stones or retreat into wetland, became conflated with a fictional attack in the town of Waterford.

In the Fragmentary Annals entries for 866, Tomrar ‘earl of Luimnech (*iarla o Luimnioch*)’ attacks Cluain Ferta, which leads to him being cursed by a local churchman and dying of insanity less than a year later.¹⁹² Soon after his death, men from Ciarraige successfully besiege Limerick, due to perceived weakness after the earl’s unholy death; Limerick is not named as the target, but rather ‘the followers of that Tomrar (*muintir an Tomrair sin*)’.¹⁹³ The Ciarraige are successful, with the Lochlannaigh suffering a mass drowning, and the entry concludes:

...a few of the Lochlannaigh escaped, naked and wounded; great quantities of gold and silver and beautiful women were left behind (*as uait[h]each tra lomnocht 7 gonta tearna dona Lochlanna[n]aib; bá mór n-óir 7 airgid 7 ban caomh ro faghaid ann sin*).¹⁹⁴

The few Lochlannaigh who were able to escape may have been able to do so by the loss of their armour, shown in *Cogadh* and *Cellacháin* to be a drowning hazard for the Norse. Gold, silver, and *ban caomh* are the rewards for this successful siege of Limerick, portable goods rather than the town itself which seems to have survived without attack. The Ciarraige likely struck Limerick at a politically vulnerable time for quick plunder rather than any planned takeover of the town.

In the next entry, for the year 867, Lochlainnaigh from Cork attempt to take Fermoy¹⁹⁵ but are stymied by a coincidence: the Déise arrive to attack their old enemies at the same time. The two Gaelic forces temporarily join together against the Lochlannaigh and are victorious. The leader

¹⁸⁹ Mac Airt, 148-9.

¹⁹⁰ *Cill Mo-Chellóc*, located 16km south of Lough Gur.

¹⁹¹ Mac Airt, 148.

¹⁹² Radner, 123-5.

¹⁹³ Radner, 124-5.

¹⁹⁴ Radner, 125.

¹⁹⁵ *Fir Maige Fine*, Co. Cork.

(*taoisioch*) of the Norse attempts to flee to a castle (*caistial daingean*) and calls upon the Fir Maige leader Cenn Fáelad to help him. The narrative does not specify as one of the men is destroyed and ‘the castle in which he had passed his life lustfully’ is demolished; presumably this is Cenn Fáelad rather than the leader of Lochlannaigh who was attempting to enter said castle. Curiously, the name of this Norse leader is ‘Deed(s) of *Cinnsiolaigh*’ (*Gnám Cinnsiolaigh*),¹⁹⁶ an Irish name which appears alongside Cerball of Osraige material in the *Chronicum Scottorum*.¹⁹⁷

Importantly, within this section of the Fragmentary Annals, the word *dún* is used exclusively for Gaelic settlements and fortifications. Áth Cliath or its fleet is mentioned in three entries (FA362, 387, and 393) but the town itself is not described, denying modern readers the ability to evaluate if the town is depicted as (or as having a) *dún*, as it is without variation in the later two sources. While the term appears in other annals from the ninth century,¹⁹⁸ the author of the Osraige chronicle, or the compiler of the annals, does not use *dún* for Norse settlements.

Towns in the *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh*

As the longest of the three texts in this survey, it is unsurprising that the most material about towns is found in the *Cogadh*. Dublin (*Áth Cliath* ‘Reed-hurdle Ford’, Old Norse *Dyflin* from the Irish *dubh-linn* ‘dark pool’) is considered most frequently, and Limerick occupies a secondary role as befitting a Munster text. Cork (*Corcaigh*) is referenced but not depicted. Armagh (*Ard Macha*) is described as being held by Tuirgéis for four years,¹⁹⁹ but this seems unlikely as it is several kilometres from navigable water in every direction. From there he brings a fleet to Athlone (*Áth Luain*),²⁰⁰ the last navigable point on the Shannon waterway, which would make more sense as the base for a maritime takeover of Munster.

¹⁹⁶ Radner, 124-5.

¹⁹⁷ Annal CS 858. This Norse leader is likely fictive and may indicate a lost Fir Maige-Déise-Uí Cinnsiolaigh conflict.

¹⁹⁸ For instance, *dún* ‘is used in the *Annals of Ulster* in the year 845 to describe Dublin and its satellite camp at *Chuain Andobair* (Cloney, Co. Kildare).’ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, 30-31.

¹⁹⁹ Todd, 9.

²⁰⁰ Todd, 13.

In an entry for 916, the numerous followers (*tola mor*) of Ragnall grandson of Ímarr and his ally Ottir split into three factions: one third settles Cork, another third goes to *Inis na hEdnigi*, and the final third to *Glas-Linn*.²⁰¹ Todd glosses *Inis na hEdnigi* as Iny, Co. Kerry²⁰² but this place-name is no longer known and *ed[h]nig[h]* does not appear to be a word in Irish.²⁰³ This entry suggests that Norse Cork saw itself as having an early tenth-century origin, and it may have been the most successful of three attempted coastal settlements in Munster.

Chapter thirty-one of the *Cogadh* places the retaking of Dublin by Sitriuc *Caech* ‘the Blind’ in 919, although the Annals of the Four Masters situates it in 916.²⁰⁴ Sitriuc’s fleet is described as coming *i nDuibhlinn Átha Cliath*, which Todd translates as ‘at Dubhlinn of Áth Cliath,’ a conflation of the area’s two names.²⁰⁵ This is better translated literally, ‘into the black pool of Áth Cliath’, which makes sense as a landing place for a fleet.²⁰⁶ Sitriuc *Caech* and his men then ‘set up a camp/watch there (do-ronsat forbaise ann)’, *forbaise* being a verbal noun with the sense of encampment but also being on guard.²⁰⁷ This suggests that there is not a defensive structure in place for Sitriuc’s men to utilise, whether it was previously destroyed or not yet constructed. For the author and readers of the *Cogadh*, the *dún* of Dublin was not assumed to be functional in 919.

Within several chapters, the settlement rather than the plunder of the Norse is made manifest in Munster. An ‘immense fleet (*longes adbalmor*)’ lands on *Inis Sibtond*, modern King’s Island in the middle of historic Limerick.²⁰⁸ In chapter thirty-six, the Norse ‘...spread themselves over Mumhain; and they built Dúns, and fortresses, and landing-ports, over all Erin [sic] (*ro sccaolsiot fon Mumhain, ocus do ronaitt dúin, ocus daingne, ocus caladpuirt do Erin inle*)’.²⁰⁹ The conflation of Munster with all of Ireland aside, three distinct types of settlements appear here: *dúin*, *daingne*,

²⁰¹ Possibly Glasslyn, an area of Bandon; or an early name for Kinsale, both in Co. Cork.

²⁰² Todd, 30.

²⁰³ eDIL.

²⁰⁴ Todd, 34.

²⁰⁵ Todd, 35.

²⁰⁶ This usage occurs in an earlier passage as well where a fleet comes to the Dubh-linn, but as there is variation in phrasing between the MSS (*i nDuibhlinn* versus *co Dublind*) I am hesitant to use it argumentatively. Todd, 13, fn. 10.

²⁰⁷ eDIL, s.v. *forbaise*.

²⁰⁸ Todd, 38-39.

²⁰⁹ Todd, 41.

and *caladpuirt*. *Dún* signifies a fortified settlement and occurs frequently in medieval Irish literature to describe forts or walled structures of any origins. *Daingen* is both the adjectival and noun form denoting strength, a fastness, or an enclosure²¹⁰ and could thereby mean any settlement delineated by a permanent structure around it. *Caladport* is a compound of *calad-* denoting a shore or landing place²¹¹ and *-port*, same in Middle Irish as in modern English. This indicates an area to store vessels in relative safety, presumably but not necessarily via other defensive structures. While archaeological evidence does not support this explosion of defensive construction, the twelfth-century audience of the *Cogadh* conceived the tenth century as a time of dramatic growth for the Norse in Ireland.

The Battle of Sulcoit was waged in 968 between the Dál gCais Mathgamain mac Cennétig and the troops of Ímarr of Limerick; the young Brian Bórama fought alongside his brother. It appears in two annals, both of which only note Mathgamain's victory over the Norse and his subsequent sack of Limerick.²¹² The *Cogadh* alone offers further information on this event, providing a brief but rich glimpse at Norse Limerick. The victorious Dál gCais

...killed *them* both night and day, until they had entered the fort [*dún*]. They followed them also [*beos*] into the fort and slaughtered them on the streets and in the houses (*ros marbsat etir aidchi ocus la, co ndechtatar isin dún. Ro-lenait beos isin dún 7 ro marbait ar na srathaib 7 isna taigib*).²¹³

Later in this chapter Limerick is described as 'the fort and the good town (*in dún 7 in degbali*)'.²¹⁴ These two passages make clear that the town is in two parts, a military structure and a *baile* with streets and houses. Whether Limerick had this layout in 968 is irrelevant; this is the Gaelic visualisation of Limerick from the time of the *Cogadh*'s composition. Located on an island in the Shannon, was Limerick of the twelfth century a fortress on an island separate from the residential area, or had the streets and domiciles naturally grown around the *dún*?

²¹⁰ eDIL, s.v. *daingen*.

²¹¹ From Latin *calatum*. eDIL, s.v. *calad*.

²¹² AI967.2: 'A defeat of the foreigners of Luimnech by Mathgamain, son of Cennétig, at Sulchuit, and Luimnech was burned by him before noon on the following day.' AU967.5: 'Mathgamain son of Cennáitig, king of Caisel, plundered and burned Luimnech.'

²¹³ Todd, 78-9.

²¹⁴ Todd, 80-1. *Deg-* is the superlative of *maith*, so this would be better translated 'best town'.

A year later, after harrying Munster and Britain, Ímarr returns to the ‘western harbour (*iartharach Lumnig*)’ of Limerick and uses (or resumes using) this as a base for his ‘spoils and battles (*creacha ocus irgala*)’.²¹⁵ Several chapters later Ímarr allies with Gaelic enemies of Mathgamain in revolt of his rule over Munster.²¹⁶ While this treachery is expected in this anti-Norse narrative, this participation indicates that Ímarr has resumed his lordship and Limerick is recovered enough — or has relocated so — that it can be considered a territory whole and prosperous enough to lend weight to a rebellion.

Mathgamain is killed and Brian takes his place at the head of Dál gCais, gradually bringing all of Ireland under his control and sowing conflict with Gaels and Norse alike. The revolt of the Leinstermen alongside the Norse of Dublin leads to the Battle of Glen Máma in 1000, where Brian’s forces meet the amassed troops upstream of Dublin. After decisive victory for Brian, he moves downstream and begins the siege of Dublin:

The fortress then was plundered by them and ransacked; and Brian at that time remained encamped in the town... He came then into the market, and the whole fortress was burned (*Ro hindradh imorro an dún leó ocus ro hairgedh; ocus ro bai Brian ar sin a fforlongport isin mbaile...Tanic iarsin isin margad 7 ro loiscead an dún*)...²¹⁷

There are three distinct portions of Dublin in this description. The first is the *dún*, which is first ransacked and later burned, although not rendered unusable, as seen below. The second is the *baile* which required some form of camping for Brian to occupy, although this may merely be the use of current structures for a new military purpose. *Forlongport* is used as the Middle Irish verb for camping, particularly military encampment, or for a temporary stronghold. This word is derived from *longport*, the distinctively Norse early settlements that were designed to situate a temporary base around a site of ship storage on a navigable waterway.²¹⁸ While Norse in concept, by the twelfth century it is in general linguistic use; was there no native Irish term for the concept? A third part of Dublin according to this passage is the *margad*, another Irish term of Norse origin (from Old Norse

²¹⁵ Todd, 84-5.

²¹⁶ Todd, 87.

²¹⁷ Todd, 112-3.

²¹⁸ Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea*, 30. See also Harrison, ‘Beyond Longphuir?’ and Gibbons, ‘The Longphort Phenomenon.’

markaðr).²¹⁹ In the Dublin of the *Cogadh*, the marketplace is a distinct entity from the town as well as the fortress, and perhaps a structure or enclosure as Brian goes ‘into [it] (*isin*)’ in the same way he goes into the *baile* and *dún*. A neutral area for mercantile activity is required for as far-reaching a port town as twelfth century Dublin, and the author of this narrative ensures that such a *margad* exists in the story.

After Sitriuc mac Amlaibh²²⁰ the Norse king of Dublin submits to Brian, he is reinstated as king and gets ‘his fortress (*a dhún*)’ back. This possessive indicates that Sitriuc of the *Cogadh* had constructed or modified the *dún* so extensively that it was considered ‘his’ personal building project.²²¹ The historical Sitriuc’s exact regnal years before 1000 are unclear from the annals, but traditionally he was associated with the reinforcement of Dublin’s defences in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.²²² This concept is therefore present in the *Cogadh*’s depiction of Dublin.

Brian continues his ascension to the high-kingship, performing circuits of Ireland in 1002 and 1003 with retinues of Norse and Gael alike. In 1003 he releases his hostages from *Belach Dúin* (Castlekeeran, County Meath), and ‘the foreigners [went] over the sea to Dublin and Waterford and Limerick (*goill tar muir go hAthcliath 7 co Port Láirge 7 co Luimneach*)’.²²³ *Belach Dúin* is far inland and away from navigable water, so how do the Norse travel over the sea from this point? This may be a fiction to continue the association of the *gaill* and the use of ships, even when narratively misleading.

A decade later, forces working against Brian have allied with Dublin as their power base, prompting him to bring his army to the area around the town. Brian’s son Murchadh brings his forces ‘to Cill-Maignenn, to the green of Áth Cliath (*co CillMaignend co faci Atha Cliath*)’²²⁴ and there he and his father’s troops encamp (*forlongport*). This construction suggests that the *faicthe*,²²⁵ a ‘green’

²¹⁹ Ó Croinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 269.

²²⁰ Also known as Sigtrygg Silkiskeggi, ‘Sitric Silkenbeard’. Not to be confused with Sitriuc *Caech*.

²²¹ Todd, 118-9.

²²² Hudson, *Viking Pirates and Christian Princes*, 86.

²²³ Todd, 137.

²²⁴ Todd, 150-1.

²²⁵ Modern Irish *faiche*, still used to denote a green or levelled field in a town or city context, such as *Faiche Stiabhna*, Saint Stephen’s Green.

or ‘field’ of Dublin, is in the area of Kilmainham. Duffy describes the *faicthe* as ‘a green area possibly to the west of Dublin often thought to be Kilmainham, in which case — which would seem unlikely — he was perhaps 10 km from where the Norse and Leinster army was assembling’.²²⁶

This culminates in the well-known Battle of Clontarf, the precise physical location of which has been debated without definitive solution for centuries.²²⁷ According to the *Cogadh* it was visible from the ‘battlements of Áth Cliath (*scemlead Atha Cliath*)’.²²⁸ Later in the narrative, Sitriuc and his wife Sláine²²⁹ witness the conflict *ar scemled a grianan féin* which Todd translates as ‘on the battlements of his watch tower’.²³⁰ This use of *sceimled* as a ‘battlement’ appears solely in the *Cogadh* and seems to be a variation on *sceimel*, a protective covering.²³¹ *Grianán* is some kind of open-air or sunny area such as an upper room.²³² Together, this suggests that Sitriuc and Sláine were in personal quarters casually observing the battle, rather than watching from a military setting. Their privacy better explains Sláine’s willingness to make a rude comment towards her husband on behalf of her father, Brian.

Towns in the *Cathréim Cellacháin Chaisil*

The *Cellacháin* is another Munster document, so it is unsurprising that it provides intricate descriptions of Limerick and Waterford. The narrative misses Dublin itself, although some landmarks around the town are noted. The *Cellacháin* also includes some information about Armagh and Dundalk, but these are at odds with their medieval geography; perhaps these are entirely fictional as neither the author nor his audience would have been familiar with these northern towns. For this reason, these depictions are not considered in detail as Dublin, Limerick, and Waterford.

²²⁶ Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 202.

²²⁷ The most up-to-date estimate is in Duffy’s *Brian Boru*, map on 203.

²²⁸ Todd, 180-1.

²²⁹ Not named within *Cogadh*. See her entry on the chapter on women.

²³⁰ Todd, 190-1.

²³¹ eDIL, s.v. *sceimel*. Elsewhere in Irish literature, *sceimled* refers to a raiding party.

²³² eDIL, s.v. *grianán*. Literally translated, ‘little sun’.

As a youth, Cellachán goes undercover and travels ‘between fort and strong fortress and the broad land of every Lochlannaigh, seeking charity in every fortress and shelter in every town (*idir lis 7 laechdhun 7 lethan-tuaith gach Lochlannaigh ag iaraid dhérce in gach dun 7 caisced in gach cathraig cu bocht*).’²³³ Several new terms for towns appear in this document that is written in the same *milieu* as *Cogadh*, which are not present in the older text. *Lis*, translated here as ‘fort’, is better understood as an enclosure, indicating a kind of domestic settlement.²³⁴ *Láechdhún* combines *láech* meaning ‘warrior’²³⁵ with the now-familiar *dún*. *Lethan-tuaith* is an awkward composition to achieve triple alliteration, but this is also an unusual appearance of the term *tuath*, a spatial as well as political unit of territory that is fundamental to Gaelic Ireland and rarely used to describe Norse or any other people in the twelfth century.²³⁶ Despite being a narrative that is intended as a *riposte* to the *Cogadh*, and likely written soon afterwards,²³⁷ *Cellacháin* introduces several new terms to the vocabulary. Has the Irish language evolved new words for (Hiberno-)Norse settlements in the short interval between *Cogadh* and *Cellacháin*’s compositions?

In Cellachán’s debut battle as the king of Munster against Limerick,²³⁸ the Gaelic warriors are described in romantic poetics due to their wearing linen garments, as a ‘thick palisade of spears (*sesmach sithremhar sleagh*)’ and a ‘strong enclosure of linen (*lonnbhuaile ladhach linanart*)’. *Lonnbhuaile* is a compound of *lonn* ‘fierce’ and *baile*, and *baile* is the most town-like word used in the description of the Munstermen in this passage. The author emphasises that ‘the heroes had neither blue helmets nor shining coats of mail (*ár ni rabhutar gormait nait glanluireach gu n-gasraid*)’.²³⁹ Their heroics, and eventual victory, are underlined by their going into battle without armour.

²³³ Bugge, 59.

²³⁴ Defined as ‘the space about a dwelling-house or houses enclosed by a bank or rampart, farmyard, courtyard’, eDIL s.v. *les*.

²³⁵ eDIL s.v. *láech*. Derived from Latin *laicus*; *láech* originally meant any lay-person and came to mean specifically a warrior by the medieval period. As late Latin *laicus* was another term for pagan, there may be a non-Christian element to the use of this descriptor.

²³⁶ Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 7-8.

²³⁷ Ó Corráin, ‘*Cellacháin*’, 4.

²³⁸ ‘Cellachán’s attack on Limerick is his first engagement as king, his *crech rig* “royal foray”, by which he demonstrates his suitability for office.’ Ó Corráin, ‘*Cellacháin*’, 13.

²³⁹ Bugge, 64.

The Norse in their armour, conversely, are given the terminology of cities and forts. Their battle arrangements, and their appearance, is described as:

...a strong, skilful and firm rampart of strong coats of mail and a thick, dark stronghold of black iron, and a green-polished hard-sharp city of battle-shields, and strong enclosure of stout shafts (*trom treabardhaingen trenluirech 7 dún dluith duaibhsech duibhiarainn 7 cathair clogudghlas cruadhphaebrach chaith-sciath 7 ruadhphuaili*²⁴⁰ *remharcra*nn)...²⁴¹

Daingen, *dún*, *cathair* and *baile* all convey the sense that the Norse not only are associated with towns in Ireland, but even appear like them in open combat. For the author of the *Cellacháin*, the visual of the Norse army on the Irish field conveys a similar intimidating and alienating sense as their walled towns in Ireland.

The Munstermen are successful against the Norse of Limerick, and the victors push forward: ...through the rear of the Lochlannaigh [so] that the nobles of Munster went into the town, so that the Lochlannaigh were not able to close the gates and the champions were killed in the houses and in the towers. They brought their wives and children and people in captivity to the nobles of Munster (*is tre deiridh na Lochlannach do chuatar maithi na Muimnech isin mbaili, cu nach rainic ona Lochlannchaib na doirrsi na dunad gur marbad isna tighibh 7 isna toraibh na treinfhir 7 tuccait a mna 7 a maccaemha 7 a muintera a mbroid gu maithibh na Muimnech*)...²⁴²

‘Gates’ (*doirrsi*, modern Irish *doras*) could also be translated as doors and indicates the breaching of an enclosure, although whether there are one set of doors or multiple is not conveyed. The ‘champions’ (literally ‘strong men’) of the Lochlannaigh killed in the ‘houses’ and ‘towers’ (*tigh* and *tor*²⁴³) suggests that there are both domestic and military structures in the *baile*.

The final sentence of the above passage merits examination of the original language, where the author stretches meaning to achieve alliteration. *Mná* can be translated as ‘wives’ or ‘women’. *Maccoim* is a poetic derivative of *maicc*, ‘sons’, which is a more generalised term for ‘boys’ and could be extended to ‘youth’, while *muintir* conveys the sense of a household including all servants and slaves. *Maithi* is used here and elsewhere to convey ‘nobility’ not only as aristocracy but also of

²⁴⁰ *Búaille* is an enclosure for cows, modern Hiberno-English ‘booley’. It is also used to refer to shield rims, eDIL s.v. *búaille*. *Ruadh-* means dark or brownish red as opposed to blood- or bright red and can therefore be a poetic allusion to ‘strong’, eDIL s.v. *ruad*; it was likely chosen for its alliterative properties. This could be translated as a ‘bloodstained enclosure’.

²⁴¹ Bugge, 64.

²⁴² Bugge, 66.

²⁴³ Unrelated to *túr*, which is an Anglo-Norman loanword. eDIL s.v. *tor* and s.v. *túr*.

‘quality’, an aspect synonymous with the Munstermen in *Cellacháin*. Therefore, a better translation would be ‘They brought their women and youth and people to the good people of Munster.’ This indicates that the noncombatants of Limerick make up part of the ‘various riches of the town (*ilmhaine in baili*)’ and ‘battle-spoils (*cathfaidhbh*)’²⁴⁴ that victory over the Norse has brought Cellachán and his men.

The author of *Cellacháin* ‘practically equates the taking of Limerick with seizing the sovereignty of Munster’ in the tenth century, which is a twelfth-century reality. In 1125, according to the Annals of Inisfallen, ‘Tairdelbach Ua Briain, king of Thomond, was at odds with the Ostmen of Limerick and with the Ciarraige and Cormac Mac Carthaig, king of Desmond, seized the kingship of Limerick’.²⁴⁵ This is further evidence that the anachronisms of the text’s depiction of tenth-century Limerick are the twelfth-century town in reality.

