F 3.2: Literature and learning: Typology: Themes, motifs

   In NThT 49/1 (1995), pp. 1–11.

2689. Lehmann (Ruth P. M.): Death and vengeance in the Ulster Cycle.
   Discusses the motif of revenge by killing, using as a case-study the deaths of Cu Roi and Cu Chulainn.

1729. Doan (James E.): The poetic tradition of Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh.
   In Éigse 18/1 (1980), pp. 1–24.
   App. 1: Do mhúsgail mé d'éis luighe ar aoir go sáimh; ed. based on MSS TCD 1399 (H 5.28) and 1367 (H 4.26), where it is ascribed to Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh and Cearbhall Og Ó Dálaigh resp.; with Engl transl. and notes; App. 2: Am leaba arnóir do shileas féin a’ teacht, attributed to Cearbhall Ó Dála na mBan; ed based on MSS TCD 1365 (H 4.24) and RIA A iv 2, with Engl transl. and notes; App. 3: Fada ar gothrom ó chéile (from DG 78–79), attributed (in MS RIA F vi 2) to Cearbhall Ó Dála; with Engl. transl.

   In PHCC 7 (1986), pp. 1–27.
   Investigates the narrative function of the Irish Otherworld, and suggests a symbolic equivalence between the latter and the énach.

   Respectively in (1) Buíme trír máthair mhic Dé, attributed to Donchadh Mór Ó Dálaigh (fl. c. 1400); and (2) Bódh aíre ag Ultacht ar Aodh, by Eochaidh Ó hEoghráin.

824. McConne (Kim): Aided Chelchair maic Uthisch: hounds, heroes and hospitalers in early Irish myth and story.
   Includes an appendix on the principal divisions in early Irish social ideology, the four main classes being òes dána, òiberga, briugaid, féini (flaithi / rig).

1619. Meek (Donald E.): Túin bò Fraích and other ‘Frách’ texts: a study in thematic relationships. Part I.
   In CMCS 7 (Summer, 1984), pp. 1–37.
[1.] The Fráech texts [Táin bó Fraích, Tochmarc Tebhlaíne and the poems Laothó Fráech (beg. Osmadh carad a Chlain Fraích), Carn Fraích, soithach na soarchlann]; [2.] Fráech and the monster place-names (e.g. Dubhlinn Fraích, Loch Bóga, Carn Fraích, Chlain Fraích) suggest early Fráech texts associated with Connacht; compares and contrasts TRF, LF and CFSS. App. A contains an Engl. transl. of LF, based on text in MS Edinburgh, NLS Adv. 72.1.37 (Dean of Lismore's Book).

For part II, see CMCS 8 (Winter, 1984), pp. 65-85.


Part I (pp. 1-33) by J.B.: Early Irish examples of the evil eye: 1. The destructive eye [súil mileach, Birugderc, súil milltech, súil neimeach, possibly tuisilchlech]; 2. The angry eye [déican andiarid, súil [fhéig] andiarid]; 3. Casting the evil eye [millid, uimillid; corrugineocht also discussed]; 4. Envy and the evil eye [for-moíneilthar, drochrose, drochshul]; 5. Protection against the evil eye. Part II (pp. 34-39) by F.K.: ‘The evil eye’ in early Irish law: a section of legal commentary (dating from around the twelfth century) attached to a four-word quotation from an Old Irish law text (No etod tri ornath ‘Or stealing away through envy’), ed. with transl. and notes from MSS Rawlinson B 506 and TCD H 3. 18; cf. CHI i 144.34-145.5; ii 673.3-10; iii 955.1-8, 1051.17-23.

5731. Ó Fiannachta (Pádraig): An grá sa tseancéalaíocht.