After this successful capture of Limerick, Cellachán and the Munstermen consider going to Cashel but decide to

go that very night to Cork, the place where their hostages and captives were, so that no news or messengers might get there before them (*dul in-aghaid sin gu Corcaig airm a rabatar a neill 7 a mbraigdi cu nach soichdis fesa nait techta rompa*).²⁴⁶

Unfortunately it is unclear from this passage whether the *geill* and *braigdi* are the hostages of the Munstermen (*i.e.*, their charges, who were taken by the Norse), if they are ‘free’ Gaels who have been captured by the Norse from Munster, or if these are people enslaved by the Norse in the Irish Sea region and collected in Cork for further disbursement. When the Munstermen recover the hostages ‘from the captivity in which they were (*asin mbroid a rabhadar*)’,²⁴⁷ are they freeing them to go where they please, or (re)turning them to the captivity of Cellachán?

After victory in Cork, the Munstermen go north to Cashel, fighting several battles with other Gaels along the way to secure Cellachán’s control over southern Munster. Cashel is anachronistically described as held by the Norse. This is also confusing within the narrative of the *Cellacháin*, because

²⁴⁴ Bugge, 66.

²⁴⁵ Ó Corráin, *Cellacháin*, 14.

²⁴⁶ Bugge, 67.

²⁴⁷ Bugge, 68.

Cellachán was recently selected as king of Munster there. Three hundred Norse are killed there,²⁴⁸ suggesting the size of a garrison in the imagination of the *Cellacháin*'s author.

After a night's feasting the Munstermen decide to attack Waterford next. They choose this target because it is 'the place where the women and families of the Lochlannaigh were (*airm a rabhatar mna 7 muinntera na Lochlannach*)'. Have the Norse moved their *mna 7 muinntera* from all over Munster (or even Ireland) to Waterford in an attempt to protect non-combatants in a single centralised location? Or are these simply the associated family of the men who will meet Cellachán in battle outside Waterford, or were killed in Cashel? The former theory is suggested by the arrival of Sitric son of Turgeis (*Sitriuc mac Tuirgeis*) with 'a division of six ships and a hundred on each ship (*lucht se long 7 C. an gach luing dhibh*)',²⁴⁹ as these troops could have been sent as reinforcements for a single town.

Sitriuc and his men are outmanoeuvred by the Munstermen, who are unchecked on the green (*faighthi*) outside Waterford and proceed to the town itself.

The Danair closed the gates and began to defend the town. However, it was useless for them to engage in combat with the champions...quick, valiant soldiers of Munster leapt into the town (*Ro hiadhaid na doirsi ag na Danaruibh 7 ro fhobradar in cathraig do cosnamh. Cid tra nír tarbha tachar risnar treinfheruibh...mileda mera moirghnimacha Muman isin mbaili*).²⁵⁰

Bugge's translation renders the poetic into the practical, but a nuance is missed. There are no verbs for leaping in the original language of the text, leaving the manner in which the Munstermen breached the walls unspecified. *Mera* (from *mairnid*²⁵¹) and *moirghnimacha* (*mór-* and *gnímach*²⁵²) is better translated as 'soldiers demonstrated the great activity of Munster in the town'. This *gním* could be vaulting the walls after the gates (*doirsi*) are shut, but it is not explicit. Could this suggest that Waterford did not have adequate defences or were caught at a vulnerable time in (re)construction?

²⁴⁸ Bugge, 70.

²⁴⁹ Bugge, 70.

²⁵⁰ Bugge, 71.

²⁵¹ Reveals or demonstrates an inherent but hidden quality. eDIL s.v. *mairnid*

²⁵² Adjective for busy or active, related to *gním*, a deed. eDIL s.v. *gnímach*

Once inside the town, the ‘Danes were slaughtered in crowds by them [Cellachán’s men] (*ro dluthmharbad na Danair leo*)...’²⁵³ *Dlúth*- indicates a compactness²⁵⁴ which Bugge has translated as ‘in crowds’ but also conveys the close quarters of Waterford’s inhabitants, whose numbers have perhaps been augmented by the sheltering of non-combatants from other areas. The Munstermen, specifically the Éoganacht (*sil Eogain*), then ‘burned the town and plundered the district (*ro loiscedar...in baili 7 ro creachsar an crích*)’.²⁵⁵ *Crích* denotes a territory or confine, particularly its boundaries, and thus poetically denotes an ending.²⁵⁶ As the *crích* is distinct from the *baile* but also has a boundary, this may refer to land adjacent to Waterford and considered part of the settlement but outside its walls. *Crích* could also indicate the hinterland or region of Waterford’s influence, suggesting that this was a defined area rather than wherever the Éoganacht could reach.

Altogether this rout of the towns of Munster within the *Cellacháin* results in the subjugation of the Norse into Cellachán’s power,²⁵⁷ adding their number to his attempt to take Áth Cliath. However, Cellachán and his men encounter Mór the wife of Tuirgéis ‘upon the road (*sligid*) where she supposed the Munstermen would come’²⁵⁸ where she warns them of a planned ambush ahead. *Slige* is the verbal noun of *sligid*, cutting or hewing,²⁵⁹ and thus indicates a pathway that has been cleared through difficult terrain. If the landscape is impassable apart from this or a small number of *slige*, this helps explain Mór’s ability to guess Cellachán’s route to Dublin from Waterford. This also indicates that there is enough traffic over land between Waterford and Dublin to generate a cleared pathway, which makes common sense given the mountains of Wicklow between the two towns.

²⁵³ Bugge, 71.

²⁵⁴ eDIL, s.v. *dlúth*

²⁵⁵ Bugge, 71.

²⁵⁶ eDIL s.v. *crích*. Modern Irish still uses *críoch* for both an ending as well as a boundary.

²⁵⁷ Ó Corráin, *Cellacháin*, 19.

²⁵⁸ Bugge, 75.

²⁵⁹ eDIL s.v. *slige*. It can also mean a slaughter, foreshadowing the ambush.

Literary Waterford, Limerick, and Dublin

Three towns within the texts of this survey provide enough material to consider the spatial imagination of the audience while visualising the narratives. Waterford appears in the Osraige chronicle and *Cellacháin*, Dublin is best described in the *Cogadh*, and depictions of Limerick feature in all three. The detailed appearance of Dublin in only one narrative may be due to the texts' southern origins (Osraige, Tuadmumu, and Desmumu respectively). But this reveals the lack that Cork is only briefly mentioned (and has no known Norse name); while Wexford (*Loch Garman* 'Garman's Lake', Old Norse *Veisaffjörðr* 'mudflat fjord') plays no part in these narratives.

The literary Waterford is a small, fortified town with wasteland nearby. There are gates (possibly several) in presumable walls which protect the town, but there are loose stones about and these defences are easy to breach, as Gaels do so in both the Osraige chronicle and *Cellacháin*. The town is densely populated. There is some kind of area around it that is considered its boundary (*crích*).

Dublin of the *Cogadh* demonstrates a change in the century between Sitriuc *Caech* and Sitriuc mac Amlaibh: the elder Sitriuc needs to construct temporary encampment for protection, while the later Sitriuc has such extensive construction under his *aegis* that the fortress of Dublin is considered 'his' (*a dhún*). There are several distinct areas of Dublin in addition to the *dún*: the green (*faiche*), market, and *baile*; as well as the deep-water site (*Duibhlinn*). Sitriuc has personal quarters in the *dún* from which the Battle of Clontarf can be seen.

Limerick's frequent appearances could indicate that an audience there had a particular interest in this sort of historical literature in the Irish language. Limerick is correctly associated in the sources with King's Island (*Inis Sibtond*), today the site of King John's Castle and archaeologically evidenced as a site of Norse settlement beginning in the tenth century. According to these narratives, there is both a fort and a town, the latter of which has houses and streets. There are gates around the town and towers in or around the fort. The town was burned and rendered uninhabitable, then re-built in a western harbour.

To the authors of these narratives and their audiences, the Norse were entwined with their towns. In the Osraige chronicle, the men of Waterford operate as such even when they are in western Munster, therefore a rout of the fleet of Waterford in Lough Gur is considered equivalent to the destruction of the town of Waterford itself. Sitriuc mac Amlaibh is so associated with the defences of Dublin that they are considered ‘his’ even when granted (back) to him by Brian in the *Cogadh*. For the author of the *Cellacháin*, the control of Limerick is equivalent to the sovereignty of Munster, and the armoured bodies of the Norse appear as moving fortresses on the field of battle. The growth of Irish towns under Norse occupation took centuries and generations of protection from, extortion of, and involvement with local Gaelic populations, but for eleventh and twelfth century audiences, the arrival of the Norse and the development of towns were one and the same.

Towns in Action: Fleets and Trade

The day-to-day realities of the Hiberno-Norse towns of Dublin, Limerick, and Waterford are best explored via archaeology, which has dramatically increased in quantity and quality over the past several decades. Woodstown in Waterford, for instance, ‘has provided the richest archaeological evidence in western Europe for Viking settlements in this early period.... The remarkable series of publications emanating from the Dublin excavation alone over the last twenty years has reinforced the view that the Dublin finds, in particular, have proved even richer than the native Scandinavian excavations at places like Birka, Hedeby, and Kaupang.’²⁶⁰ For the Gaelic authors of the source texts under consideration, however, the life of the townspeople was not worth imagining or recording. Rather, the narratives consider the large-scale products of the Hiberno-Norse towns, namely commerce, including that from overseas; and the production and maintenance of vessels such as long ships made in the Scandinavian clinker-built style.

‘The *húskarlar* of the naval ships expected regular pay in addition to whatever spoils of war might come. Specialists also needed to be paid to keep a large ship-building operation going. As mentioned above, the king would have had every incentive to keep his permanent fleet

²⁶⁰ Ó Cróinín, *Early medieval Ireland*, 259.

low in numbers for this was an expensive and potentially treacherous machine. In order to keep a complicated naval operation going there must have been a system that paid running costs and ensured operations outside the windfalls of war. The problem is we know next to nothing about it.²⁶¹

The conflation of the Norse with their ships is found throughout the source narratives. The *Cogadh* and *Cellacháin* both begin with the kingly genealogies that situate the narrative chronology, then *Cogadh* proceeds immediately into a recitation of the waves of ships coming to Ireland: a literary metaphor comparing Gaelic kings to Norse fleets as fixed points of power and time. The eldest Leinster manuscript reads, ‘It was in the time of Aedh...that foreigners first began the devastation of Ireland, at “Cammus Hui Fathaidh Tire”, i.e. 120 ships, and the whole country was plundered (*Irremes Aeda...ra thindscansat gaill indriud hErend an tus, a Cammus h. Fataid Tire .i. fichi ar cét long, ocus ra indretar in tir uili*).’²⁶² The *id est* explanatory note equates the gaill with their *long*, though surely the number is an exaggeration for the early ninth century.

According to the *Cogadh*, 416 of the Norse in this initial fleet are killed. This suggests that a significant percentage, though not a majority, of the 120 ships’ crews were defeated; were any ships themselves taken in battle by the Gaels? Did some of these ships’ crews join later fleets? Does the precise number of the dead indicate that their disposal was a memorable task? The literary landscape depicted in *Cogadh* is of overwhelming quantity and force: seven different fleets are described, including a ‘royal fleet (*riglonges*)’²⁶³ with Turgeis at the helm, before the description of the Norse coming to Ireland broadens to ‘great sea-vomitings of foreigners (*murbruicta mor du gallaib*)’. These impractical multitudes heighten the victory that Munster (i.e. the Dal gCáis) will eventually achieve over them, while also demonstrating a Middle Irish literary conception of Ireland as a beleaguered but inexhaustible island that can sustain a fleet at every ‘point (*aird*)’.²⁶⁴

The impracticality extends to the places under Norse occupation, including Armagh,²⁶⁵ which is landlocked. In this case it is a metaphor for the takeover of the Irish church by the disruption of the

²⁶¹ Holm, ‘Naval power’, 76.

²⁶² Todd, *Cogadh*, 222.

²⁶³ Todd, *Cogadh*, 8-9.

²⁶⁴ Todd, *Cogadh*, 14-5.

²⁶⁵ Todd, *Cogadh*, 16.

Norse. Did the author and audience of this Munster text not know the geography of Armagh, or did they understand the metaphor? The conflation of the Norse and their ships continues in Chapter Twenty when the *duibgeinti Danarda* arrive in their own waves of ships to fight the established *Findgenti a hErind*.²⁶⁶ ‘Amlaibh, [son of] the king of Lochlainn’ brings ‘a prodigious fleet (*longes...mor*)’ to Ireland, and his latecomer brother Ossil arrives with yet ‘another fleet (*longes ele*)’.²⁶⁷ Politics and power are embodied in the ships of the Norse, and no leader in these texts can appear in Ireland without a fleet of his own; this is repeated in the lead-up to the Battle of Clontarf much later in the narrative.

Conversely, the *Cellacháin*, which was supposedly a rip-off of *Cogadh*, begins with a similar Gaelic genealogy and then entirely omits the arrival of the Norse, leading in Chapter Four with the specific taxation extracted from each household. The titular character goes to the towns which have already been established by the start of the narrative: ‘both harbour and smooth strand and seaport, both fort and strong fortress and the broad land of every Norseman (*idir chuan 7 chaemhthraigh 7 calaphort; idir lis 7 laechdhun 7 lethan-tuaith gach Lochlann*)’.²⁶⁸ The *tuath*²⁶⁹ or territory of the Lochlannaigh involves fortresses and harbours, and while they are taxing the Gaels down to the household, their occupation is solely coastal.

Cellachán gains victory over the Lochlannaigh and Danair of Limerick and Cork with land-based battles and no mention of their fleets. But, when his forces proceed to Waterford, ‘on the same day Sitric son of Turgeis arrived at Port Lairge with a division of six ships and a hundred on each ship of them (*lucht se long 7 C. an gach luing dhibh*)’.²⁷⁰ The ships’ occupants enter the defence of Waterford against Cellachán but this is only known from afterwards, when the author states that ‘Sitric left the town and went on board his ship (*ro fhaguib Sitriuc in baili 7 ro innsaigh a*

²⁶⁶ Todd, *Cogadh*, 18.

²⁶⁷ Todd, *Cogadh*, 22-3.

²⁶⁸ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 2, 59.

²⁶⁹ ‘...tuath, a word which has such wide connotations that no one English equivalent is adequate. Primarily “people”, it has often been rendered “tribe”, but it also means “the laity” or “lay property”, as opposed to clerics or churches. In the Old Irish period it meant particularly a political community, a kingdom ruled by a *rí*. By the eleventh century its political status had declined...’ Byrne, ‘Ireland and her neighbours, c. 1014-1072’, 871.

²⁷⁰ Bugge, *Cathréim*, 70, 13.

luing)...only one hundred fugitives (*esbadach*²⁷¹) of them reached their ships'. According to this narrative, five hundred men entered a land-based battle by ship and were then slain on-shore. Whether based on actual Norse warfare in Ireland or not, the cultural memory of the Norse in *Cellacháin* sees them using their ships to travel, but not to engage in battle until later.

So, too, do the Gaels function in *Cellacháin*: naval warfare becomes part of their armoury, but only further in the narrative. The first appearance of the fleet of Munster is chapter 46 (of 100 total), when Cellachán instructs Aistrechan how to organise the men of Munster after his capture: 'if I am carried away from Erin, let the men of Munster take their ships to follow me (*madh da mberar mhisi a hEirinn gu bhfagat fir Mhuman a longa dom*)...[let] them bring with them ten ships from each cantred, for that is the full muster of our own fleet (*tabhrat .X. longa gacha tricha .C. leo or ase-sin coimtinol ar cabluigh-ne*).'²⁷² Bugge translates *tricha .C.*, *tricha cét*, as the later Anglo-Norman organisational term *cantred*; '[i]ts use as a territorial term does not pre-date the tenth century. By the twelfth it had replaced the *tuath* as the smallest effective political entity.'²⁷³ Paul MacCotter characterises Cellachán's command as 'a naval levy of ten ships due from each *tricha cét* of the coastal kingdoms of west Munster as part of the provincial army',²⁷⁴ but the concept of 'full muster (*coimtinol*)' implies that this is every ship available.

The rescue party musters the men of Munster in a fortnight 'at Magh Adhar, those of them who were on land, and those of them who were on sea to be at Bel Átha Laighin (*a mBel Atha Laighin*)'.²⁷⁵ Mag(h) Ad(h)a(i)r is 'the plain west of Tulla in Co. Clare in which the Dál Cais held their *óenach* or assembly',²⁷⁶ a natural meeting point for men in this narrative offering obeisance to the descendents of the Dál Cais, but 'Be(a)l Átha Laighin' is unknown. Perhaps it is near to Mag Adair, as after recounting the nobility present, the author describes 'they marched forward in their arranged

²⁷¹ Literally 'wanting, lacking, deficient', or perhaps 'injured, disfigured'; eDIL s.v. *esbadach*.

²⁷² Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 29, 86.

²⁷³ Byrne, 'Ireland and her neighbours', 873.

²⁷⁴ MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland: Territorial, Political and Economic Divisions*, 53.

²⁷⁵ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 30, 87.

²⁷⁶ Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 105.

battallions and their fleet (*a cablach*²⁷⁷) set out the same day. The place, where their host was that night, was in *Áth-na-Rígh*.²⁷⁸ But if this *Áth-na-Rígh* is modern Athenry, Co. Galway; it is possible *Bel Átha Laighin* is a mistake for *Luain*; modern Athlone, Cos. Westmeath and Roscommon. Athenry is a rough midpoint for the foot soldiers from Mag Adair and sailors from Athlone to converge. The narrative traces their journey northwards to Armagh.²⁷⁹

As few of these sites are navigable by ship, has the fleet of Munster been understood as travelling to Dundalk in preparation for the Norse taking Cellachán overseas from the nearest seaport, ‘the place where their ships are’²⁸⁰? If so, this second half of *Cellacháin* implies a new dimension to Gaelic conflict with the Norse: strategic naval warfare, rather than simply utilising ships for travel. The use of ships is still associated with the Norse, who have taken Cellachán to Dundalk as a defensive measure, and they retain the ability to traverse the open water in a way the Gaelic ships cannot.

...Donnchadh said, that he would rather prefer to have a fair fight (*comthrom comluinn*) with them, and he recited the lay:

O Sitric, who flees over the sea (*theithios tar tuinn*)
 Stay to converse with us!
 Since we cannot, O dark man,
 Follow you out on the open sea (*isin leirmhuir*).²⁸¹

Donnchadh calls out to the Norse to not leave the *tuinn* (literally ‘waves’, such as at a seashore) because ‘we’, meaning the Gaelic ships, cannot traverse the *leirmhuir* (*ler* ‘ocean’ + *muir*, cognate of Latin *marus*²⁸²); suggesting that it is unfair or at least unsporting (*com-* implying equality) for the Norse to take to the sea. Later in the poem, Donnchadh taunts the Norse saying that Cellachán has pursued them ‘with the feet of his ships (*go cosaibh a long*)’²⁸³, suggesting that there is nowhere in Ireland that the Norse can go without Cellachán following them. However, the fleet of Cellachán, let alone the Munstermen, has not been mentioned before chapter 46 in *Cellacháin*. This is more likely

²⁷⁷ From *coblach*, which can refer to a fleet, its crew, or a naval expedition as a whole. eDIL s.v. *coblach*.

²⁷⁸ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 31, 88.

²⁷⁹ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 89.

²⁸⁰ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 91.

²⁸¹ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 34, 92.

²⁸² eDIL s.v. 1 *ler*, and eDIL s.v. *muir*, ‘The sea in wide sense, both of sea as opposed to land and of particular tracts of ocean with special designations’.

²⁸³ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 35, 93.

a metaphor for the men who follow Cellachán, as an alternate translation of *cos* is infantry.²⁸⁴ Donnchadh is telling Sitric that Cellachán's Gaelic foot-soldiers are as good or better than Norse ship crews.

This also indicates that his ships (*a long*) are in use against the Norse, and while they have the advantage on the open sea (*leirmhuir*), coastal navigation and strategic deployment of Gaels using ships is now part of Cellachán's arsenal. The narrative *Cellacháin*, the 'riposte'²⁸⁵ or fan fiction of *Cogadh*, which demonstrates 'that Dál Cais's greatness is to be traced back to the reign of Cennétig', Cellachán's associate,²⁸⁶ also implies that the use of Gaelic naval warfare came to fruition under Cellachán's administration. Donnchadh's dramatic conversation with Sitric is followed by Cellachán's response, from his imprisonment tied to the mast of Sitric's ship, 'O Donnchadh, has a fleet (*cabhluch*) set out with you?'²⁸⁷ This literary king of Munster's top priority was to muster a *cablach* in his absence, and his first concern was whether the ships and their crew had arrived at the rendezvous. It is unknown whether the historical Cellachán or any other tenth century Gaelic leader had such a prosaic and visionary plan of technological advancement. But this sequence in the *Cellacháin* suggests that in the early twelfth century, the Gaelic cultural memory of their use of ships arose from military engagement with the Norse in Ireland. Unfortunately we can only guess if ships such as those 'ten ships due from each *trícha cét* of the coastal kingdoms of west Munster' were constructed by Hiberno-Norse artisans *in situ*, bought or commissioned from Norse towns like Limerick or Waterford, constructed by Gaelic shipbuilders trained elsewhere by the Norse, or further possible scenarios.

At the end of his speech to Donnchadh, Cellachán indicates that from his vantage point on the mast he alone can see 'the fleet that has not been shown (*cablach nar tubhad*)', that of the Munstermen, indicating that they have both only just arrived at Dundalk and have not encountered

²⁸⁴ eDIL s.v. *cos*. Admittedly, *cos* may refer to the literal stem of a ship, but as Bugge suggests, this is an usual translation.

²⁸⁵ Ó Corráin, '*Cellacháin*,' 5.

²⁸⁶ Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 76 and 79.

²⁸⁷ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 35 and 94. Recall that *coblach* can mean both a fleet of ship as well as its crew.

the Norse before.²⁸⁸ ‘Then the Munstermen raised their heads and lifted their nobles[sic] eyes (*a caemroisc*), and they saw the harbour (*cuan*) being filled with ships and swift barks (*do longuibh 7 do luathbharcuibh*²⁸⁹), and 'tis they who were there, the fleet of the men of Munster (*cablach fer Muman*).’²⁹⁰ The literary Sitric seems neither surprised nor impressed by this showing, and what follows is one of the more unbelievable scenes in what Ó Corráin characterised as ‘sheer fantasy and invention’²⁹¹: Duinechad Mac Fiangusa²⁹² travels around in a boat among the fleet to collect everyone’s names, and which specific Norse ship they wish to attack, and how the Norse can in return identify their specific ships; on giving this ludicrous report to the endlessly patient Sitric, he replies “‘This has fallen out prettily...for these are the very opponents (*comhlainn*) we have chosen.’”²⁹³

The initial claim of Donnchadh, that meeting the Norse at sea would not be a *comthrom comluinn*, has proven unfounded: not only is there a Gaelic ship and crew for each Norse ship and crew, but they have dramatically and improbably found a perfect adversary equally interested in combat. The narrative suggests that each family is settling a specific score. For instance, ‘the three kings of Corcauibne’ select ‘the three guardians of Cork’, ‘For it is to us that they have given cause after coming to Inis Clere, when they carried off our women and youths in captivity.’²⁹⁴ Ó Corráin writes,

Here we may have a genuine historical memory though of the eleventh century. In 1013 a Viking fleet, probably from Dublin, sailed southwards along the coast, burned [the town of] Cork and attacked Clére [extreme southwest Co. Cork] and was defeated with the slaughter of its leaders by the Uí Echach Muman. ...It might be added that sporadic Viking raids, if we may judge from the annals, were not at all infrequent in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁸ He also describes them as ‘a fleet that will not flee to the *linn* (*cablach nach teithfe don linn*)’, which Bugge translates as ‘sea’, but has been shown in these narratives as well as place-name evidence to refer to a deep-water pool or harbour. Whether this is a poetic term for the open sea or for a place of coastal refuge, now the navigability of the Norse ships is used against them, as the Gaelic ships are more stalwart due to their inability to escape battle. I am unsure whence *teithfe* derives, however, and wonder if Bugge translated it solely by context. *Cellacháin*, 37 and 95.

²⁸⁹ From *bárc*, derived from Latin *barca*; eDIL s.v. 1 bárc. This is not a loan word from Old Norse *bark*, which also derives from the Latin.

²⁹⁰ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 37 and 95.

²⁹¹ Ó Corráin, ‘*Cellacháin*,’ 5.

²⁹² ‘His inclusion here is wildly anachronistic.’ Ó Corráin, ‘*Cellacháin*,’ 11.

²⁹³ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 97.

²⁹⁴ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 96.

²⁹⁵ Ó Corráin, ‘*Cellacháin*,’ 49-50.

Ó Corráin characterises *Cellacháin* as a genealogical tract made into a narrative, eschewing fact for family-name valour in a manner ‘different from what modern notions of history teach us to expect’.²⁹⁶ But errors in relative ages of dynastic figures aside, the overarching chronology suggests a hitherto-unconsidered Middle Irish cultural memory of the rise of Gaelic naval warfare against and among the Norse in Ireland. Those ships collected in the *trícha cé*t levy are factually given as part of the ‘provincial army’²⁹⁷ but the readiness of Gaels to defend their king — literally, in the case of en-hostaged Cellachán — using naval warfare is a novel manoeuvre, ‘the fleet that has not been shown’.²⁹⁸

The full implications of the use of ships in combat among Gaels is considered in the chapter on gender, as the masculinity of the combatants is tied into their martial prowess and standards of battlefield behaviour, and becoming Norse on the sea requires some element of becoming Norse in the mind: at the conflict’s start ‘the senses, and feelings, and thoughts of the [Gaelic] heroes underwent a change’.²⁹⁹ The actual battle depicted over a dozen chapters involves Gaelic and Norse ships joining together with ropes and chains, and when detailed, the Gaels are shown going on the offensive into the Norse ship. In at least one scenario, this clever tactic results in a Norse ship capsizing from the extra weight.³⁰⁰ For the author of the *Cellacháin* who fictionalises a dramatic engagement at Dundalk with perfectly matched enemies; while Norse ship technology begins superior to Gaelic naval warfare, the heart and courage of Gaels in combat ultimately claims victory.

It was ebb-tide when the fleets met, and the broad waves of the flood-tide brought the ships of the Munstermen to land. But when the ships had reached land, the Munstermen went into them to join those who were left of their people. But when the Lochlannachs who were left perceived this, they went away in thirteen ships and left the harbour at once, and carried neither [Gaelic] king nor chieftain with them.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Ó Corráin, ‘*Cellacháin*,’ 5.

²⁹⁷ MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland: Territorial, Political and Economic Divisions*, 53.

²⁹⁸ Bugge, 95.

²⁹⁹ Bugge, 98.

³⁰⁰ Bugge, 103.

³⁰¹ Bugge, 107.

In defeat, the Norse have nowhere to go in the harbour but the open sea. Similarly to the scene in *Cogadh* where the ‘inheritance (*dúchas*)’ of the Norse fighters is their death in the rising tide,³⁰² the sea beyond Ireland is seen as the inherent preserve of the Norse.

Conclusions

In these texts, the Norse differ from the Gaels primarily by their occupation of towns and their use of naval technology. This conflation of a people with their distinguishing way of life served to answer questions the Gaelic Irish circa 1030-1130 had of their difference from their Hiberno-Norse neighbours. Sharing a northern European physiognomy, and able to learn and communicate in each others’ languages, the distinction between who was Norse and who was Gael is shown in these texts to be intimately related to their relationship with fleets and with towns, both of which were necessary for the international trade that characterised Norse speakers at the time of these narratives. For the writer, reader, and listener of these dynastic propaganda pieces, the suitability of the Gaelic ancestor and his family to rule is predicated on his ability to differ from the Norse and their foreign ways — or, to adapt their technology to his people’s advantage.

³⁰² Todd, 192-3.

IV. Gender & Masculinity

Introduction

In composing my thesis, I combed out themes from the data of the narratives, and found several important strands with which to weave chapters. One of these is gender, both the specific (although not necessarily named) women who influence the tales significantly, as well as the shape of masculinity denoted by speech and action about righteous and/or manly attributes, or their lack. In all three texts I noticed a glaring difference between the heroism attributed to Norse and Gaelic figures, whereas women were accorded the same values regardless of their origin. This has to do with the permeability of women between the two socio-linguistic groups — that is, the historical reality of intermarriage, as well as concubinage and enslavement. ‘For every law circumscribing [Irish] women there was another that allowed them considerable liberties.... Women in early Ireland were no goddess-queens, but neither were most of them prisoners or slaves.’³⁰³

This chapter follows six women who influence the plot of the stories: the sisters, mothers, wives, and daughters of the men who characterise the stories afford more than a passing mention in the narrative. These are elite men from prominent families, however, so these women having a voice and decision over the events is likely a product of their class rather than reflecting a reality of female participation in politics. Most notably, these women often relate to more than one man at a time and thus weave two families together by marriage. This can bring peace to dynasties and túatha in competition, but also headaches for later genealogists by the convolution of elite families. If Irish sagas sometimes reiterate the conservative perspectives on women and gender articulated within clerical and juristic discourse, their status as literary texts also allows them to represent gender in more complex ways. and historical between somewhere residing stories, these of narrative The ³⁰⁴

³⁰³ Bitel, *Land of Women*, 10-11.

³⁰⁴ Sheehan and Dooley, *Constructing Gender in Medieval Ireland*, 5.

propagandistic,³⁰⁵ allows the authors to voice subtle but dynamic interpretations of gender present in their contemporary worldview.

In the narratives dating from the medieval period, little or nothing of the individual's inner life is described. Psychology is externalized to a large degree into plot and speech. The protagonists are usually famous and emblematic; the name Deirdre, for example, would have conjured both the history of the individual of that name whose elopement with Noisiu brought tragedy to Ulster, and the character associated with her: beautiful, wilful, fatalistic. When the emotions of a figure such as Deirdre, typically expressed in poetic language, were thought to epitomize those experienced by real people in circumstances regarded as somehow similar, this figure might function as a poetic mask.³⁰⁶

Polygamy was not intentionally practiced, but sequential marriage via divorce was common for wealthy men and women. Spread out over a lifetime, this could result in several generations with the same parent. For instance, according to the Annals Cerball's sister Land was married to Máel Sechlainn I, who also had an unnamed daughter - presumably by another woman! - who is then herself married to Cerball. This was not Land's first marriage, however, and her son of a prior union became a king in his own túath. She is the first of the historical figures treated as literary characters in the narratives explored in detail below.

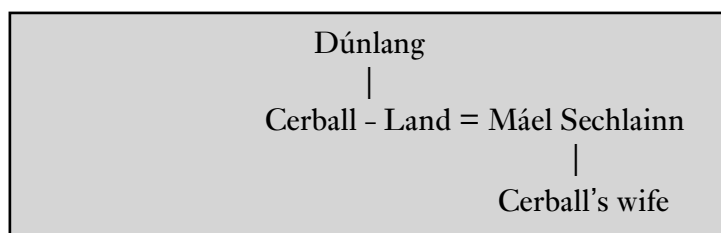
Land ingen Dúnlainge, d. 890

Land, sometimes Lann, is a fascinating figure who is cited throughout the Osraige chronicle and also briefly appears in the *Cogadh*. She first appears in the *Fragmentary Annals* at 246 (K. 854) where her convoluted family and marital connections are detailed thus: 'Cerball son of Dúnlang, king of Osraige (Máel Sechlainn's relative by marriage (*cliamhuin*): that is, Cerball's sister, Land, daughter of Dúnlang, was wife of Máel Sechlainn, and moreover Máel Sechlainn's daughter was Cerball's wife)...³⁰⁷ Rewritten into a very basic genealogical chart, this passage suggests:

³⁰⁵ Duffy, 198.

³⁰⁶ Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Gormlaith and her Sisters, c. 750-1800,' 166.

³⁰⁷ Radner, 96-7.



Presumably Cerball's wife is not the daughter of his own sister; that is, the Uí Neill king Máel Sechlainn had a daughter with a different wife or consort who he gave to Cerball in marriage. However, Cerball and Land are *both* siblings, perhaps half-, as their respective mother or mothers are not given; *as well as* mother- and son-in-law through Máel Sechlainn.

Land is mentioned again, albeit obtusely, in *FA* 308 (K. 862): 'Cerball son of Dúnláng and Cennétig son of Gáethíne, i.e. the son of Cerball's sister (*i. mc. deirbhseathar Chearbhaill*) defeated Rodolb's fleet, which had come from *Lochlann* shortly before that...'.³⁰⁸ Gáethíne is her first husband, before Máel Sechnaill I, their union producing this Cennétig — not the more renowned Dál gCais father of Brian and Mathgamhain. Land's famous son with Máel Sechnaill is Flann Sinna, 'Flann of the Shannon [River]'. For a woman who is not involved in these conflicts directly, Land is frequently cited for her role in tying these Gaels together in their conflicts against the Norse.

Her influence appears a few entries later in the *Osraige* chronicle, as the goader of her third husband into harrying *Lochlannach*:

'Áed had a great victory over the *Lochlannach* at Loch Febail. The learned related that it was his wife who most incited Áed against the *Lochlannach* (*i a bhean as móo ro greis Aod i c-ceann na Lochlannach*)—namely Land, daughter of Dúnláng: and she was the one who was Máel Sechlainn's wife previously, and the mother of Máel Sechlainn's son, *i.e.* Flann. She was the mother of Cennétig son of Gáethíne, king of Loíches. Now the ills that the *Lochlannach* suffered this year are noteworthy, but the greatest they encountered were from Áed Findliath son of Niall.'³⁰⁹

Land's relationships are carefully outlined here — the third time in the *Osraige* chronicle so far — as well as her explicit role in supporting her husband Áed's campaign. Perhaps this is one reason why Radner terms the narrative the 'Osraige chronicle' rather than the 'Cerball saga': his sister, in the

³⁰⁸ Radner, 114-5.

³⁰⁹ Radner, 118-9.

form of her husbands and sons, is just as important a contributor to the machinations of the Gaels against the Norse as her brother.

Land appears once more in *FA* 366 (K. 868) as a mother, wife, patron, inciter, and at last, a ‘queen (*rioghan*)’. After repetition of her marriages and famous sons, she is described as ‘building a church to St. Brigit in Kildare’; while this is surely not literal and she serves as patron rather than architect, she is involved enough to be on site while carpenters gather lumber. This involvement means she overhears plans by Leinstermen against her husband, and she ‘mightily incited him (*ro neart go sochraide é*)’ to go on the attack.³¹⁰ Note that while this episode involves Gael on Gael violence, Land is the legitimate orchestrator of the conflict. While the Osraige chronicle does not give any voice to Land in its narrative, this passage gives her agency and purpose as more than just a mother and wife to the men of its story.

Within *Cogadh*, however, Land appears and has a direct quotation, in poetry. She is introduced by her familial relations, though the author makes a slight error calling her the sister rather than the wife of Áed Findliath:

‘It was upon it [battle between Aedh Finnliath, king of Ireland, and Flann son of Conang allied with the *Finnгаill*] that Niall’s daughter, i.e., the sister[*sic*] of Aedh, and mother of Flann, composed *these lines*:
Is ar ani do rigni ingen Neill .i. siur Aeda ocus mathair Flanid:

Joy! woe! good news! bad news!
The defeat of a bloody battle by him,
Joy to the king who won, let him rejoice!
Sorrow to the king who was defeated!
Sursan, dursan, degscel, dro̅scel
Maidni caia ruaid remaig,
Sursan rig do rigni failid
*Dursan ri forsar maig.*³¹¹

³¹⁰ ‘However, when Flann son of Conaing gave this insult to the king of Ireland, Land, daughter of the king of Osraige (i.e. Dúnlang)—and she was wife to Áed Findliath at that time, having previously been Máel Sechlainn’s wife, and it was she who bore Flann Sinna to him, truly the best lad in Ireland in his time, and he was High King of Ireland later; this same Land was mother of the famous Cennétig son of Gáethíne—it was then, I say, that this queen was building a church to St. Brigit at Kildare, and she had many carpenters in the wood chopping down and shaping trees. This queen had heard the conversation and wishes of the Laigin concerning her husband, Áed Findliath, and concerning her son, Flann son of Máel Sechlainn ... and when she found out that the Laigin were mustering with Flann son of Conaing, king of Cianachta, she went to where her husband was, and told that to him, and mightily incited him to gather forces against them.’ Radner, 132-3.

³¹¹ Todd, 32-3, emphasis mine.

It is unusual to record a verse written by a woman in these sources, and extraordinary to have one reporting on a battle; add poet to the list of Land's roles in these dynastic narratives. Further study on her historical record as well as her literary character is warranted, but unable to fit into this thesis. Her approximate death date is based on that of her brother Cerball in 888.

Máthair Cellacháin, d. ?930

While unnamed herself throughout the narrative, the mother (*máthair*) of Cellachán provides extraordinary political and military support to her son. She violates social norms repeatedly, beginning with the very conception of her son.

‘...he came to Cashel. For it is there his mother was, and she, the noble queen (*caeimrighan*), was the wife of the *coarb*³¹² of Cashel. And Cellachan had been begotten in violation of her marriage with him. And during the year and a half that Cellachan was traversing the country, she was herself collecting arms, and clothes, and treasures, and retaining companies of foot-soldiers and gentle household-troops (*ceithearn 7 caeimhtheglach*). And this is the number of those who were fed(?) and fully bound to her, viz. 500 armed men.’³¹³

By his biological father Buachadán, Cellachán is a member of the Eóganachta, the prevailing Munster dynasty, but he is known in this tale as *Caisil*, ‘of Cashel’, as a nod to the husband of his mother. While Cellachán performs reconnaissance on the Norse, his mother gathers troops by whatever her resources.³¹⁴ Finally, when the leading noblemen of Munster meet to (s)elect the next king, *Máthair* interrupts this meeting to argue for her son. Having accomplished these extraordinary achievements for Cellachán, *Máthair* drops out of the narrative, her personality unexamined and her motivations unknown beyond the success of her son. This curious lack-of-characterisation is just one of several issues with *Cellacháin* that led Ó Corráin to dismiss the author as an ‘armchair strategist’,³¹⁵ but it also helps to lionise the eponymous hero, whose very conception was against social norms and whose rise to power was aided by a strangely powerful woman.

³¹² *Coarb* was a high-ranking church official. Etchingam, *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 107.

³¹³ Bugge, 2-3, 59.

³¹⁴ Bugge, 2.

³¹⁵ ‘*Cathréim Cellacháin Caisil: History or Propaganda?*’, 3.

Máthair tells Cellachán that she will go into the council choosing the next king of Munster, even though it is mostly a show between Cennédig, of the Dál gCais, and Donnchad. She reminds the Munster nobles about the supposed 'arrangement' between Eóganacht and Dál gCais ancestry, putting the most politically important role of this entire text in the mouth of a woman - and in poetry, as well:

‘Remember (*Cuimnigh*), O pleasant Cennédig!
the arrangement (*dail*) of Fiachu and Cormac Cas,
that they left it so that Munster should be divided
rightly (*roinn gu cert*) between their gentle descendants...’³¹⁶

Duffy explains: ‘When Cennétig asked who she meant, she replied that it was Cellachán. Cennétig then retired from the gathering, but he would not “break his brotherhood (*a bhrathairsi do bhriseadh*)” with the Eóganachta; both he and the other Eóganacht candidate withdrew from the contest because only the Vikings would prosper from a dispute over succession.’³¹⁷

The entire court swings into action and takes her recommendation to crown Cellachán the new king of Munster, rather than the already established candidates Cennédig and Donnchad. They express gratitude for divine providence in providing this centrist candidate, after granting Cellachán kingship the men ‘gave thanks to the true, magnificent God (*fhirdhia fhurorda*) for having found him’.³¹⁸ Yet the narrative makes plain that *Máthair* was the sole source and proponent for her son! Does this imply, therefore, that she takes the place of God in the direction of Munster kingship? Appropriate for divine intervention, *Máthair* disappears from the narrative, presumably her hired men now pledged to her son and all further work on her part finished or performed without comment. Her proposed death date here is based on that of her son in 952,³¹⁹ presuming she predeceases him by one generation.

³¹⁶ Bugge, 3, 60.

³¹⁷ Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 78.

³¹⁸ Bugge, 4, 61.

³¹⁹ Bugge, 56.

Bebinn ingen Tuirgeis, d. ?950

Bebinn (alternatively Bé Binn) is the tenth-century Gaelic-named daughter of a Norse Turgeis — the grandson of the famous Turgeis, who was drowned by Máel Sechnaill I in 845.³²⁰ Unfortunately her narrative lacks agency, as she only appears as a marital offering for the protagonists and has no dialogue of her own. Nevertheless, it is useful to a discussion of female characters in these texts to trace her appearances in *Cellacháin*, as an example of the use of women in intermarriage agreements between Norse and Gael. Her own parentage is suggested by her Gaelic name: even if she was raised in a primarily Norse-speaking household, she was born in Ireland to parents who spent most, if not all, of their lives in Ireland. Her mother may have been Irish-speaking, along with household servants purchased from the Dublin slave trade. Whether the historical *Bebinn ingen Tuirgeis* existed in the way she is depicted in *Cellacháin* or not, audiences of this text found plausible a Gaelic-named sister and daughter of Norse-named men who was buffeted around as a bridal bargaining chip.

Bebinn first appears in the narrative as an offering to Cellachán in marriage by her brother Sitric, as a trick. Sitric sends a messenger ‘...to tell him to go to Ath Cliath to marry her, and [to inform him] that they leave him the territory of Munster without contest (*a radh ris dul co hAth Cliath da tabairt 7 co leicfidis sium crich Muman gan imchosnum dho*).’³²¹ The Norse of Dublin assume that such an offer would appeal to the young queen-less king, and they intend to capture him and kill his companions when he arrives. Jochens characterises Norse marriage custom as ‘a commercial contract...negotiated between two males of equal standing. The guardian handed over to the groom a third human, the bride.’³²² *Bebinn* is thus an offer between Sitriuc and Cellachán — the former implying equal power as the latter — with no consent even considered. Whether this event is historical or not, it accords with the worldview shared by author and audience that even a well-connected woman would not have agency in her marriage arrangement.

³²⁰ Annals of Ulster, AU 845.8.

³²¹ Bugge, 16 and 74.

³²² *Women in Old Norse Society*, 30-1.

After receiving this offer, Cellachán tells the nobles of Munster that he suspects a trick, so he will go with a convoy to Dublin, but have Bebinn sent out rather than go ‘into the fortress (*isin dun*)’.³²³ As covered in the chapter on towns, the Norse Dublin of historical imagination had a well-fortified section and a large *faiche* or green space available for the Munstermen to encamp without being trapped. Along the way he meets Mór ingen Aeda (subsection below), who offers both dialogue and consent to Cellachán, and Bebinn’s fate becomes untethered from the king of Munster.

Cellachán’s troops eventually overcome Norse Dublin and Bebinn appears for the final time in this narrative, brought forth as a spoil of war for Cellachán’s ally. ‘Mór, daughter of Aed, son of Echu, and Bebinn, the daughter of Turgeis, were brought to Cellachan, who said to Donnchuan, son of Cennedig, that he should take Bebinn to his wife (*do bhaincele*). And so it was done by them, and each man of them had his choice of women (*a rogha mna ag gach fhir*) afterwards.’³²⁴ This *rogha* is entirely in the hands of the men in this narrative and the women, including Bebinn, have no recourse to their treatment. Even outside the bounds of war, ‘According to an Old Irish tract on *dire* (‘honour price’), “her father has charge over her when she is a girl, her husband when she is a wife, her sons when she is a [widowed] woman with children”.’³²⁵ Whether Bebinn ingen Tuirgeis operates as a Gael, Norse, or the in-between state afforded to women who straddled the cultures, as a woman her rights end when her city is taken in war.

A similar situation arises in the *Cogadh* after the Dál gCais victory over the Norse in Limerick:

‘...It was then that they celebrated also the races of the son of Feradach, *viz.* a great line of the women of the foreigners (*gailsechaib nangall*) was placed on the hills of Saingel in a circle, and they were stooped with their hands on the ground [*and the palms of their hands under them -B*], and marshalled (*inandegaid*) by the horseboys (*gilli*) [*and ? -B*] of the army behind them, for the good of the souls of the foreigners (*do rait anma nangall*) who were killed in the battle.’³²⁶

Violence upon the non-combatant population, those not ‘fit for war’, is considered fair and honourable when performed by Mathgamain upon the Norse of Limerick and their Irish-speaking allies. This

³²³ Bugge, 17 and 75.

³²⁴ 94.

³²⁵ Downham, *Medieval Ireland*, 65.

³²⁶ Todd, 82-3.

public mass rape by the *gilli na sluag*, performed on hills for maximum visibility and shame for the women involved, is even written as if it provides a benefit for the slaughtered Norse. The brutal assault on their mothers, wives, and daughters supposedly does good (*do rait*) for their souls in the afterlife in some form of aid against purgatory. Rather than revenge, this spectacle of rape bears a Christian motivation and can even be read as charitable for the deceased gail.

Nonetheless, this is shockingly violent even in a text full of warfare and non-combatant casualties. Is this really the approved doing of the Dál Cais, under whose reign a woman could walk from one end of Ireland to the other unmolested? Does emphasising that it is the foreign-women of the Norse (*gailsechaib nangall*) relieve the inhumanity of the assault by Mathgamain's forces? Is the perpetration of the act by the *gilli* specifically to aid in the humiliation? These 'horseboys' could be young men, some not yet teenagers, who would be subservient to the triumphant soldiers in age and likely also station and brought to the battle as part of their fosterage.³²⁷ The foreign-women are forced in defeat to yield to the young men, not the able-bodied fully grown men who succeeded in the battle; the women are enslaved and bodily 'given' to the servants of the soldiers as transferable property.

The same fate befalls Bebinn and other women of Dublin in the narrative of *Cellacháin* who are given to the captors: 'They spent a week in arranging this [patronage]. And as they went away they burned the town. (*Ocus do bhatar gu cenn sectmaine ar an seolad sin. Ocus oc imtheacht doibh ro loiscset in baili.*)'³²⁸ Bebinn's death date, as well as that of Mór ingen Áedha below, is approximate based on Cellachán's death in 952.

Mór ingen Áedha, d. ?950

'That night there happened to be a discourse between Sitric, the son of Turgeis, and his wife. And his wife asked him why he gave his sister [Bebinn] to Cellachan, as it was he who had destroyed the Lochlannachs. He answered that it was not out of kindness to him, but in order to capture himself and to slay his people. The woman arose early the next morning, and put a bondsmaid's dress round her. For this discourse which she had heard was grievous

³²⁷ Downham, *Medieval Ireland*, 78-9.

³²⁸ Bugge, 94.

to her as she herself greatly loved Cellachan. She left the town, and came upon the road where she supposed that the Munstermen would come. And as she stayed there she beheld Cellachan approaching, and the woman told this news to him. Cellachan asked her who she herself was. “Mor, daughter of Aed, son of Echu, am I,” said the woman, “daughter of the king of the Islands of the Foreigners (*i.e. the Hebrides*), and my husband is Sitric, son of Turgeis, of the Fair Lochlannachs. And I fell in love with you the day I saw you at Port Lairge.”³²⁹

Mór ingen Áedha delivers a poem warning Cellachán of the danger in Dublin, which he already suspected by his men. The place they intersect is not specified, just that Dublin is eastward from there, and is presumably not more than a few hours’ transit for Mór from her home of Waterford.³³⁰ The men choose to retreat and ‘take the woman [Mór ingen Áedha] with them, as far as they went (*in fad do rachdais in ben do breith Leo...*)’³³¹ The Lochlannaigh who are dispatched from Dublin catch up to them quickly.

While married to a Norse-named husband who is son of another Norse-named man, Mór’s father and grandfather both have names that are Gaelic; yet these men are explicitly kings of the ‘*Innsi Gall*’, which Bugge equates with the Hebrides, and later specifically the ‘*innsi Fionnghall*’. Either this is historical information which reveals an astonishingly early melding of Gaelic and Norse identity in tenth century western Scotland, or as a fiction it implies a slippery lack of boundaries for the twelfth century conception of Norse versus Gaelic identity two centuries prior. Either way, or somewhere between the two absolutes, *Cellacháin* demonstrates a softer division than *Gall* and *Gael* for Mór ingen Áedha.

Cellachán’s poem to be brought back home as he goes into captivity is ‘to the men of Munster and to their wives (*d’fëraibh Múmhan, is dá mnaibh*)’.³³² This also includes a lament for Mór:

‘Tis a pity that Mór has not come with me.
The King’s daughter of the Islands of the White Foreigners.
That I should be brought eastward,
'Tis not to you it is sad.
Truagh gan Mór do teacht liom
Inghion Rígh innsi Fionnghall
mé do bheith ar breith a soir

³²⁹ Bugge, 75.

³³⁰ Bugge, 17-8, 75-6.

³³¹ Bugge, 18, 76.

³³² Bugge, 24, 82.

*noch an libhsi nach dursan.*³³³

Is there a concept of Cellachán being less of a king or lacking for not having a wife? By the end of the narrative, they are married after the convenient death of her first husband Sitriuc.

Mór ingen Áedha finds an unexpected enemy in the daughter of Donnchadh, unhelpfully also called Mór. Mór ingen Donnchadh is married to another of Turgeis's sons, making Mór ingen Áedha her sister-in-law. They are both women of Gaelic names daughter of men with Gaelic names. Mór ingen Donnchadh decides to take her husband's enmity with Cellachán into her own hands and attempts to tell her sister-in-law that Cellachán has died. The plan is that Mór ingen Áedha will be so distraught by her lover's death that she kills herself, and as in a Shakespearean tragedy, Cellachán will himself die of grief and his troops will lose their will to fight:

'Then the wife of Tora, son of Turgeis, namely Mór, the daughter (*ingen*) of Donnchadh, said: "I know", said she, "a plot that will result in the death of Cellachán..."

"Let this be done", said the women, and they told the young woman these tidings.

"It is not true for you, O women," said Mór [ingen Áedha], "and it would be better for you if that story were true. And it is certain that Cellachán would die, if I should die. But I get news of him every night in my bed, and yet I am not his wife," said the woman.³³⁴

This plan fails, however, as Mór ingen Áedha has a reliable source she trusts more, so she knows that the news of Cellachán's death is false.

Significantly, Mór ingen Donnchadh sends 'women' (*mna*) to speak to her sister-in-law rather than deliver the falsehood herself. This demonstrates that there are a group of women who function under Mór ingen Donnchadh's direction, whether by employment, enslavement, or other social obligation, and they are able to freely travel to and converse with Mór ingen Áedha. She tells them herself that they are wrong and 'it would be better for you if that story were true (*'do budh ferr libhsi cumad fhir an scelsin*)',³³⁵ suggesting that the statuses of these women — whatever language they speak or how they see themselves — rise and fall with Mór ingen Donnchadh and her Norse husband.

³³³ Bugge, 24, 81.

³³⁴ Ibid., 113.

³³⁵ Bugge, 54, 113.

Gormlaith ingen Murchada, d. 1030

Gormlaith ingen Murchada is another female figure who has an Irish name but operates in this genre in ways that are against her husband(s) and sometimes pro-Norse. Historically, the annals record that she was first married to the Norse king of Dublin Olaf (Amláib) Cuarán, producing Sitriuc king of Dublin; and then married Brian Bóru, bearing Donnchadh who would later become king of Munster. Other literature suggests that she divorced Brian and then married his rival Máel Sechlainn II, but this is not clearly attested.³³⁶ Gormlaith's father was Murchad Mac Finn, but her mother is only given as *scirrdech banamas*, which Ní Bhrolcháin posits may indicate a Norse maternal origin for the unnamed woman, and which may further suggest that Gormlaith was raised bilingual and culturally fluent enough to marry both Norse king Olaf and Gaelic king Brian.³³⁷

Within the *Cogadh*, the literary Gormlaith incites her brother Máelmórdha to warfare against her (now former) husband Brian. Máelmórdha loses a silver button in the act of carrying a mast or tree trunk to Brian in submission, and asks his sister to repair it for him. Disgusted, she 'took the tunic and cast it into the fire (*Ro gab in rigan intinar, ocus tuc urcur isin tenid de*).'³³⁸ Gormlaith insists 'that his [Brian's] son would require the same thing from his son (*asbert co sirfead a mac ara mhac in ni cetna*).' The Brussels manuscript reads, 'Brian's son would hereafter require it from his [Maelmordha's] son, and all other men afterwards (*...atbert f6r co sirfead Mac Briain ar a macsan ma diaig, ocus gaç duine d6ir aroile*).'³³⁹ This is a classic example of the female inciter motif, where issues of honour are disbursed and managed by women of their male relations.³⁴⁰ 'Gormlaith's words may have been seen as contributory, and indeed later authors linked the two incidents; nonetheless, Gormlaith's role as evil schemer was certainly less pronounced in the early-twelfth-century account than it was later to become.'³⁴¹

³³⁶ Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Tales of Three Gormlaiths,' 18-20.

³³⁷ Ní Bhrolcháin, 'Who was Gormlaith's mother?', *passim*, especially 90.

³³⁸ Todd, 142-3.

³³⁹ Todd, 143, fn. 15.

³⁴⁰ See, for instance, *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power* by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013).

³⁴¹ Ní Mhaonaigh, 21.

Njáls saga places the blame even more squarely on Gormlaith (written in Old Icelandic as Kormlöðr), but for inciting her son Sitriuc (Sigtrygg): ‘She had become so spiteful towards him [Brian] after their divorce that she wanted very much to see him dead...Kormlöðr pressed her son Sigtrygg hard to kill King Brian (*En svo var hún orðin grimm Brjáni konungi eftir skilnað þeirra að hún vildi hann gjarna feigan...Kormlöð eggjaði mjög Sigtrygg son sinn að drepa Brján konung*).’³⁴² ‘Kormlöðr (Gormlaith) was the mother of Sigtryggr of Dublin and also the estranged wife of Brjänn and is painted in *Njáls saga* as the evil instigator of the battle — as she is in *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh*.’³⁴³ In both Norse and Irish source, Gormlaith is the instigator, but of a Gaelic-named son in the Irish language source and a Norse-named son in the Norse language source.

Sláine ingen Briain, d. ?1050

‘Then it was Brian’s daughter, namely the wife of Amhlaibh’s son said, “It appears to me, said she, “that the foreigners have gained their inheritance.” “What meaning thou, O woman?” said Amhlaibh’s son. “The foreigners are going into the sea, their natural inheritance,” said she; “I wonder is it heat that is upon them; but they tarry not to be milked, if it is.” The son of Amhlaibh became angered, and he gave her a blow.’*’

*Is and sin ro raid ingen Briain ben [meic] Amlaib, is gois lemsa, arsi, ro benrat na Gaill re nduchus. Cid sen, a ingen, ar mac Amlaib. Na Gaill ic tocht is in fargi, ait is dual daib, arsi, nuchu netar in aibell fail ortho, acht ni anait re mblegun mased. Ro fergaiched mac Amlaib ria, oculus tuc dornd di.*³⁴⁴

*B. adds, ‘*di dur ben fiacail asa ceann*, “which knocked a tooth out her head”.’³⁴⁵

The *Cogadh*, written as the ultimate propaganda piece for the Dál gCais, omits entirely the name of Brian’s daughter who was married to Sitriuc king of Dublin. We know from other sources that it was Sláine. But this passage does not name Sitriuc either; rather, it is clearly intended as a metaphor for the conflict between the Norse and Gaels in the form of their children: Sitriuc is twice described as

³⁴² Cook, trans., *Njáls*, 296-7; original language *Icelandic Saga Database*.

³⁴³ Etchingham, et al., *Norse-Gaelic Contacts*, 227.

³⁴⁴ Todd, 192-3.

³⁴⁵ Todd, 192 fn. 4.

Amhlaibh's son³⁴⁶ and the phrase by which he refers to his wife is better translated as 'daughter' than woman, making his response closer to 'O daughter [of Brian]'. This conversation is written in Middle Irish, and since Old Norse appears elsewhere in the text (see conclusions chapter) this may suggest that the audience understood Sitriuc to have been conversant in Irish. Either way, Sláine and Sitriuc, both native-born of Ireland and aware of each other's culture since birth, can speak the same language, and are likely both bilingual.

While violence is foisted on Sláine - to lasting harm in the Brussels text - the *Cogadh* nonetheless depicts her as speaking feistily, even treacherously to her husband. This is a narrow but illuminating window into the early twelfth century perception of Norse-Gaelic intermarriage a century prior. Whether or not she knew that her husband would react so violently, she is shown as feeling bold and authoritative enough to make a cruel joke about the death of his soldiers. In particular the term *duchus* (modern Irish *dúchas*, home or tradition) is a contentious suggestion that the gaill do not have a 'natural' or legal hold on Dublin or anywhere else in Ireland; instead their 'place' (a better translation of *ait*) is the sea (*in fargi*). Compare this to similar language in the *Cellacháin*. The maritime advantages of the Norse in Ireland are discussed in the chapter on fleets.

There is also language of femininity in Sláine's insult of the Norse: 'the heat' (*in aibell*) could refer to ovulation and a desire to copulate or a necessity to relieve milk, animalistic but specifically female urges. Therefore the retreat of the Norse is unmanly, even as they drown in the rising tide. The narrator of the *Cogadh* uses this same language in the prior chapter to describe the event: 'They retreated therefore to the sea, like a herd of cows in heat... (*Cid tra acht, ro thechsetar isin fargi, amail elta bo ar aibell*)'.³⁴⁷ By putting nearly the same words into the mouth of Sláine, the author of the *Cogadh* demonstrates sympathy and correlation with Brian's daughter. While she is a woman and a noncombatant, she confidently states the same demeaning metaphor to her husband, placing her firmly on the side of Brian as well as the author. Using a woman's voice, one of the few instances of

³⁴⁶ There is a peculiarity in the Ó Cléirigh MS where twice the mac has been omitted, making the speaker and wife of Brian's daughter 'Amhlaibh' rather than his son. But as it is retained in the B MS, aligns with the historical annals and other sources, and makes narrative sense, Todd feels that this was a double error (191, footnote 4; 193, footnote 3).

³⁴⁷ Todd, 192-3.

a direct quote from a woman in this text, adds further derision to the gender-derided insult of Sitriuc's troops. Sláine's death date is approximate, based on the death of her husband in 1042.³⁴⁸

The way women act in these three narratives is hardly feminist in a modern sense; they are fairly two-dimensional characters and always serve to directly affect a man, whether for benefit or harm. But their value and ways of acting hinge on their support of their husbands and blood relatives, not whether they are operating in a Norse or a Gaelic milieu. Within this literature it is difficult to even tell in which socio-linguistic community a woman like Mór ingen Áedha or Gormlaith ingen Murchada belongs. It is intentional that these bilingual women raising children, who could claim Norse and Gaelic titles, were considered part of both.

Gaelic v. Norse Masculinities

It is very different for the men of these texts, however. These are dynastic propaganda narratives written to ennoble a valiant ancestor to the point of heroism. Therefore warfare and martial prowess are constant themes, but the language used to describe Gaels and Norse in combat differ strikingly. Gaels are accorded bravery and acclaim by leaping into battle wearing fine linen and beautifully decorated accessories, indicating that their power is from their athleticism and fearlessness. The Norse, on the other hand, are described as heavily armoured in metal helmets and coats of mail, and move slowly and brutally in shielded formations.

The historical reality of ninth and tenth century military activity is not what is being described in the literature, it is important to warn. The archaeology of northern European warfare is poorly attested in the first place; for instance, a single helmet survives from the whole of the Old Norse-speaking region during the 'Viking Era'. Common sense also suggests that combatants would utilise whatever arms and armour they could afford. Even if Norse technology outstripped that of the landed Irish at first, surely the Gaels would rapidly engage in trade and other methods to obtain equipment.

³⁴⁸ Clarke, *King Sitriuc*, 264.

Rather, these narratives capture the eleventh and early twelfth century imagination of Viking battles in Ireland. For the Middle Irish audience, the conflict of their ancestors was characterised by the different fighting styles of Norse and Gael, and the respective societies' differing views on masculinity.

The *Cogadh* describes the Norse oppression of Munster, as synecdoche for all Ireland, in almost entirely masculine language, particularly against the feminine Munster/Ireland: '...they spread themselves over Mumhain; and they built Dúns, and fortresses, and landing-ports, over all Erin...so that they made spoil-land, and sword-land, and conquered-land of her (...*co ndernsat ferann creiçe, ocus cloidim, ocus forgabala go foirleian, ocus go coitcenn [di]*).'³⁴⁹

It states that the Vikings have displaced every Gaelic Irish king, chief, abbot, steward, and soldier (i.e., replacing the man of the house), reducing agency 'so that none of the men of Erin had power (*co nach raibhe a comas ag aen duine dferaihb Erenn*)' to provide hospitality or defend his family or people.³⁵⁰ The alliterative language literally reads 'any people of the men (*-feraihb*) of Ireland', emphasising the depersonalisation of the men by the loss of their leadership roles. The author explicitly attributes the Norse triumph to their coats of mail (*lurech*), swords (*claidium*), and spears (*sleag*), as well as 'their strength, and their venom, and their ferocity (*a neirt, a nemi, ocus a nbadamlacht*)'.³⁵¹

Much later in the narrative, the Norse forces gathered for the Battle of Clontarf are described as two thousand men all wearing full-body metal armour of some kind:

'And there was not one villain or robber of that two thousand Norse gathered for Clontarf who had no polished, strong, triple-plated, glittering armour of refined iron, or of cool uncorroding brass, encasing their sides and bodies from head to foot.'

*Ni bai, imorro, danar no dibergach don fichit cet sin, can lurig lainderdha, tailc, trendualaig, taitnemaig, do iarund aith aitlegtha, no дума innuar nemergidi, ima toebaib, ocus imma cnesaib leo o cennaib co bondaib.*³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Todd, 40-1, emphasis added.

³⁵⁰ Todd, 48-9.

³⁵¹ Todd, 52-3.

³⁵² Todd, 152-3.

‘Blue/grey people (*Daeine glasa*)’ and ‘foreigners of the armour (*goill na luireach*)’ further equivocate the Norse with their coats of mail.³⁵³

Cellacháin continues this imagery, describing the forces of Amlaib as ‘a thick, dark stronghold of black iron, and a grey-polished, hard-sharp city of battle-shields, and a strong enclosure of stout shafts (*dún dluith duaibhsech duibh-iarainn 7 cathair clogudghlas cruaghfhaebranch chaithsciath 7 ruadhbhuaile remharcraon*)’.³⁵⁴ This conflates the armoured Norse with their fortified towns, another fundamental difference in lifestyle from the Gaels in Ireland. A fictional battle at Ard Macha portrays the Norse as ‘a glittering, deathbringing circle of combatants (*cathbhuaile crithrech chomhartach*)’,³⁵⁵ and later at Dún Dealgan, ‘a dense fortress of dark shields, and an immovable oakwood of venomous and strong spears (*dun dighain doinnsciathach 7 sluaghchoire sesmach slegh neimhnech nertchalma*)’.³⁵⁶

The Gaels, in opposition, are depicted as heroically charging into battle without regard for bodily protection. Within *Cogadh*, Brian Bóru and his brother Mathgamhain take different approaches to the Viking incursions: the latter makes truces and cedes land to the Norse in order to save his people, while the former attacks them relentlessly and gets nearly all of his followers killed. Brian chides his brother for making compromises and losing honour, while Mathgamhain believes that his responsibility is for his subjects’ lives rather than valour. These two exemplars of Gaelic masculinity show literary tension between battle-glory and protection of their charges in the pursuit of ideal manhood.

Eventually, Brian convinces Mathgamhain that the long-term survival of their family relies on the eradication of the Norse, and they go into warfare together. In order to have any chance, they have to recruit other Gaelic families, only one of which is described as ‘having a large warrior’s shield at his side (*...fosra rabi sciath mor mileta ar cli cach oen fír...*)’.³⁵⁷ The very call to arms acknowledges

³⁵³ Todd, 202-3.

³⁵⁴ Bugge, 7, 64.

³⁵⁵ Bugge, 32, 90.

³⁵⁶ Bugge, 40-1, 99.

³⁵⁷ Todd, 74.

that it is ‘unequal warfare (*nanforran*)’;³⁵⁸ it is the valour and manliness of Gaelic masculinity that calls them to fight even against the odds, rather than being seen as a foolish suicide.

This eventually results in Clontarf, of course, where the author waxes effusively about Brian’s forces and allies: ‘the stainless intelligent heroes of the Gaidhil along with them (...*geratai glangasta goedel ar oen riu*)’.³⁵⁹ This description of their weaponry and battle strategy comes later in the chapter, with emphasis on their cloth tunics and vests. Shields and helmets are only ‘on the heads of chiefs and royal knights’ and seem much more decorative than functional, being made of gold and gems. Surprisingly, their armoury includes ‘*Lochlann axes*’, but they are specifically ‘in the hands of chiefs and leaders’ and only for ‘cutting and maiming the close well-fastened coats of mail (*fri tuarcain lureac lutmar drulinec dib*)’.³⁶⁰ The leaders are also the only ones with swords.

This is an eye-catching array of men, but their weapons are less formidable than the skills with which they wield them. Brian’s son Murchad is described as the height of masculine ideal and ‘the last man in Erin who had equal dexterity in striking [with a sword] with his right and with his left hand’.³⁶¹ He uses this skill to break impenetrable Norse armour at ‘the buttons, and the fastenings, and the clasps, and the buckles that were fastening the helmet (...*na cnaip, ocus cengal, ocus iata, ocus na coraigthe barat ic cong bail in cathbairr*...)’.³⁶² Murchad also pulls the mail coat off of another Norseman and then wrestles him, dramatically stabbing him with his own sword three times!³⁶³

Cellacháin makes the difference between the Gaels and Norse even more explicit, stating that the Gaels do not have armour but only fancy clothing.³⁶⁴ Undaunted, in battle they ‘put the hooks of their shields over each other, and they made “champion-knots” by attaching their broad belts to each other’.³⁶⁵ But the Norse slaughter the Gaels due to their lack of armour. This causes the hero Cellachán

³⁵⁸ Todd, 74-5.

³⁵⁹ Todd, 160-3.

³⁶⁰ Todd, 162-3.

³⁶¹ Todd, 186-7.

³⁶² Todd, 194-5.

³⁶³ Todd, 194-7.

³⁶⁴ Bugge, 7, 64.

³⁶⁵ Bugge, 7, 64.

to reach a new fury and somehow overpower his technological disadvantage, inciting the rest of his men to attack with renewed violence focused on the Norse outside of their coats of mail. For example one puts 'his spear through the boss of the buckler and beneath the rim of the helmet into the [Norse] hero, so that it passed quickly into the hero's neck',³⁶⁶ and another performs a manoeuvre where he pulls up a Norseman's coat of mail and disembowels him.³⁶⁷ The Gaels carry this brutal style of no-holds-barred fighting to Dún Dealgan, a ship-bourne battle, where they use the weight of the mail-coats against the Norse by overloading their ships and throwing them overboard to drown.

These narratives explore the literary boundaries between Norse and Gaelic performative masculinity, where Norse warfare is un-elegant and brutish to the Gaels and Gaelic warfare is poorly arranged and underhanded in the sight of the Norse. The best evidence of how these men occupy different standards occurs when they cross boundaries and the author demonstrates how a change has overcome them. When the Munster forces go to fight for Cellachán with naval warfare, they must transition from Gaels to Norse in their tactics, and to their very appearance and mindset: 'the senses, and feelings, and thoughts of the heroes underwent a change...'.³⁶⁸ In this literature no such transformation is ever shown for a woman, whose domain is off the battlefield and whose socio-linguistic allegiance is fluid. To be a man in pre-Norman Ireland, one must choose a side by which to measure his masculinity, and to function within it totally: either brave by athleticism and showmanship as a Gaelic man, or ferocious with the aid of technology as a Norse one.

The Cerball of Osraige saga has several mentions of the *Gall-Gaidhel*, who appear to be paradoxical: their name means 'foreign Gaels' (see previous chapter on Names for the Norse for more on the *Gall-Gaidhel*). But viewed in the context of this dual avenue of masculinity in pre-Norman Ireland, their role is clear: they are men of Gaelic origin who have voluntarily adapted to the Norse mode of gender performance. The annalist explains that they are *daltai* of the Norse, a term which refers to the formal institution of fosterage but also connotes students and apprentices,

³⁶⁶ Bugge, 8, 65.

³⁶⁷ Bugge, 8-9, 66.

³⁶⁸ Bugge, 40, 99.

indicating that they have learned from the Northmen (*normannaigh*), ‘and sometimes they are even called Northmen’.³⁶⁹ For the annalist, these men who have taken on Norse methods of warfare are idiots for having given up their patrimony, a similar sentiment expressed by Brian to Mathgamhain in *Cogadh*, and furthermore whatever misfortune they suffer at the hands of their former fellow Gaels is warranted: ‘...the Eireannaigh deserved that killing, for as the Northmen do, so they also did.’³⁷⁰

The *Cellacháin* also distinguishes a group of Gaels who operate in Norse idiom but can be isolated from their actions by their parentage. In the twenty-third chapter, Cellachán and his men fights the amassed forces of the ‘inhabitants of Ciarrage and the Lochlannachs who previously had escaped from them in the Battle of Limerick’. Cellachán succeeds and takes hostages of the combined forces, then is joined by Donnchuan mac Cennédig who ‘began to inspect the Danair and the foreigners (*na neachtrainn*). At seeing him the descendants of Eógán welcomed him and told him to remember his friendship.... Donnchuan assented to this, for he thought it was an evil thing to let Clan Eógán be slaughtered and reduced in numbers.’³⁷¹ *Echtrann* is translated by Bugge as ‘foreigners’ and indeed has the connotation of one on a journey (*echtra*),³⁷² but this specific term exists in all of the texts under consideration only in this precise setting, to describe Gaels of Munster allied with the Norse. Why else would the author distinguish the hostages under Donnchuan’s purview as ‘*eachtrainn*’ alongside ‘*Danair*’? The term was utilised for the necessity to distinguish Norse allies from the Norse themselves, as Gaels who had gone on a ‘journey’ astray from their birth culture.

The reverse, inclusive terminology was also available in these Middle Irish texts for Norse operating in alliance with Gaels. The Battle of Clontarf involved Norse and Gaels on either side, even in the primary narrative given in the *Cogadh*, and was not a simple conflict between ‘native

³⁶⁹ Radner, 98.

³⁷⁰ Radner, 98.

³⁷¹ Bugge, 71-2.

³⁷² eDIL s.v. *echtrann*: *adj.* strange, foreign; *as subst.* stranger, foreigner, alien; sometimes connoting enemy.

Gaels' and 'foreign Norse' as portrayed in later nationalist material.³⁷³ Máel Mórdha and the men of Leinster famously opposed Brian's forces alongside Norse recruited from outside of Ireland. 'As for Brian's forces in the battle, in fairness to the author of the *Cogadh* it must be said that he is very candid about the depleted nature of Brian's authority': the men of Munster, Connacht, and Mide (*i.e.* Máel Sechnaill II).³⁷⁴ These men of Munster fighting for Brian must include those from the Hiberno-Norse towns Limerick, Waterford, and perhaps Cork and Wexford, as described elsewhere in the *Cogadh*: 'from all the men of Munster, foreigner and Gael (*de feraib Muman uli eter gall ocus goedel*)'.³⁷⁵

Conclusions

Three modes of gender expression were thus available to the laity of Ireland in the literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. There were Norse men, who intimidated and shielded himself in heavy armour; Gaelic men, who performed warfare with pomp and athleticism; and women, who operated in their family's best interests — whether they privileged the family of their father or of their husband. Ridicule and shame were given to those who transgressed the boundaries of their accepted performance, but only as far as they are revealed to have come from 'the other side'. Women could inhabit both socio-linguistic communities, but it was deceitful for a man to do so. To be a man of honour in pre-Norman Ireland, according to these narratives, one had to choose and live as wholly Norse or wholly Gaelic.

³⁷³ See, for instance, Brian Boru's inclusion in Sinn Fein(*sic*) in a pamphlet on display at The Little Museum of Dublin.

³⁷⁴ *Cogadh* implies that Máel Sechnaill betrayed Brian by withdrawing from battle, whereas the Annals of the Four Masters ascribes the victory to his intervention after Brian's death. Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 201.

³⁷⁵ Todd, 48-9.

V. Culture & Religion

This chapter explores the characterisation of Norse speakers operating in Ireland in these texts in the realms of personality and piety. The non-Christian nature of these initial Vikings generated additional fear and mistrust, and the foreignness of their religion (or lack thereof) enthralled Gaelic audiences long after the Hiberno-Norse founded churches and became fully vested members of Christendom. The actions and maxims written in these texts are not what the pre-Christian Norse believed or practiced in Ireland, but the cultural memory and eleventh and twelfth century Irish imagination of heathen religion. There may yet be a kernel of ‘truth’ preserved in the material, but without contemporary Norse literacy, or modern-style objectivity in Middle Irish historical writing, it is safest to assume that these practices are fictive.

Indeed, a meta-narrative emerges from these themes: whatever the heathen Norse are accused of doing, some Christian Gael performs a similar act. For instance, Brian Bóru burns down the ‘Wood of Thor’ as an act of dominion over Dublin, whose residents cultivate a space with the name of a god;³⁷⁶ but Brian’s rise to power in Munster was embodied by the destruction of multiple inaugural sites associated with sacred trees. The Norse are associated with lying and oath-breaking, but Norse Ragnall is killed at a banquet held in his honour by Gael Áedh mac Neill.

Within these narratives, the very bodies of Norse and Gael join the conflict. Heads are removed and displayed in triumph, but also identified and returned — a mockery or a kindness? The Norse undergo ‘berserker’ rages, but so do the Gaels. Saints and miracles (*míorbúili*) support Christians, but magic happens to the advantage of the Norse as well. By looking closely at the textual treatment of both Norse and Gael praxes, even while fictive, these narratives reveal a contemporary permeability in morality and performance that is nowhere as simple as good versus evil, or even enlightened versus ignorant.

³⁷⁶ Seán Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 214–5.

Norse heathenism and idolatry

The actual nature of pre-Christian religious practices of Scandinavia, described as *heathenism* within this thesis (from Old Norse *heiðinn* or ‘heath-dweller’; compare Latin *paganus*, ‘person from the countryside’), are still undergoing intensive scrutiny from archaeological and post-textual evidence. There was no unified ‘church’ or hierarchical organisation across Scandinavia, and likely modes of worship, forms of priesthood, and even the specific deities honoured varied significantly across space and time. Rather than attempt to identifying the signifiers of heathenism in these sources as genuine worship or practice, this thesis considers the eleventh and early twelfth century Gaelic imagination of what the Norse speakers in Ireland would have done as part of their ethno-linguistic culture. This is not what the vikings in Ireland ‘believed’, but what the Gaelic Irish authors of these texts believed the ancestors of their Hiberno-Norse neighbours believed.

Nonetheless, themes emerge in the sources as to how the heathen Norse function. The Cerball of Osraige saga includes dialogue from Horm, a Danar leader, to his men before battle, which hints at a cohesive albeit military worldview:

‘What you must do now is to go single-mindedly (*go h-aonmeanmnach*) against them, as if you did not expect to live, but were not waiting for death either; and revenge yourselves.

‘And though you may not have a lucky victory (*cosgar sainmheach*) thereby, we will have done what our gods (*ar n-dee*) and our fate (*ar toicthe*) will give to us...’³⁷⁷

For Horm and his men, the fighting itself is honourable and their ‘gods’ and ‘fate’ determine the outcome, rather than whether or not they are victorious. To the Gaelic audience, the Danair are fanatically ‘single-minded’ where they do not even care about the outcome but that they fight as if they are ‘not waiting for death’. These Danair are dangerous for their devotion to warfare without the mitigation of their ‘gods’, whereas the Gaelic Irish fight with the Christian God in mind.

Later in the saga, a pitched battle in the area of Kildare sees Áed Finnliath mac Néill fighting a combined army of Flann Sinna, the Gaelic Laighin, and Norse Lochlannaigh. Áed’s rally before the battle is the Christian counterpoint to Horm’s heathen call before:

³⁷⁷ Radner, 92-93.

‘It is not by the number of warriors that a battle is won, but by the help of God (*fhurtacht an Coimdheadh*) and by the righteousness of a sovereign. Arrogance and excessive size of an army, moreover, are not what God values, but rather humble bearing and firmness of heart...Do now as your fathers and grandfathers did: endure volleys discharged at you, in the name of the Trinity. When you see me rising, rise, all of you, together against them, as God will guide you (*faillseachus Día dhuibh*).’³⁷⁸

The chapter on names for the Norse studied the use of ‘gentiles’ (*gentes*) to demarcate them as non-Christian, and this manifests in further Old Testament imagery of the Norse performing ‘idolatry’ (*iodhaladhradh*). Áed instructs his men to ‘spare the Christians and attack the idolators’ (*legish dona Criostadhibh 7 imridh for iodhaladharthaibh*),³⁷⁹ distinguishing Laigin and Lochlannaigh despite their military allegiance. The *Cogadh* also distinguishes the Norse from the Gael via idolatry, claiming in chapter sixty-nine that the ‘Danmarkians (*Danmargaig*)’ were able to find and retrieve treasure throughout Ireland ‘through paganism and idol-worship (*tre geintilidhect ocus tre iodhaladhradh*)’, though the specific mechanism is unmentioned.³⁸⁰

Notably, these Norse are written as able to penetrate ‘the various solitudes belonging to Fians or to fairies (*ag Fianaibh no ag sithcuraibh*)’,³⁸¹ which are clearly a native Gaelic tradition, outside of or at least ill at ease with the Christian church. The roughly contemporary twelfth-century Middle Irish text *Acallamh na Senórach*, for instance, tells stories of the Fianna only within a larger frame narrative of St. Patrick expelling the warriors’ demons, thus sanctifying their exploits for the written record: ‘*fianaigecht* ultimately accommodated within a Christian framework’.³⁸² The Norse ‘idolators’, while coming from overseas, are not far removed from the Gaelic pre-Christian past; and Ireland, while Christian, still has places beyond control of the church, according to the author of these texts.

This leakage of pre-Christian Ireland continues in *Cogadh*, where a supernatural host is seen in the sky before the Battle of Clontarf:

‘And there arose a wild...“vulture” (*badb*), screaming and fluttering over their heads. ‘And there arose also the “satyrs” (*bananaig*), and the “idiots” (*boccanaig*) and the “maniacs of the valleys” (*geliti glini*), and the witches (*amati adgaill*) and “goblins”

³⁷⁸ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 132-3.

³⁷⁹ Radner, 134-5.

³⁸⁰ Todd, 114-5.

³⁸¹ Todd, 114-15.

³⁸² Murray, *The Early Finn Cycle*, 22.

(*siabra*)...and they were screaming and comparing the valour and combat of both parties.³⁸³

Todd's translation includes colourful choices that obscure the Gaelic Irish origin of several of these supernatural creatures. *Badb* is better translated as a 'hooded' or 'scald-crow', but refers specifically to a war-goddess who takes the form of that bird.³⁸⁴ *Bánánach*, *bocánach*, and *genit/gelit glini* appear together in other twelfth century literature from the *Lebor na hUidre* and the Book of Leinster recension of the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, with the former two repeated as well in contemporary *Fianaigecht* material.³⁸⁵ As they appear to be stock characters of frenzy in Middle Irish literature, Todd's description of them with Latinate creatures of madness reflects a nineteenth-century preference for Classical material that is not shared by the original. Middle Irish *siabair*, from *siabriad* 'distorts, transforms (for the worse); enchants, bewitches',³⁸⁶ makes the *siabra* another distinctly Gaelic Irish figure in the sky above the battle. As these beings apparently communicate with each other, and are talking about 'both parties' in the conflict, this lends a supernatural milieu over all attendants present, whether Christian or, for the purposes of literary tension, apostate heathen.

Brian exemplifies his sanctity by not engaging in the Battle of Clontarf at all. Instead, the admittedly quite old man prays for his troops in a tent nearby, and like Christ, he has foreseen his own death on Good Friday. Brian's death is foretold, however, by an Aoibhell of Craglea ('*Aibhell Craicce Leithe*')³⁸⁷, 'a supernatural lady who resided in the *sid* of Craig Liath, near Killaloe, co. Clare.'³⁸⁸ Brian also meets with, and directs the violent attentions of, the 'supernatural being' Dúnlaing Ua hArtagáin during the conflict.³⁸⁹ This cast of non-Christian characters around Brian and his troops at Clontarf complicate the simple literary dichotomy of the righteous Gaelic Irish versus the evil heathen Hiberno-Norse. How can the Norse be accused of idolatry when Brian himself converses with supernatural creatures for his own benefit?

³⁸³ Todd, 174-5.

³⁸⁴ eDIL s.v. *badb*

³⁸⁵ Dillon, *Lebor*; Murray, *Finn Cycle*.

³⁸⁶ eDIL s.v. *siabraid*

³⁸⁷ Todd, *Cogadh*, 201.

³⁸⁸ O'Rahilly, 'Ir. *Aobh*', 3.

³⁸⁹ Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 189.

Before the Battle of Clontarf, Brian's career included the destruction of sacred inauguration sites of rival Gaelic kings, often marked by trees. The Dal gCáis themselves had a sacred tree at Mag Adair that was hewn by the king of Tara in 981, and apparently replanted to be hewn again by the king of Connacht in 1051.³⁹⁰ This contextualises a component of Hiberno-Norse Dublin, the *Caill Tomair* mentioned several times within *Cogadh*. In chapter 70 'the *Caill Tomair* was burned by him, and hewn down (*ro loiscead Coill Comair[sic] leis, ocus ro ledradh*)' after Brian won the battle of Glen Máma in 1000.³⁹¹ While there is a palaeographical error in this chapter, the Annals of Inisfallen clarify that 'the men of Munster...burned *Caill Tomair* as firewood (*Caill Tomair do loscud doib do chonnud*)' in this year.³⁹² During the Battle of Clontarf, for dramatic effect, Brian's servant first compares the din of battle to the sound of *Caill Tomair* being chopped down, and then later compares the battle to the sound of the same wood on fire.³⁹³ Duffy writes, 'From these references we take it that *Caill Tomair* was a famously impressive tract of oakwood close to Dublin and highly prized by the Dubliners'.³⁹⁴

Brian's destruction of the wood is part of his tactic to delegitimise rival kings by literally uprooting their sources of inaugural power. The targeting of *Caill Tomair* has an extra element of ethno-religious fervour, as the namesake of this wood (*caill*) can be read as *Tomar*, the Middle Irish approximation of Old Norse *Þórr*, modern English 'Thor'.³⁹⁵ With a softened medial *-m-*, the rendering of other Old Norse names incorporating *Þór-* prefixes use *Tomr-*, such as *Tomrair* for *Þórrar* and *Tomralt* for *Þóraldr*.³⁹⁶ Elsewhere in *Cogadh* the Norse are described in poetry as 'the people of *Tomar* (*muintir Tomair*)'.³⁹⁷

The interpretation of the non-Christian gods is almost non-existent in these texts, but the few places where the authors depict the Norse opinions of their own modes of worship are therefore all

³⁹⁰ Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 66.

³⁹¹ Todd, *Cogadh*, 116-7.

³⁹² Mac Airt, *Inisfallen*, 174 (I1000.2).

³⁹³ Todd, *Cogadh*, 196-9.

³⁹⁴ Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 214-5.

³⁹⁵ Bugge, 138.

³⁹⁶ Marstrander, *Bidreg Til Deg Norske*, 66, 109, 127.

³⁹⁷ Todd, *Cogadh*, 30-1. The fleet of the Norse are also described in *Cellacháin* as '*clainni Tuirgeis*', though this may be literally Turgeis's sons; Bugge, 42.

the more compelling. The Osraige chronicle depicts the Danar Horm talking to his men about “our gods and our fate” (*ar n-dee 7 ar d-toicthe*)³⁹⁸ and later describes Hona as ‘praying to his gods (*118ttach a dhée*)’.³⁹⁹ The Norse in *Cogadh* are able to recover underground treasure ‘through paganism and idolatry (*tre geintlídacht ocus tre iodáladráð*)’.⁴⁰⁰ Just as *Tomar* represents the Middle Irish rendering of Old Norse *Bórr*, the same principle suggests a ‘fleet of Odund (*loinges Oduind*)’⁴⁰¹ could refer to Old Norse *Óðinn*. The name of the Norse god does not appear elsewhere in the Irish language, but *Odunn/d* would appropriately render the medial -ð- into Middle Irish orthography as well as support the Irish linguistic characteristic of *leathan le leathan* or ‘broad with broad’ vowels.

Apostasy

The only thing worse than a non-Christian, according to these texts, is a former Christian.⁴⁰² This appears in the literary malice of Bróðir, above, as well as the *Gall Gaedhel* of the Cerball of Osraige saga, first discussed in the chapter on names for the Norse. Were these Gaels who willingly joined the Norse required to renounce Christianity in order to participate, or does the annalist assume that associating with non-Christians necessitated penance and forgiveness on their return to their culture of birth?

There are also apostate Gaels in *Cellacháin*, men of Ciarraige who willingly join with displaced Lochlannaigh from Limerick to resist Cellachán. After Cellachán’s victory over them at Glenn Corbraigi,⁴⁰³ he is joined by Donnucan mac Cennedig, one of Brian’s elder brothers, who inspects ‘...the Danair and the *eachtrainn*. At seeing him (*oca fhaicsin*) the descendants of Eogan (*clanna Eogain*) welcomed him and told him to remember his friendship (*a chonnailbhe*).’⁴⁰⁴ The *clan Eogain* refers to the Ciarraige, and confirms that the *eachtrainn* of the prior phrase describes the Gaels against Cellachán’s forces at Glenn Corbraigi. Bugge translates *eachtrainn* literally as

³⁹⁸ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 92.

³⁹⁹ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 108.

⁴⁰⁰ Todd, *Cogadh*, 114.

⁴⁰¹ Todd, *Cogadh*, 40-1.

⁴⁰² Downham, ‘The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly.’

⁴⁰³ Gleann Corbrai or the Glin Demesne, on the Shannon between Limerick and the Dingle Peninsula.

⁴⁰⁴ Bugge, *Cahthréim*, 14 and 72.

‘foreigners’, as the relation to Irish *echtra* ‘expedition, journey, voyage’⁴⁰⁵ indicates, and without context it seems to be another term for Norse speakers. Here, however, in contrast with Danair, the term must refer to the apostate Ciarraige, in the sense of ‘wanderers’ or ‘exiles’ from their Gaelic origin. The *eachtrainn* are tactfully asked to recall Donnchuan’s *condalbae*, literally ‘affection for kindred’,⁴⁰⁶ and cease fighting Cellachán as a fellow Gael.

The choice of Gaelic Irish to have ‘abandoned their Christian baptism (*ro treigsíot...a m-baitis Críostaidhachtsa*)’⁴⁰⁷ is abhorrent, but performed by willing agents. Churches are overtaken by the non-Christian Norse as well, forcing Christians out of their religious positions in these texts. In *Cellacháin*, the lowly Gaelic doorkeeper at the Norse-occupied Ard Macha was once the bishop.⁴⁰⁸ *Cogadh* depicts Turgeis placing himself as abbot in Armagh (*‘ro gaib Tuirgeis fein abbdani Arda Macha’*),⁴⁰⁹ and two chapters later describes his wife performing some kind of oracle or proclamation on the church altar of Clonmacnoise.⁴¹⁰ According to the narrative within this text, this replacement was also practiced more systemically throughout Munster, where the Norse impose ‘an abbot over every church (*abb for cach cill*)’.⁴¹¹ Whether this was a historical reality or merely literary, the author describes an situation where a Christian religious office can be claimed by a non-Christian, who still retains the title! Presumably he is not offering services, but only collecting the dues ordinarily given to the church. For the author, the subjugation of Gaelic Ireland includes the takeover of its churches and monasteries:

‘There shall be of them an abbot over this my church
 Who will not attend to Matins
 Without Pater and without credo,
 Without Irish but only foreign language.
Biaid abb ar mu cillsea de,
III[?] ticfa don ermeirge
Can pater, is can creda,
*Gan goedilg, aít Gaill bearla.’*⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁵ DIL

⁴⁰⁶ DIL, s.v. *condalbae*

⁴⁰⁷ Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, 97-8.

⁴⁰⁸ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 33.

⁴⁰⁹ Todd, *Cogadh*, 8.

⁴¹⁰ Todd, *Cogadh*, 12.

⁴¹¹ Todd, *Cogadh*, 48-9.

⁴¹² Todd, *Cogadh*, 10-1.

The Norse using the churches for their own purposes, whether religious or not, has the extra fervour of apostasy as they have already been sanctified for Irish-language devotions, not ‘*Gaill bearla*’.

As noted in the prior subsection, however, Gaels themselves were not above using magical or at least extra-Christian methods of victory in these narratives.

‘The learned (*na h-eolaigh*) related that Cerball had great difficulty there because Tairceltach mac na Ceartha practiced magic upon him (*imirt draigheachta do...fair*), so that it might be less likely that he should go to the battle...’

The name Tairceltach only appears in Irish⁴¹³ as a name of a learned man: there is a Taircelltach *sapiens* recorded in several Irish annals as well as ‘a Taircelltach ‘next to the phrase *magica ars* in Berne Stadtbibliothek MS 363’.⁴¹⁴ It could be a misreading of the name Tairdelbach which was fairly popular in Middle Irish,⁴¹⁵ but if ‘Taircel(l)tach’ has mystical connotations — Tairceltach’s only appearance in the Osraige saga is here, performing an enchantment — it may also be the construction of a supernatural non-figure akin to the prior mentioned Dúnlaing Ua hArtagáin. ‘Na Ceartha’ simply means ‘the correct’ or ‘righteous’⁴¹⁶ and this Tairceltach’s only appearance is here, performing an enchantment on Cerball.

The twelfth-century *Lebor na Cert* is a Middle Irish text that ‘purports to record the rights of the Irish Kings, the King of Ireland, the provincial kings and the stipends due from the King of Ireland to the provincial kings’,⁴¹⁷ perhaps the surname indicates that this figure is an embodiment of the standard *cert* of kings, which Cerball circumvents? Regardless, just as Hona the Norse ‘druid’ (*druí*) performs magic (*denamh a draoigheachta*)⁴¹⁸ against Cerball within the saga, so too can opponents who are clearly encoded with Gaelic names work against him with magic (*imirt draigheachta*).⁴¹⁹

⁴¹³ Apart from the father of a late 9th century abbot of Clonmacnois: ‘Blathmac son of Tairceltach (otherwise Taircedach), of Bregmaine, abbot.’ Macalister, *Clonmacnois*, p. 132. AU 896.1 does not mention the father; AFM 891.3 reads ‘*Blathmhac, mac Taircealtaigh, do Bregmainibh, abb Cluana Mic Nóis.*’ This could also be a misspelling of Tairdelbach.

⁴¹⁴ John Carey, *Magic, Metallurgy & Imagination in Medieval Ireland: Three Studies*, pp. 17-8.

⁴¹⁵ Consider the eleventh century grandson of Brian Bóruma, contemporary with this text, or the later High King from Connacht, Tairdelbach Ua Conchobair.

⁴¹⁶ From Latin *certus*. eDIL s.v. 1 *cert*.

⁴¹⁷ Dillon, *Lebor*, ix.

⁴¹⁸ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 108.

⁴¹⁹ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 102.

For the Irish author of this text and their audience, the sort of enchantment available to magicians was the same for Norse and Gaelic practitioners.

Saints and Miracles

Saints, *i.e.* exemplary Christians, are also shown in these texts as performing miracles and enduring special hardship at the hands of the Norse. For instance, the *Cogadh* reports an anchorite (or son of one) who was captured by Danair and released by an angel, though this was not enough to secure his safety. The Brussels MS reads: ‘...Cormac, son of Selbach[.?] the anchorite, and he it was whom the angel let loose three times, though he was bound again every day. (*Cormac Mac Selbaig ancair, ocus is doside ro orlaic angeal fo tri ocus ros cenglas gaç lae*).’⁴²⁰ The Leinster MS uses the phrase ‘holy anchorite (*angcaire naem*)’ and clarifies, ‘The angel set him loose twice, and the foreigners used to bind him every time (*ra horlaic aangel fo di, ocus ros ceñglaitis na gaill cae nuairi*)’.⁴²¹ The *gaill* are clearly the opposition to the angel in this anecdote, the literary enemy that allows Cormac to demonstrate his holiness in the form of divine intervention. Curiously, though, there is no indication if the intervention of the angel resulted in his liberation, or just delayed the inevitable.

Other holy episodes in *Cogadh* include the ‘miracles of Mochuda (*mirbuli do Muçuda*)’ which include Norse fratricide by Amlaib of Osill,⁴²² and the miracles surrounding the death of Mathgamain, who bore the ‘Gospel of Barri (*soisccela Bairri*)’ for protection. When he sees his attacker, he piously tosses the Gospel away to preserve it, and it miraculously lands in the hands of a priest on another hill ‘...the full flight of an arrow asunder’. Simultaneously, a far-away witness sees the attack clearly.⁴²³ The Cerball of Osraige saga also experiences divine intervention by the success of Cennétig mac Gáethíne’s forces against the Lochlannaigh, first described as multitudinous and barbarous (*bharbardha*), then helpless against the Christian Gaels: ‘Nevertheless, God was helping

⁴²⁰ Todd, *Cogadh*, 16-9.

⁴²¹ Todd, *Cogadh*, 18.

⁴²² Todd, *Cogadh*, 32-3.

⁴²³ Todd, *Cogadh*, 90-1.

the son of Gáethíne and his troops; the *Lochlainnaig* were overcome (*Gidh eadh tra ro bhaí Día ag furtacht do mac Gaithin cona mhuinntir; ro fhoruaslaighid na Lochlainnaig*).⁴²⁴

The success of these saintly miracles, however, is limited. Another captive of the Norse in *Cogadh*, Edgall of the monastic site Skellig Michael and presumably a holy man, confusingly experiences both a miraculous escape and death:

...Etgall of the Skellig was carried off by them into captivity, so that it was by miracle he escaped from them, and he died of hunger and thirst with them.
 ...*Etgall in Skelig leo i mbrait, conid tre mirbail atrulla uádib, ocus ba marb de gortai ocus díttaid occo hé.*⁴²⁵

This is taken from the eldest extant version of *Cogadh*; while the meaning of the story remains the same in the Dublin and Brussels manuscripts, wherein Edgall experiences a *mírbulí* and a *míorbuilibh*, respectively.⁴²⁶ Editor Todd considers the contradiction in a footnote, suggesting that there is a phrase missing or Edgall died later of privations he suffered in Norse captivity; he notes, ‘The annals of Ulster, A.D. 823, make no mention of the miraculous escape’.⁴²⁷ The Osraige chronicle includes an anecdote about the Lochlainnaigh successfully besieging a fort in Strathclyde, ‘having subdued the people inside by hunger and thirst—the well that they had inside having dried up in a remarkable way (*ar t-traghadh go h-iongnadh*)’.⁴²⁸ This wonder (*iongnadh*) differs from a saints’ miracle (*mírbail* and variations) because it is not an advantage for a Christian, but it is nonetheless a supernatural event for the Norse in the Irish Sea Region.

Saints’ miracles can also provide proactive defence against the Norse, particularly in the Osraige chronicle. In FA 337, the Lochlainnaigh Earl (*iarla*) Tomrar raids Clonfert, an abbey founded by the early sixth century St Brendan, whose abbots bore the title ‘successor of Brendan (*Comarbai Brénaínd*)’.⁴²⁹ The inhabitants mostly escape or hide in the church, thanks to both God and St Brendan according to the author; and ‘Tomrar, moreover, died of insanity within a year, Brénaínd having

⁴²⁴ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 122-3.

⁴²⁵ Todd, *Cogadh*, 223.

⁴²⁶ Todd, *Cogadh*, 6.

⁴²⁷ Todd, *Cogadh*, 223, fn. 1.

⁴²⁸ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 142-3.

⁴²⁹ Moody, T. W.; Martin, F. X.; Byrne, F. J., eds. (1984), *Maps, Genealogies, Lists: A Companion to Irish History, Part II, New History of Ireland: Volume XI*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 245–246.

performed a miracle upon him (*Marbh imorro do dhasacht an Tomrair 'sin bliadain si ar n-imirt do Bhrenainn miorbhal fair*).⁴³⁰ This is repeated in FA 340, adding that Tomrar ‘died of insanity...and he could see Brénaind killing him (*marbh...do dhásacht..., & ba h-eadh ad-chíd Brenainn 'ga mharbadh*).’⁴³¹ The long-dead St Brendan is nonetheless an active player in the struggle against the Norse in Ireland.

This intercession of saints is not always on the part of Gaels, however. In FA 235, the Danair led by Horm operate as proto-Christians who offer booty to St Patrick for advantage in battle against the Lochlannaigh.⁴³² In her 2004 article Downham explores the role of heathen Norse factions considered closer or further to Christianity in the Osraige chronicle, categorising the Danair as ‘unpleasant but useful to Irish kings’, ‘semi-christian’, and thus the *least* bad as allies for the Gaels.⁴³³ Their sacrifices of ‘gold and silver’ as well as their abstention ‘from meat and from women for a while, for the sake of piety’ result in an unlikely victory for them ‘by the grace of Patrick (*cosgan tria rath Padraicc*)’.⁴³⁴

The potential for conflict *among* Christian saints is also considered, along with the inherent paradox such a situation generates. FA 387 comment ‘the human condition is strange (*is iongnadh an cuingioll dáonda*), for the Laigin trusted in St Brigit that they would have victory and triumph over the Osraige and Loíchsi. However, the Osraige trusted in St Ciarán of Saigir to bring them victory and triumph over the Laigin.’⁴³⁵ The battle of Christian Gaels with each other results in a near-bloodless stalemate ‘by a miracle (*miorbhail*) of St Brigit and Sen-Chiarán’.⁴³⁶ In these examples, the saints exercise an active influence in battle, though not specifically for the punishment of the un-Christian Norse.

⁴³⁰ Radner, 122-3.

⁴³¹ Radner, 124-5.

⁴³² Radner, 92-4.

⁴³³ Downham, ‘The Good...’, 30, 31.

⁴³⁴ Radner, 95, 92.

⁴³⁵ Radner, 140-1.

⁴³⁶ Radner, 142-3.

More extraordinarily, the *Cogadh* includes a saintly punishment for Brian, for the slaughter of the Norse! Before the Battle of Clontarf, one of his retainers has a vision wherein he sees

...St Senán come to collect debts from Brian (*feich dlighes do Brian*) that were due on the day of the battle...thirty-seven years earlier, shortly after assuming the kingship, Brian had indeed taken revenge on the Norse of Limerick...by following them to the monastery of St Senán on Inis Cathaig (Scattery Island) in the Shannon Estuary, where Ímar of Limerick had established a base. The Norse were presumably expecting the protection of sanctuary there, but Brian allowed them none and slaughtered them instead, the annals portraying this as a violation or profanation of the monastery (*Inis Cáthaig do shárughadh do Bhrian*).⁴³⁷

For the author of the *Cogadh*, St Senán plays an active role in the ending of Brian's life, as the unholy and immoral slaughter — even of non-Christian foreigners — is ultimately unforgivable. Then again, thirty-seven years is a long time to wait for vengeance, in contrast to Tomrar's death by insanity within a year of violating St Brendan's sanctuary in the Osraige chronicle.

The three texts under review demonstrate a chronological reduction of the role of the Christian God in struggles of Gael versus Norse. The *Cerbal* saga includes several interjections of divine providence on the part of the Gaels, such as in FA 252, where Lochlannaigh are explicitly 'slain by God's will (*trucidati sunt permissione Dei*)',⁴³⁸ or in FA 342 when the Lochlannach host try to attack 'but God did not allow them to do that (*acht cheana ní ra cheadaigh Dia dhóibh*)'.⁴³⁹ The *Cogadh* offers saints' miracles and signs of divine favour but no *Deus ex machina* episodes, and the *Cellacháin* features neither saints nor supernatural aid in its narrative. The difference between the explicit Christianity of the three texts may represent the worldview of the authors in the periods they were written, indicating a loss of religious tone in the explanation of the history of the Norse in Ireland; however, this may simply be three authors' differing opinions on the importance of divine intervention in narrative.

Assuming the former, though, suggests that Gaelic Ireland became more comfortable with the Hiberno-Norse in the period 1030 to 1130, recognising that their incursions into and establishment

⁴³⁷ Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 196.

⁴³⁸ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 98-9. Note also the rare use of Latin, previously seen in this text to refer to the penance of the Gall Gaedhel.

⁴³⁹ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 124-5.

within Ireland were neither divine punishment nor against the will of God. Rather, this was a socio-political movement of people where religion was merely one part of the package of cultural differences between Norse and Gael, and anyway that difference did not persist for many generations. For instance, the *Cogadh* reports that in 980, ‘Amlaibh [Cuarán], son of Sitriuc, high king of the foreigners, went on a pilgrimage to Iona of Colm Cille (*i nailtri co hÍ Coluim Cilli*),⁴⁴⁰ long before Clontarf.

The Norse as inherently treacherous

In the absence of divine punishment and saints making war in *Cellacháin*, the primary difference between the Norse and the Gaels is their trustworthiness. The Lochlannaigh are described as perjurers and oath-breakers, and their schemes rely on false pledges and misleading Cellachán and his men. This characterisation is found in the prior texts as well, such as in FA 243 where a Lochlannaigh king makes an oath with Máel Sechlainn at a feast: ‘But all the same he did not observe the least thing [that he had sworn] after he went out of Máel Sechlainn’s house (*Acht cheana ni ra chomhail a bheag ar n-dul a tigh Maoil Seachlainn amach*), but began immediately to plunder Máel Sechlainn’s territories.’⁴⁴¹

However, there are also instances where Gaels are untrustworthy; this same Máel Sechlainn ‘devised false reasons (*ro dheilbh dno...cuisi bréagach*)’ to meet with Cináed under an assumption of peace and then had him killed for working with the Lochlannaigh, in FA 234.⁴⁴² In the *Cogadh*, the son of Ragnall and his retinue are killed at a feast in their honour by Áed mac Neill in Dublin (*Ro cured iarum ár ar mac Ragnaill ocus ar Gallaib, la h-Aed Mac Neill ic in fleid do ronad do mac Ragnaill Aia Cliat*).⁴⁴³ FA 279 describes an attack on Máel Sechlainn by the same Áed mac Neill who had previously sworn by St Patrick to maintain peace, and the breaking of this oath leads his

⁴⁴⁰ Todd, 46-7.

⁴⁴¹ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 96-7.

⁴⁴² Radner, *Fragmentary*, 90-1.

⁴⁴³ Todd, *Cogadh*, 26.

men into a frenzy: ‘...they came to Máel Sechlainn's tents, thinking that they were those of their own people. They were there until they were all killed—and it was on account of the false oath (*an eithioch*) they had taken that God did that.’⁴⁴⁴ Similarly to the popular perception that the Vikings in Ireland were the first and only to attack monasteries, when predation by Gaels both preceded and occurred simultaneously, these narratives posit that perjury and oath-breaking are characteristic of the Norse — yet show Gaels also operating by deception.

In the *Cellacháin*, the Lochlannaigh try to trap Cellachán by offering Turgeis’s daughter Bebinn in marriage, inviting him to Dublin and ceding ‘the territory of Munster without contest (*co leicfidis sium crich Muman gan imchosnum*)’ as a wedding gift.⁴⁴⁵ They also tell their plan to Donnchad mac Floinn, king of Tara, who supports it and plays along, as ‘Cellachán had not consented to pay tax or tribute to him (*ár nír aemh Ceallachan cis na cain do 7 ro aentaigh*)’.⁴⁴⁶ Cellachán is suspicious but accepts the invitation, then the plot is revealed to him outside of Dublin by Mór ingen Áed, as covered in the chapter on women. Nonetheless they are ambushed outside of the town by the Lochlannaigh and suffer heavy casualties, and Cellachán is captured according to the original plan.

Incredulously, Cellachán is told where he will be taken by the Lochlannaigh, and also has enough time and access to tell his associate Aistrechan how to gather hostages and govern the noblemen of Munster in his absence. In verse, Cellachán remarks, ‘Let them be brought to Sitric of the hosts/Since he has perjured himself (*ó thug se a éitheach*)/To fulfil this henceforth/With Eric,⁴⁴⁷ king of the Islands (*le hÉiric righ na n-Innse*)’.⁴⁴⁸ Perhaps it is this generous treatment by Sitric that prompts Cellachán to comment: ‘it is not more proper for the champions of Lochlann to show valour in contesting our country that it is for the soldiers of Munster to act bravely in defence of their own country... (*...leanmain áir ni cora do laechraidh Lochlann crodhacht ag cosnamh ar crichi-ne ina*

⁴⁴⁴ Radner, 110-1.

⁴⁴⁵ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 16, 74.

⁴⁴⁶ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 17, 75.

⁴⁴⁷ This *éric* has been translated by Bugge as a name, and thence assumed by scholars to refer to Eric Bloodaxe (*Éiríkr bloðøx*), for no apparent reason that I can see. The name of the ‘*righ Innse Gall*’ has already been established in this narrative as Áed mac Echu (Mór’s father, see the chapter on women) in chapter 29. Eric as a name appears nowhere else in *Cellacháin*, whereas *éric* as in a man’s honour-price (*eraic in gach einfir*, p. 23) appears in the immediately preceding chapter; therefore *le h-éric righ na n-Innse* is better translated as ‘with the honour of the King of the Isles’.

⁴⁴⁸ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 25, 83.

do miledaib Muman calma do denum ag cosnamh a criche seom).⁴⁴⁹ For Cellachán, though taken captive by false invitation, the Norse are acting properly to ‘show valour (*leanmain...cródacht*)’⁴⁵⁰ in their campaign; the verb (*ag cosnamh*) is the same for the Lochlannaigh and the Gael in their struggle for the *criche* or boundary.

Several chapters later, however, when Donnchadh mac Cennétig has brought his men to Dundalk to arrange for Cellachán’s release, Sitric and the Norse are again shown as deceitful. Donnchadh asks for a ransom, whence Sitric demands the return of everyone killed in the battles throughout Munster and Armagh. The Munsterman angrily retorts to this impossible request ‘that they had not captured Cellachán in battle or in open fight, but by lying and open perjury (*nach a g-cath na a g-comluinn...acht ar luighi 7 ar loimeithech*)’.⁴⁵¹ As the Norse ‘pledged a false word (*tugais briathar bréige*)’ according to Donnchadh, they can never be trusted; though it is already shown that the word of the Norse is always suspect to the Gaels in these narratives. Significantly, Cellachán — who is tied to a ship’s mast at this time — calls out that the Norse have not *technically* perjured, as they swore not to kill him in Ireland, and he will be taken overseas for his death.

By this technicality, the hero of *Cellacháin* faintly redeems his captors, though the perceived stain of operating in an unreliable manner remains; Donnchadh wishes for a ‘fair fight (*comthrom comluinn*)’.⁴⁵² The distinction between Gaelic and Norse modes of conflict is explored in the chapter on gender, namely the difference in strategy between athletic and armoured soldiery, and this is tied into the opposing masculine ideal of either culture. Deception is not limited to the battlefield, and thus women are also invoked in the depiction of Norse as dishonourable in *Cellacháin*. The plot of ‘wife of Tora...Mór, the daughter of Donnchadh (*Mór ingen Donnchada*)’ against Cellachán’s lover Mór ingen Áed pits one daughter of a Gael wedded to a Norse husband against another.⁴⁵³ But Mór

⁴⁴⁹ Bugge, *Cellacháin*, 29, 86.

⁴⁵⁰ *Cródacht* in earlier Irish expressing ‘blood-thirstiness, cruelty’ but later meaning ‘courage, valour’, eDIL s.v. *cródacht*

⁴⁵¹ Bugge, 34, 92. *Comlann* bears the sense of an evenly matched conflict whereas *luige* is merely the act of swearing and *lomm-* emphases brazen nakedness to *éthech*, perjury. eDIL s.v. *comlann*, **etc.**

⁴⁵² Bugge, 34, 92.

⁴⁵³ Bugge, 54, 113.

ingen Áed's devotion to the Gaelic Cellachán, despite her marriage to a Norseman, keeps her character Gaelic and thus honourable in this discourse. Mór ingen Donnchada, whose attempt is stymied by the immediate revelation of her falsehood, is trying to aid her husband; further conflating deception with operating in Norse idiom.

From the Danair who are depicted as teaming up with Cerball 'honourably (*go h-onorach*)' in the eldest text,⁴⁵⁴ to Lochlannaigh shipping out Cellachán so as to not kill him in Ireland, the Norse in Ireland are shown in these texts to operate with a weak ethic system that is extant but less honourable and reliable than that of the Gaels'. The Gaels also show dishonour on the large scale: *Cogadh* places most of the blame for the Battle of Clontarf on the king of Leinster, and at the conflict itself, 'the men of Midhe and Maelsechlainn were not of one mind with the rest (*mad enni nir ba run oen fir ic feraib Midi re caic, no ic Maelseclaind*)'.⁴⁵⁵

Brian and Máel Sechnaill II, both men who have claimed high kingship of Ireland, are thus meant to be exemplars of Gaelic honour. As this text is intended to glorify Brian (and thereby his descendants), Máel Sechnaill serves as a deceptive literary foil to Brian's unerring righteousness. In Chapter 75 of *Cogadh*, corresponding with 1001CE, Brian brokers a year-long truce with Máel Sechnaill, and by extension other kings in Ulster Áed and Eochaid; extends it for a year, and then in 1003 Áed and Eochaid are killed while Brian holds their hostages (*gialla*).⁴⁵⁶ The *Cogadh*

...describes — and again this is unique to it and therefore [historically] unverifiable — that Máel Sechnaill returned to his home...where his men advised him to submit to Brian. He travelled, it tells us, with a party of 240 horsemen and arrived at Brian's tent without any guarantees for his own safety beyond the word of Brian and the Dál Cais.⁴⁵⁷

The literary Máel Sechnaill knows that Brian is trustworthy and operates accordingly, even with his own life at stake. Later, however, at the Battle of Clontarf, he and the men of Mide make their own non-aggression pact⁴⁵⁸ with the Norse (*gail*) on the King of Leinster's side, leading indirectly to a

⁴⁵⁴ Radner, *Fragmentary*, 98-9 (251).

⁴⁵⁵ Todd, 154-5.

⁴⁵⁶ Todd, 131-5.

⁴⁵⁷ Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 132.

⁴⁵⁸ Todd transcribes this agreement as *drocomarlli* which he translates as 'evil understanding', This word only appears in the TCD 1319 MS version.

weakness among Brian's forces. The literary Brian even foresees this: 'for he knew himself that they would desert him at the approach of that battle, although they came to the assembly (*comitinol*)'.⁴⁵⁹ Everyone around Brian knows how he will act, as he is a moral *nonpareil* in this narrative, while he must operate without trusting even other Gaels.

Compare this to Cerball and his dealings with other Gaels among Norse alliances. When Gaels double-cross one another, there is an element of cruelty in their treachery which is thereby missing from the predations of the Norse, who are expected to be untrustworthy. For instance, when Cerball raids Leinster, the Laigin enlist Lochlannaigh to raid Osraige in revenge, and many of Cerball's people are killed. The author writes,

What most embittered Cerball's mind was that the people whom he had trusted (*an lucht ro gabh aige amhail tairisi*), that is, the Eóganachta, had slaughtered and killed them. He used to think little of the doings of enemies (*caingean na namhad*), for he was not surprised that they did what they did, because they were entitled to it (*uair ra dhlighsiot*).⁴⁶⁰

For Cerball, according to the author, his enemies have some form of right or entitlement (*dligid*) to slaughter; his cognitive dissonance comes from the Eóganachta Gaels being his enemies (*namhaid*). But earlier in the narrative, he says to his 'own people (*a mhuintire féin*)' that the Danair with whom they fight alongside today 'might be against us another day (*go m-bedís 'nar n-aghaidh doridhisi*)', and as well, the Munstermen they are coming to aid 'are often our enemies (*uair is minic as namáidh íad*)'.⁴⁶¹ Cerball's retaliation against the Eóganachta includes Lochlannaigh mercenaries, presumably not the same ones who had just raided Osraige! The relationship between *Gael* and *Gaill* is much more complicated in the Osraige chronicle than simply Gaelic in-groups and Norse out-groups. In this narrative, the Lochlannaigh and Danair are more predictable than the Eóganachta because of their inherent treachery.

These narratives have already been established as dynastic propaganda; the assumption with these texts is that the Gaels, particularly the respective heroes of the narratives, would behave in a

⁴⁵⁹ Todd, 154-5.

⁴⁶⁰ Radner, 116-7.

⁴⁶¹ Radner, 100-1.

clearly preferential manner to the Norse, who would appear as an alien force worth contempt and destruction. The evidence however demonstrates a much more nuanced interplay of cultural values between speakers of Irish and Norse in the pre-Norman period. The presence of madness, from the Christian God or saints, a curse, or upsetting news, is found among both Gael and Gaill.

Fury and Madness

The embodiment of mindless rage among warriors is found in both Irish and Norse literature. The former is exemplified by Cú Chulainn in the Middle Irish *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, a copy of which is in the same Book of Leinster as the *Cogadh*, who is described as ‘the distorted one (*in riastarthe*)’ and dragon-like in combat (*dofeith deilb n-dracuin don chath*).⁴⁶² The latter can naturally only be found in later Old Norse literature, as the earliest prose in that language is from the late twelfth century, but the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *Islendingasögur* contain many references to *berserkir*, men who would perform madness in battle.⁴⁶³ Compare the Norse *úlfhéðnar*⁴⁶⁴ to the Gael Cennétig mac Gáethíne, who in the Osraige chronicle attacks famine-weakened Lochlannaigh ‘as a wolf attacks sheep (*ro ghabh fotha amhail fáol fo cháorchaibh*)’.⁴⁶⁵

Elsewhere in the narrative, Cerball is threatened by Lochlannaigh on horseback who are put into rage by their coming defeat: ‘Great passion seized them (*Ra ghabh airéd mór iad*), and what they did was to draw their swords and take their arms, and to attack the Osraige so that they killed many of them.’⁴⁶⁶ Cerball’s forces are victorious but Cerball himself is taken hostage, and escapes via his own burst of madness, this time divinely provided: ‘...through the Lord’s help he was aided: he himself tore his clothes and the fetters that were on him (*tré fhurtacht an Coimdheadh fúair a*

⁴⁶² O’Rahilly, *Táin*, 3, 144. *Book of Leinster* lines 4604 and 4589, respectively.

⁴⁶³ The Iclander Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241), for instance, described *berserker-gang* in *Ynglinga saga* as ‘men [who] rushed forwards without armour and were as mad or dogs or wolves (*menn fóru brynjulausir ok váru galnir sem hundar eða vargar*).’ Linder and Haggson, eds., ch. 6.

⁴⁶⁴ lit. ‘Wolf-coats’, in *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Haraldskvæði*, *Völsunga saga*, et al.

⁴⁶⁵ Radner, 122-5.

⁴⁶⁶ Radner, 98-9. What is *airéd* precisely? >*éirgid*?

fhoirithin: ra bhris féin a edach, 7 na ceangail ra bhatar fair).⁴⁶⁷ This single entry in the Fragmentary Annals provides a literary contrast between two forms of frenzy; the first by non-Christians that ultimately does not help them, and the second by a Christian to perform a miracle in his favour.

This taint of Christians misusing their faith is further demonstrated thirty entries later, after Áed mac Neill and his men swear a ‘promise of peace...through the holy man Fethgnam successor of Patrick (*an freagra síodha...trésan duine náomh, .i. Fethgna, comarba Padraicc*).’⁴⁶⁸ Despite this, they ally with Amlaib the Lochlannaigh against the combined troops of Máel Sechnaill and Cerball and attempt a nighttime ambush, which is stymied by divine intervention.

Then madness (*dásacht*) seized a certain band of them, and they came to Máel Sechlainn’s tents, thinking that they were those of their own people. They were there until they were all killed—and it was on account of the false oath (*eithioch*)⁴⁶⁹ they had taken that God did that.⁴⁷⁰

This attempt by Áed against other Gaels provides another example of joining the Norse in both military alliance, and deed by deception. The Christian God inflicts *dásacht* because of *éthech*, lending holy support to Máel Sechnaill and Cerball specifically and the act of making a truce in general. This also contextualises madness as a divine punishment for oath breakers.

As previously demonstrated, the Osraige chronicle emphasises the influence of God and saints on the mitigation of the Norse in Ireland, relying on Christianity as an attribute of the Gaels and the lack, or adjacency in the form of rudimentary saint-worship, as a characteristic of the Norse. The handicap of allying with the Norse does not linger, as the aforementioned Áed later wins a battle with the help of God. Áed gathers the forces of Ulaid and Mide against Flann mac Conaing, the Laigin, and Lochlannaigh; while Áed’s army is smaller, it includes ‘the Lord’s cross and the staff of Jesus (*croch an Choimdheadh 7 bachall Iosu*)’ and he tells his men several times that God is on their side. When they win, Áed is careful to distinguish the opposing Gaels and their Lochlannaigh allies: ‘spare the Christians, and attack the idolators (*iodhaladharthaibh*)’.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁷ Radner, 98-9.

⁴⁶⁸ Radner, 110-1.

⁴⁶⁹ Compare *loim[-]jeithech* in *Cellacháin*, above. eDIL s.v. *éthech*.

⁴⁷⁰ Radner, 110-1.

⁴⁷¹ Radner, 132-5.

Unchecked fury is also associated with the Norse in *Cogadh*. The author describes the Danair in Munster as an overall ‘furious, ferocious, pagan, ruthless, wrathful people (*an droing gloidmir glifidig genntlíde ainiarmartaig ainiarda*)’⁴⁷². As well, individual figures are depicted prone to rage, such as Ímarr going frenetic to hear of Brian and Mathgamain’s rebellion: ‘...it was to him frenzy of mind (*reçt acnid*), and raging fury (*ferg fir feocair*), and aching of heart (*gal cridi*).... His spite (*A nim*⁴⁷³) was little short of death [to him].’ Gaels in combat also show this ferocity, but the author is careful to distinguish that theirs is a chosen and deliberate fury: ‘Woe to those who aroused their anger (*ro íoduisc a forglaim*⁴⁷⁴), if it was possible to escape from it...it is not easy to conceive of any horror equal to that of arousing the fierce battle and hard conflict (*garbgleo ocus cruad cundsleo...toduscud*) of these warriors.’⁴⁷⁵ Maelmordha, a Gael against Brian, also demonstrates this situational anger when he leaves without permission and assaults a messenger in reaction to a simple jest.⁴⁷⁶ Within *Cogadh*, the Gaels’ fury is transitive and brought upon them by provocation, but the Norse are intrinsically *ain[d]iaraid*, wrathful.

Cellacháin offers a similar perspective on Gaelic versus Norse fury. After extensive description of Cerball’s un-armoured forces as valorous (*echtacha*), brave (*crodach*) and proud (*foruallach*),⁴⁷⁷ their initial failure against their heavily armoured opponents ‘arose his wrath (*do eirigh a brath*), his rage (*a bharann*), and his vigour, and he makes a royal rush (*ruatha rofhlatha*), caused by fits of mighty passion (*rabharta rofheirgi*)’ at the Lochlannaigh. Cerball’s sovereignty, a better translation of *-f(h)latha*, provides a legitimacy to his rage. The ‘high spirited Morann of the fierce people (*muintergharbh*)’, the leader of the opposing Norse in this episode, has no such approval for his violence.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷² Todd, 42-3.

⁴⁷³ Literally ‘venom’ or ‘poison’; Todd, 72, fn. 4.

⁴⁷⁴ *Forglaim* does not appear elsewhere in the medieval Irish corpus, but is presumably a derivative of *ferg*, anger; perhaps *-láim* specifies ‘hands/arms of anger’?

⁴⁷⁵ Todd, 162-3.

⁴⁷⁶ Todd, 144-7.

⁴⁷⁷ Bugge, 7, 64.

⁴⁷⁸ Bugge, 8, 65.

The narrative also includes recurrent use of the term *Pers*, which Bugge initially translates as *Berserks*; for instance, Scattery Island is plundered by a ‘fleet of the Berserks (*loingius na Pers*)’.⁴⁷⁹ The figure Lenn Turmun is given the epithet of ‘the Berserk (*na Pers*)’ throughout, apart from one poem wherein he is ‘of the city of the Berserks (*chathrach Pers*)’ and ‘of the journey (*na h-Uidhe*)’.⁴⁸⁰ Ó Corráin believes, however, that these are two separate people named Lenn Turmun, as their respective ships have different opponents in the massed sea battle.⁴⁸¹

Bugge extrapolates that *Pers* may be from *Persia*, particularly as *Serkir* is an attested term for Muslims in Old Norse, hence ‘*P/Ber-Serkirs*’; but he considers it ‘most unlikely that the imagination[*sic*] of an Irish poet should alone have been sufficient, without any connection with the facts, to introduce Persians into a Norse army in Ireland.’⁴⁸² While acknowledging that medieval Ireland was aware of the far reach of Norse politics, including the inclusion of Mauretians in the Osraige chronicle, Bugge argues that this is a Gaelic misunderstanding of Norse culture, turning specialist troops into a foreign legion.⁴⁸³

Neither Ó Corráin nor Bugge comment on the meaning of the term *cathrach Pers* or city of ‘Pers’: a literal city is more likely to mean a location with a significant population outside of Scandinavia; or this is another reference to the ‘cities’ of armoured Norse soldiers in battle. As previously mentioned in the chapter on masculinities, the Gaels defending Cellachán assume a Norse idiom of warfare at the sight of their leader in captivity, appearing as ‘a fortified city of helmets...and a manly, angry, venomous (*fal ferrdha fraeheimnech*) hedge of bright spears’.⁴⁸⁴ Whether *Pers* is related to Norse *berserkir* or Latin *Persia*, or something else; Lenn Turmun’s epithet of *cathach* ties neatly into the Gaelic concept of Norse warriors as both city-like and frenzied.

The *Mauri* or Mauretians of the Osraige chronicle deserve special consideration as a thoughtful glimpse into medieval Ireland’s perception of people from northern Africa or southern

⁴⁷⁹ Bugge, 46, 105.

⁴⁸⁰ Bugge, 51-2, 111.

⁴⁸¹ Ó Corráin, ‘History or Propaganda?’, 49.

⁴⁸² Bugge, 140.

⁴⁸³ Bugge, 141-2.

⁴⁸⁴ Bugge, 40, 99.

Iberia. Within this thesis, their role as foreigners taken as hostages by the Norse back to Ireland is considered as a metaphor for Irish anxieties about enslavement; but further study of the *Mauri* and medieval Ireland is warranted on their own merits. The passage refers to the Mauretians in Ireland twice in a tangible tense: ‘those are the Black men (*siad-sin na fir ghorma*)’, and ‘Now those Black men remained in Ireland for a long time (*As fada dna ro badar na fir ghorma sin in n-Eirinn*)’. The passage also glosses *Mauri* and *Mauritania* as *nigri* and *nigritudo*, Latin for ‘black’ and ‘blackness’ as an adjective and noun respectively.⁴⁸⁵

These straightforward statements have inspired a few mentions, for instance in Paul Edwards’ 1990 lecture for the Centre of African Studies at Edinburgh University, ‘The Early African Presence in the British Isles’;⁴⁸⁶ and most recently Geraldine Heng’s *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, where she mentions the connection between *Mauri* and later medieval *Moor*.⁴⁸⁷ But until now no systematic interpretation and contextualisation of the *Mauri* or the *fir ghorma* in Middle Irish has occurred in academic scholarship. *Gorm*, literally ‘blue’ in modern Irish, was used to describe dark skin tone in the Irish language until recently.⁴⁸⁸

The passage of interest occurs in the chronology at the year 867CE, although it does not concern people already mentioned in the narrative. Two sons of one Ragnall depart the Orkneys to amass an army against the ‘Franks and Saxons (*Frangc 7 Saxan*)’. They move south with their fleet, through either the Irish Sea or to the east of Britain, down to Spain (*Espain*) and engage in piracy there. Then they go through the Strait of Gibraltar (*Muinceann n-Gadiana*) and arrive in Africa, the specific locality of which is given by their engagement straight away with the *Mauriotánuibh*; a place first defined by its inhabitants rather than a geographical designation. Mauretania is further situated at the end of the passage as ‘across from the Balearic Islands (*contra Baleares insulas*)’.⁴⁸⁹ This

⁴⁸⁵ Radner, 120-1.

⁴⁸⁶ Edwards, ‘The Early African Presence in the British Isles.’

⁴⁸⁷ Heng, *Invention of Race*, 192 and *passim*.

⁴⁸⁸ The earliest reference to this I could find outside of the Cerball of Osraige saga is in the seventeenth-century diary of Tadhg Ó Cianáin who was part of the so-called ‘Flight of the Earls’; he mentions seeing two Black men (*beirt d’feroip gorma*) among the Pope’s retinue in Italy. Finnegan et al., eds., *Imeacht na nIarlaí*, 254.

⁴⁸⁹ Radner, 118-21.

roughly accords with the greater Roman province of Mauretania, which occupied various shapes and subdivisions on the southwestern coast of the Mediterranean in the Classical period.⁴⁹⁰

The brothers and their men immediately engage in warfare with the Mauretians, who seem to have been ready and waiting for them: ‘There was hard fighting on both sides in this battle, and neither of them won the victory from the other in that battle.’ The one success for the Lochlannaigh is that they cut the hand off the *rígh na Mauriotana*, the king of the Mauretians, and he flees in the night.⁴⁹¹ The eleventh-century Irish audience for this passage would recognise Old Testament as well as Irish mythological precedent for the loss of kingship with the loss of bodily perfection.⁴⁹²

The next morning the Mauretians discover their king’s retreat and the brothers seize victory: ‘Thereupon the Lochlannaigh swept across the country, and they devastated and burned the whole land. Then they brought a great host (*slúagh mór*) of them captive (*tugsad...brait*) with them to Ireland....’⁴⁹³ In her article ‘The Viking slave trade’, Downham considers historical annals and literary accounts of Norse enslaving the Irish. She writes, ‘Viking slave-raids on Ireland seemed fearful and abhorrent to contemporaries, despite the fact that slavery was already an integral part of Irish society.’ Prisoner-of-war captivity in Ireland was well in effect before the arrival of the Norse, but the Gaels were devastated by the breadth and lack of respect for extant social structures by Norse predations.⁴⁹⁴

Elsewhere in the narrative, as a comparative, Cerball ‘mustered a force of Gaels and Lochlannaigh (*slóigh Gaoidheal 7 Lochlannach*), and devastated the neighbouring territories; he laid waste Mag Feimin and Fir Maige, and took the hostages of many tribes (*tug braighde ciniudha n-iomdha lais*).’⁴⁹⁵ The Norse participation in Cerball’s hostage-taking indicate that by the ninth century, their later literary representations had entrenched themselves well enough into Irish society

⁴⁹⁰ Not coterminous with the modern country of Mauritania, on the Atlantic seafront. Thanks to Chris Morris, who suggested that this geographical description does not necessarily exclude southern Iberia as Ragnall’s sons’ destination.

⁴⁹¹ Radner, 120-1.

⁴⁹² The 9th century *Cath Maith Tuiread*, for instance, tells of physician Míach who restores king Núadu’s arm so he can reclaim his kingdom ‘since Núadu was not eligible for kingship after his hand had been cut off’. Gray, trans., 27.

⁴⁹³ Radner, 120-1.

⁴⁹⁴ Downham, ‘The Viking slave trade,’ 15-17.

⁴⁹⁵ Radner, 116-7.

to have a stake in established power dynamics and ‘play fair’ according to Gaelic sensibilities of taking people into captivity. The verb form is similar to the capture of the *fir ghorma* above: *tugad brait* and *tug braighde*. For the eleventh century audience of this saga, the Lochlannaigh operating in northern Africa remove the Mauretians in a nearly identical manner as the Gaelic Cerball removing other Gaels in Ireland.

According to the *Cogadh*, the Norse overtake Munster and require the Gaels to give them food and housing and the best of everything from their own homes. On top of this is an oppressive tax, likely designed to force the Gaels into captivity: ‘...an ounce of *findruni*-silver for every nose, besides the royal tribute afterwards every year; and he who had not the means of paying it had himself to go into slavery for it.’⁴⁹⁶ When Brian gains the upper hand, however, he returns the oppression:

...there was not a winnowing-sheet from *Benn Edair* to *Tech Duinn* in western Erin that had not a foreigner in bondage on it, nor was there a quern without a foreign woman. So that no son...deigned to put his hand to a flail, or any other labour on earth; nor did a woman deign to put her hands to the grinding of quern, or to knead a cake, or to wash her clothes, but had a foreign man or a foreign woman to work for them.⁴⁹⁷

The pre-eminence of the *Dál gCais* is embodied by the slaves who now labour for the Gaels, after a lifetime of having the Gaels work for them. Whether this literary depiction was the unvarnished tenth century truth or not, by the early twelfth century, the cultural memory of the Norse in Ireland accorded the possibility of such a dramatic role reversal in the historical narrative.

Notably, however, the terms for enslavement in the *Cogadh* differ from the term for hostage-taking. *Indairthe* and various forms refer to capture for the sake of labour, while the *bragthe* we saw in the Fragmentary Annals is used to the capture of political hostages. There is also a harsh visual of intentionally destroying martial captives: ‘Every one of them that was fit for war was killed, and every one that was fit for a slave was enslaved (*ro marbait cach oen rob inéichta dib, agus ro dairait cach oen rob indairtha*)’.⁴⁹⁸ There is also a related verb in *Cogadh* specifically for enslavement: ‘Many women also, and boys, and girls, were brought to bondage (*tugadh fo dhaire*) and ruin by them

⁴⁹⁶ Todd, 51.

⁴⁹⁷ Todd, 117.

⁴⁹⁸ Todd, 80-1.

[Brian's forces]; and the foreigners had deserved that treatment...'.⁴⁹⁹ However, the verb we saw for being taken before is used to refer to enslavement specifically (*tugadh fo dhaire*), while the verb *gaibid* meaning to take away or remove is used for absconding with hostages: 'he took the hostages of Munster (*ro gab bragti airdcell Muman*)'.⁵⁰⁰

With this comparison, what does that imply about the Hiberno-Norse who brought *fír* to Ireland in a *slúagh mór*? Did the Lochlannaigh capture these martial men for enslavement, or for political reasons; and if so, why did they bring them to Ireland? The passage includes anxiety from the brothers about helping their father in *Lochlainn* but such a kingdom is clearly overseas from Ireland in Cerball of Osraige and other literature. If Ireland, particularly Dublin, was known for providing slaves to the Norse market, why would the *Mauri* be remarked as staying there for a long time?

Bodily Violations

Finally, the abuse of bodies and exchange of body parts marks a useful distinction between the Gaels and the Norse in these texts. Heads are passed between them in *Cellacháin* and the Osraige chronicle, and mass rape or allotment of women from across cultures is used as post-war booty for soldiers in *Cogadh* and *Cellacháin*. The ill treatment or death of a king in captivity features in the Osraige chronicle and *Cellacháin*, and all three feature the loss of bodily identity — the distinction of Norse and Gael — due to the confusion and disruption of battle. Whereas terms like *Gall Gaedhel* and *echtrainn* demonstrate an onomastic need to label Gaels who take up Norse attributes, the careful study of physicality in these texts suggests that the Irish authors saw an immutable, embodied difference between them.

The Danair and Lochlannaigh, conversely, are bodily interchangeable within these texts. The fragments of the Osraige chronicle that survive open with Lochlannaigh at sea being unable to identify

⁴⁹⁹ Todd, 114-5.

⁵⁰⁰ Todd, 105-6, and many other similar examples through the text.

other longships as allies or *enemies*, apart from some who ‘understood better (*as fearr ra tuigsiot-saidhe*)’ and saw that they were Danair.⁵⁰¹ Two entries later, victorious Danair desecrate their Lochlannaigh opponents’ bodies by using them as supports for cooking pots and spits: ‘...and the fire was burning the bodies (*na c-corp*), so that the meat and fat (*an fheoil 7 an meathradh*) that they had eaten the night before was bursting out of their bellies (*asa n-gailibh amach*).’ The lurid scene commingles corpses and food, suggesting a sort of cannibalism. This is a literary conceit demonstrating the inhumanity, even monstrosity, of the Norse in Ireland. In case the Lochlannaigh seem like innocent victims, the Danair explain to the horrified Gaels: ‘They would like to have us like that (*As amhlaidh sin budh maith leo-sum ar m-beith-ne*).’⁵⁰² For the author of the Osraige chronicle, the sort of Norse is irrelevant; whether Danair or Lochlannaigh, they are vile near-cannibals who would commit the same atrocities upon the other Norse speakers if able.

This depiction of the Norse as bodily horrific continues through the narrative, and is applied as a posthumous punishment to a Gael towards the end of the fragment. As previously discussed, Cináed is killed by Máel Sechlainn for working with the Lochlannaigh;⁵⁰³ later an unnamed Laigin ‘chieftain (*táoisioch*)’ who is considered ‘an interloper (*tuilithe*)’ is kicked out of his territory and receives aid from Áed mac Néill. While this former *táoisioch* oppresses the Lochlannaigh in his unspecified territory,⁵⁰⁴ he also attacks the Laigin, which provokes the latter to breach ‘fairness of men and combat against him (*fír fear no comhlann dhó*)’ and kill him ‘so that they made little pieces of him.... His head was later brought to the Lochlannaigh, and they stuck it on a pole, and took turns shooting at it, and afterwards they threw it into the sea’.⁵⁰⁵ The unnamed chieftain, according to the

⁵⁰¹ Radner, 88-9.

⁵⁰² Radner, 94-5.

⁵⁰³ Radner, 90-1.

⁵⁰⁴ FA377 is tentatively dated K. 869. AI869.1 lists the death of ‘*Dúnlainge m. Muirchertaig, rí Laigen*’, 134; and AU869.4 reports that ‘*Mael Ciarain m. Ronain*, royal champion of eastern Ireland, a warrior who plundered the foreigners, was killed (*rignia airthir Erenn, feinid foghla Gall, iugulatus est*)’, 325-6. Byrne suggests that the record of the Kings of Leinster is muddled at this point due to the influence of Osraige under Cerball mac Dúnlainge, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 163. Therefore it is difficult to determine whether this literary chieftain is meant to be Dúnlaing mac Muirchertaigh, Máel Ciarán mac Rónáin, or someone else.

⁵⁰⁵ Radner, 136-9.

Laigin, has earned bodily dissolution by his misdeeds, and the way to mortify the corpse is by sending it to the Norse for abuse.

The translation of heads between Norse and Gael appears as well in *Cellacháin*. In a gruesome passage, a series of men bring out heads of slain Gaelic heroes to Cellachán on the green outside Dublin. The hero is asked to identify the heads and does so, often adding specific mourners and families of the deceased. Presumably it is Norse people coming out of Dublin bearing these battle-trophies, though they are never specified; nor is it explained where the heads go once Cellachán has identified them. Is this grisly parade meant as a formalised kindness of returning the dead to the Gaels, or a mockery of their loss? After eleven heads, Cellachán begs for the demonstrations to stop: ‘But do not show them to me henceforward, for I cannot endure to look at them. And although I have not been wounded by you (*gonad libhse*), I am killed (*is marbh mé*) through the wounds (*gonaibh*) of yonder men.’⁵⁰⁶

Later in the narrative, after battle at Ard Macha, Cellachán’s men ‘went to the battlefield, and collected the bodies of their people (*cuirp a muintiri*) into one place, and the heads of the Lochlannachs, and they placed the heads upon [deadly] spikes (*do cuirset ar birchuailli bodhbha*⁵⁰⁷ *na cinn*)’.⁵⁰⁸ The Gaels have removed the bodies of their *muintir* from the site with care, but decapitated their enemies and further desecrated their heads. The translation of the living body of Cellachán follows, from Ard Macha to Dún Dealgan to overseas, so that the Lochlannaigh can fulfil their vow of not killing him within Ireland. At the battle in Dún Dealgan harbour, however, the Gaels utilise their own living bodies to capsize the Norse longships: ‘For the pouring in of the clan of Corc [i.e. *Eóghanachta*] into their wombs (*ina crislaigibh*⁵⁰⁹) was a terrible addition to the ships...so that the ships...burst open to the salt sea’.⁵¹⁰ Compare the swelling and bursting of the Danair’s bodies in the Osraige chronicle to this image of the Gaels impregnating and breaking the longships. In

⁵⁰⁶ Bugge, 20-1, 77-9.

⁵⁰⁷ From *bir*, point; *cúal*, bundle of sticks; *bodhbha* from *badbda*, see *Badb* above. Compare *bir-ghéara bodhbha* meaning ‘cattle pens’ in contemporary *Cath Ruis na Ríg for Bóinn*, ed. Hogan.

⁵⁰⁸ Bugge, 33, 91.

⁵⁰⁹ Literally, that part of body enclosed in a girdle (*crios*). s.v. *crislach*.

⁵¹⁰ Bugge, 44, 103.

particular, the Norse ships are described as holding the Norse easily, but become overwhelmed by the Gaels — an embodied difference between these warriors.

While the treatment of women in these texts is covered in a prior chapter, the violation of women's bodies warrants an additional mention. *Cogadh* details the mass rape after the battle of Sulchóit⁵¹¹ and the taking of Limerick, from whence women, girls, and boys are enslaved while '[e]very one of them that was fit for war was killed':⁵¹²

'...It was then that they celebrated also the races of the son of Feradach, viz. a great line of the women of the foreigners (*gailsechaib nangall*) was placed on the hills of Saingel in a circle, and they were stooped with their hands on the ground,⁵¹³ and marshalled (*inandegaid*) by the horseboys of the army behind them, for the good of the souls of the foreigners (*do rait anma nangall*) who were killed in the battle.'

Violence upon the non-combatant population, those not 'fit for war', is considered fair and honourable when performed by Mathgamain upon the Norse of Limerick. This public mass rape by the *gilli na sluag*, performed on hills for maximum visibility and shame for the women involved, is even written as if it provides a benefit for the slaughtered Norse. The brutal assault on their mothers, wives, and daughters supposedly does good ('*do rait*') for their souls in the afterlife in some form of aid against purgatory.⁵¹⁴

Rather than revenge, this spectacle of rape bears a Christian motivation and can even be read as charitable for the deceased *Gall*. Nonetheless, this is shockingly violent even in a text full of warfare and non-combatant casualties. Is this really the approved doing of the Dál gCais, under whose reign a woman could walk from one end of Ireland to the other unmolested?⁵¹⁵ Does emphasising that it is the foreign-women of the Norse (*gailsechaib nangall*) relieve the inhumanity of the assault by Mathgamain's forces? Is the perpetration of the act by the *gilli* specifically to aid in the

⁵¹¹ 'Solloghod, about 6 km north-west of Tipperary', Duffy, *Brian Boru*, 87.

⁵¹² Todd, 79-81.

⁵¹³ 'and the palms of their hands under them', Brussels MS. Todd, 82, fn. 6.

⁵¹⁴ Todd, 82-3.

⁵¹⁵ Todd, 139.

humiliation? These 'horseboys' would be young men, some not yet teenagers, who would be subservient to the triumphant soldiers in age and likely also station. The foreign-women are forced in defeat to yield to the young men, not the able-bodied fully grown men who succeeded in the battle; the women are enslaved and bodily 'given' to the servants of the soldiers as transferable property.

Similarly, *Cellacháin* displays a cavalier attitude to the distribution of women as a payment for victory: 'Then the van of the Munster army reached the town...and brought the women and young men (*mna 7 maccaeimh*) of the town together. Mór, daughter of Áedh, son of Echu, and Bebinn the daughter of Turgeis, were brought to Cellachán, who said to Donnchua, son of Cennédig, that he should take Bebinn to his wife.'⁵¹⁶ While Mór ingen Áedh had previously shown agency to willingly leave her husband Turgeis and marry Cellachán instead, her (step?-)daughter Bebinn is used as a political reward without apparent regard of her preferences. 'And so it was done by them [the Munster army], and each man of them likewise had his choice of women afterwards (*do bhi a rogha mna ag gach fhir dibh*).'⁵¹⁷ The *fir* of Munster have their own 'choice of women', presumably Norse; these *mná* have no say in their fate. Their bodies are forfeit in war.

Conclusions

Throughout this thesis and the analysis of these three dynastic propaganda texts, the differences between Norse and Gael are explored and found to be both more praxis-based than inherent. Claims that the Norse are deceptive or untrustworthy are undermined by Gaels acting in perfidy, yet there remains a sense that the Norse are expected to be liars while Gaels are meant to be honourable and 'the exceptions prove the rule'. Christian saints and miracles occur in the face of Gaelic resistance to Norse rule, but Norse idolatry nonetheless sometimes wins the upper hand. Danair and Lochlannaigh are depicted as bodily violators, even semi-cannibalistic, but Gaels also mutilate the bodies of the Norse and rape women. While the culture(s) and religion(s) of the Norse shown in these Irish

⁵¹⁶ Bugge, 54, 113.

⁵¹⁷ Bugge, 54, 113-4.

language texts are literary fictions, they create a worldview coherent for the eleventh and early twelfth century audience to frame their ancestor's struggles against and triumphs over the Norse as the victory of a flawed but ultimately superior way of life.

VI. Overall Conclusions

It is easy to dismiss dynastic propaganda pieces as untrustworthy and solely written for an unsavoury motive of political machination and historiographical reshuffling of power. Yet the very partisanship of their purpose makes their biases particularly straightforward to unpick. History is not made once and handed down intact, or rediscovered later; it is written and rewritten for each generation — in a way, for each pair of eyes — that encounters it and utilises it. It is a privilege to be part of this process and I hope that this thesis has advanced one small but significant part of human history by its work.

When I began as an undergraduate in 2005, the ‘Vikings’ were sort of the goofy medieval older brother of pirates, with films like *Erik the Viking* and *Thirteenth Warrior* making them into brutish, dirty, comedic oafs. Thanks to popular shows, video games, and even musical acts like Wardruna and Heilung, Old Norse studies has experienced a renaissance of interest with a far more nuanced and progressive attitude to the appearance, lifestyle, and worldview of the stereotypical Scandinavian raider. Similarly, while Irish popular history used to relegate the contribution of the Hiberno-Norse to footnotes in the development of southern towns, there has been a marked rise in interest in Ireland’s role among the Norse-speaking world of the ninth to twelfth centuries and beyond. The celebration of the millenium of Clontarf, the development of museum programmes and television shows on RTÉ, and the indefatigable *Friends of Medieval Dublin* have brought Hiberno-Scandinavians into public awareness. In 2022, the ‘Vikings’ are once again, in Roberta Frank’s words, terminally hip and incredibly cool.⁵¹⁸

But my specific interest in the Norse of Ireland is not for their rising cachet, although that is a pleasant side effect of pop culture in the past two decades. Rather, I am intensely curious about the navigation of different socio-linguistic ethnicities in the pre-modern, pre-national world. The intersection of two northern European phenotypical peoples with different languages and cultural

⁵¹⁸ Frank, ‘Terminally Hip and Incredibly Cool’.

values is, to me, an exciting window into understanding timeless human concepts of empathy, xenophobia, and curiosity.⁵¹⁹

The hard part here, then, is how to find and interpret opinions of people who died a millennium ago and had no recourse to sit and journal out their feelings on such a matter, if they even had the internal vocabulary to articulate it. Dynastic propaganda, with its biases clearly defined — the valorisation of its protagonist, for the benefit of his direct descendant intended as audience (and patron, in some form or another) — offers a rich harvest of the narrative fiction required to portray its hero as heroic, as a product of contemporary opinion. One cannot sell a story that makes no sense, and so the very appearance of these narratives in modern manuscript collections implies that there is an implicit collective approval of the settings and characters that populate them. Their historical veracity is suspect, but their existence is unquestionable.

The use, then, of these narratives as a source of opinion is both well-established as New Historicist reading, and novel by treating these dynastic propaganda tales as social treatises rather than political narratives. When I was an undergraduate at University College Cork learning about the Norse in Ireland for the very first time, I immediately wondered, ‘What did the native Gaels think of their Scandinavian neighbors?’ There were a few articles that made educated guesses then,⁵²⁰ but no monograph on the subject, and in many ways the thesis you hold now is the book I wanted to read in 2007.

The navigation, then, of Gaelic thoughts on the history of the Norse in Ireland has hopefully been made manifest in the four thematic chapters of this doctoral thesis. They were seen as intrinsically tied up in their ship-building and ocean-navigating practices; the development and

⁵¹⁹ Being a non-Irish national resident in Dublin for years, I regularly encountered the same sort of in-group out-group song-and-dance that the Hiberno-Norse must have felt themselves a thousand years earlier. I speak English with a northwestern American accent that reveals my New Jersey origins in times of stress, but as I originally learned Irish in Cork my *cáint* is distinctly *Mumhain*. When I speak to people *as Gaeilge* first I sound like an Irish national who hasn’t used the language since the Leaving Cert and understandably annoy the fluent *Gaelgeoirí*, but as soon as I slip in an apology that I’m American, they brighten up and assure me my Irish is very good. I wonder if Norse speakers born and raised in Ireland had a similar sort of relationship with their neighbours’ Irish language, and navigating with Norse speakers outside of Ireland with a distinctly Hibernian accent.

⁵²⁰ My favourites then being Holm, ‘Between Apathy and Antipathy’ (1994), and Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘Friend and Foe’ (1998).

maintenance of market towns with visible defences; and their social and political connections with overseas polities both near and far. By the names used for them, we know that the Gaels did not see them as a monolithic entity — surely the Irish speakers from Munster to western Scotland recognised that a shared language did not imply political unity — but nonetheless the Norse had indelible characteristics. Their coming from outside of Christendom painted them as gentiles, inherently untrustworthy, and in violation of social norms around churches and clergy. The same narratives admit that some Gaels performed the same actions, although this may be an indictment of Irish rivals rather than a redemption for the Norse. Their reliance on armour makes Norse masculinity one of brutal assistance, as opposed to Gaelic masculinity which values lithe athleticism and beauty in combat; technology versus technique. Women were not only exempt from this difference in values, but their own cultural allegiances were intentionally murky, being seen as simultaneously members of their fathers' and husbands' families.

These key characteristics are a useful though not exhaustive catalogue of Gaelic thoughts on their local Norse, and altogether they help paint a picture illustrating long-dead opinions. As lurid as some depictions of the Norse are — for instance, the visceral scene of the Danair lounging among roasting bodies of the Lochlannaigh⁵²¹ — nonetheless they are given names, genealogies, motivations, triumphs, and in several cases full personalities. Horm the *druí*, Turgeis and Ota, Sitriuc the king of Dublin: these are not monsters or two-dimensional shadows for the protagonists to fight, but flesh-and-blood characters who are just as real and resident in Ireland as the Gaelic heroes of these texts. At the very least, these stories prove that for the authors and audience who patronised them, the Norse were people in the same way that the Gaels were. This is no Giraldus Cambrensis a few decades later attempting to dehumanise the Gaels and legitimise conquest; this pre-1166 material preserves a begrudging but tangible respect for the Norse in Ireland as strange, foreign, but established and tolerable neighbours to the Gaels.

⁵²¹ Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, 100.

The scant presence of Old Norse in these texts is also worth mentioning, as otherwise giving whole dialogues between Norse speakers in unaffected Middle Irish can serve as a sort of minimising agent on their linguistic identities. While surely some Norse learned enough Middle Irish to communicate with Gaels, or indeed were raised bilingually in one of the Hiberno-Norse towns, these source texts rarely labour to separate their speech from that of the protagonists. The eldest example is in Osraige chronicle, FAI 338, when Lochlannaigh rally against Cennétig Mac Gaithin: ‘Foreign, barbarous cries were raised there, and the noise of many war trumpets, and a crowd were saying “Núi, nú!”’ (*Ro thoghbhaid gotha allmhardha bharbardha ann-saidhe 7 stuic iomdha badhphdha 7 socuidhe 'ga rádh, 'Núi, nú'*).⁵²² *Nú* complete with diacritic is Old Norse for ‘now’⁵²³ which is conceivable for an ‘*allmhardha bharbardha*’ crowd to shout in encouragement; one wonders if such an injunction was often heard on the streets of Dublin or Limerick at the time of Osraige chronicle’s composition.

Snippets of Old Norse also appear in the *Cogadh*. At daybreak at the start of what became known as the Battle of Clontarf, ‘Plait came forth from the battalion of the men in armour, and said three times, “*Faras Domhnall*,” that is, “where is Domhnall?” Domhnall answered and said, “Here (*sund*), a *sniding*”...’.⁵²⁴ Duffy writes, ‘It is interesting to see the author of the *Cogadh* trying his hand here at a bit of Old Norse — *Faras* from Norse *Hvar es* (“Where is”) and *sniding* from *níðingr* (“wretch”, “scoundrel”) — which might suggest contact with the Hiberno-Norse settlement at Limerick.’⁵²⁵ Domhnall’s insult in Plait’s language is more potent than the translations here suggest,⁵²⁶ as Old Norse *níða* refers to scorn, slander, and villainy,⁵²⁷ making the personal ending -*ing* into *níðing* a consummate attack on Plait’s character. Yet Domhnall wraps this spicy foreign insult in Irish context, answering Plait’s Norse inquiry with both an Irish adverb of place and casting the

⁵²² Radner, 122-3.

⁵²³ Zoëga, *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*, 315. See also Pokorney, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 770.

⁵²⁴ Todd, 174-5.

⁵²⁵ *Brian Boru*, 208.

⁵²⁶ Particularly Todd’s inexplicable use of the word ‘reptile’, 175.

⁵²⁷ Zoëga, 314.

aspersion with the exclusively Irish vocative particle, which may explain the otherwise unaccounted-for initial mutation from *níðingr* to *sniding*. Domhnall knows enough Norse to respond to and wind up his opponent, but uses his own language in delivering the message.

Finally, in the dramatic passage of Brian's death of the *Cogadh*, the author slips in additional Old Norse to add to the foreign power of the scene. *Brodar iarla*, the Manx Jarl Broðar, is departing the battle when he passes the elderly Brian praying on his cushion. One of his companions who had apparently been in Brian's service — a subtle but uncontested indication that his retinue had included Norse speakers — points out Brian to Broðar, naming him 'cing'. Broðar does not recognise the old man and argues back, 'Nó, nó, acht príst, príst'. The author translates for the Middle Irish audience with 'rí' and 'sacart',⁵²⁸ but like Domhnall before, the speaker links his Norse vocabulary with Irish grammatical forms. J. H. Todd noticed the English-looking form of these words while composing the edition:

These words are apparently English; nevertheless the original Danish[*sic*] may have been translated into English, by modern transcribers. The portion of the narrative in which the words occur, exists only in the Brussels MS; and it is not improbable that O'Clery, transcribing in the seventeenth century, and familiar with the English language, may have written *king* for *kónge*, *príst* for *prestr*, and *no* for *né*; or else that all this may be an interpolation.⁵²⁹

While Todd's description of Old Norse as Danish has hopefully been proven anachronistic by this thesis and other more linguistic scholarship since 1865, he does have a point that the word forms look remarkably familiar for modern English speakers.

While Norse literacy was nascent at the time of Clontarf, and the shape of dialects present in Hiberno-Norse Dublin thus unknowable, the earliest attested forms of 'king' and 'priest' are *konungr* and *prestr*; presuming the loss of the masculine nominative final *-r*, this is reasonably close enough

⁵²⁸ Todd, 202.

⁵²⁹ Todd, xxiv.

to ‘cing’ and ‘prist’ to pass muster for Irish speakers. We do not know whether ‘Ó Cléirigh...not merely a cultural icon of Irishness, but...hailed as the saviour of the Irish past’⁵³⁰ applied his care in preserving Irish to the preservation of Germanic language. Assuming that Ó Cléirigh faithfully recorded what was written in his source text⁵³¹ and the original had at least some attempt to record the Norse language, this leaves the *Cogadh* peppered with six words that would be possible for an Irish speaker to have picked up from their neighbours: ‘where is —?’, a negation, ‘king’, ‘priest’, and a dire insult. Not only are Norse speakers in this ostensibly anti-Norse text not treated as babbling barbarians, as their dialogue is neatly translated into the language of the audience; but also, accurate words from their original language appear, indicating that the average Middle Irish speaker was expected to have at least heard Old Norse in their travels and would have recognised and valued their inclusion as a dash of (imagined) authenticity.

In his oft-cited and comprehensive *Early Medieval Ireland: 400-1200*, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín characterises the appearance of the Norse in the *Cogadh* thusly: ‘This rousing narrative is about as good a source of information on the Vikings as *Star Trek* is for the American space programme.’⁵³² Yet this pat metaphor works brilliantly for the aims of this thesis: an analysis of the first seasons of *Star Trek*, with a cast including people of colour and Russians, encapsulates contemporary American ideals of space travel and the future better than any NASA data report ever could. Similarly, while archaeology continues to give us new objective information about the Norse in Ireland, or rather what traces they left which can be recovered centuries later; these Middle Irish narratives give us a window into contemporary thought which could never be preserved in a lost spearhead or piece of shoe leather.

The Osraige chronicle, *Cogadh*, and *Cellacháin* are three examples of dynastic propaganda literature that feature the Norse in the lionisation of their heroes. They are not the only, but they have the most sustained narratives and clearest characterisations of Norse speakers, which is why they were chosen for this thesis. Close seconds were the *Móirthemhell Éirenn uile dorigne Muirchertach*

⁵³⁰ Cunningham, *The Annals of the Four Masters*, 17.

⁵³¹ Cunningham, 72.

⁵³² Second edition, 276.

mac Néill ('The circuit of Ireland by Muirheartach mac Néill'), which would have added an Ulster dimension to these Munster and Osraige/Leinster texts,⁵³³ and the *Senchas Gall Átha Cliath* ('History of the Foreigners of Dublin'), whose title promises more *senchas* than it delivers.⁵³⁴ Both texts offer brief anecdotes about the Norse in Ireland, but neither are worth the intense scrutiny that the three chosen texts have sustained in this thesis. In *Cogadh, Cellacháin*, and the Osraige chronicle, the generation and sustenance of a narrative creates the sort of scenery (or scenery-chewing) around the Norse that bears analysis, whereas the relative brevity and straightforwardness of the *Móirthemhell Éirenn* and the *Senchas Gall* lacks in qualitative material.

Similarly, *flanagecht* and other contemporary vernacular material such as the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* and the *Táin Bó Cúailge* could be read and analysed for their depiction of Norse speakers and their analogues.⁵³⁵ Such a venture, however, would quickly spiral beyond the parameters of a doctoral thesis, particularly one focused on the way the Norse are depicted in narratives meant to be historical and concerning explicitly Norse-speaking figures. It is the intention of these figures that they capture Norse speakers' characteristics by their explicit description, rather than reading narrative metaphorically for imagined 'Viking' stand-ins. Nonetheless, further study is warranted on literary Lochlannaigh, and I hope in further work to pursue the relationship between the Gaelic outlaw figures *fianna* and *diberga* and the Norse in Ireland, and perhaps their crossover, historical or literary, in the form of the *Gall Gaidhel*.

The aims of this thesis are to gauge contemporary social and public opinions about the Hiberno-Norse by analysis of their depiction in documents that narrate the history of Norse speakers in Ireland. Inherently, such a task is amorphous rather than rigidly defined, resulting in evidence subject to analysis rather than objective data. Yet the organisation of this thesis hopefully demonstrates the possibilities for treating episodes and figures from narrative texts as discrete packets of quantitative information that can then be analysed in summary. The evidence is clear for a

⁵³³ O'Donovan, *The circuit of Ireland*.

⁵³⁴ Boyle and Breatnach, '*Senchas Gall Átha Cliath*.'

⁵³⁵ Carey, '*Lebor Gabála*'.

worldview that includes the Norse as strange, sometimes outright hostile; but nonetheless humans with human fears and motivations, who could be reasoned with, militarily allied to victory, or even successfully married. These are not alien barbarians incapable of speech or rational thought, but people.

The study of the European Middle Ages is still of great use to world affairs despite its frequent use as a punchline of obsolescence. The formation of political entities, cultural assimilation, and identity issues are still daily concerns across the world, and the study of people in contact in pre-modern states is of priceless value to modern concepts about the relationship of culture and nation. This thesis's objective is to discern the contemporary attitudes of Irish language speakers about their neighbours and allies, based on their depiction in literature understood at the time to be historical. Ultimately, this information can be applied to identity politics in the early medieval period as well as throughout human history. The theoretical framework of otherness and acculturation — or rather, transculturation, a two-way process on the part of the Norse and the Gaels — explored in this thesis, particularly via lenses of technology, gender, and religion, have revealed fruitful outcomes about the retention of personhood despite foreignness. Themes of cultural assimilation, multilingualism, and syncretism are central to pressing modern issues such as globalisation, language policy, immigration, and social integration.

When Norse speakers in the form of plundering Vikings first arrived in Ireland in the final years of the eighth century, they encountered a politically fragmented but culturally cohesive society speaking Middle Irish, organised by the Church and in units from the individual household to the *tuath* and over-kingship of provinces. The Norse recognised the fertility of the land as well as its convenience for other sea-based ports and commerce in the Irish Sea Region, and found footholds in the form of temporary camps in Ireland that they were able to make into year-round settlements that eventually became towns, most of which are still the leading cities of the Republic of Ireland today. While we will never be able to go back in time and interview the Gaels in ninth to twelfth century Ireland about their opinions of their Hiberno-Norse neighbours, utilising contemporary literary texts

in Middle Irish about the Norse is an invaluable source of information about how that ethno-linguistic community collectively felt. The stories the Irish told themselves about how, when, and why the Norse came to Ireland reveal their prejudices, stereotypes, and impressions of their contemporary descendents, the Hiberno-Norse town-dwellers. The analysis of these preconceptions reveal a complicated, nuanced, and humanistic worldview where medieval people pondered and appreciated those different from them. While violence and terror are present in these texts, so are camaraderie, wonder, and even romance. The Norse in Ireland are another form of Irish, living alongside and among the Gaelic Irish of pre-Cambro-Norman Ireland.

VII. Bibliography

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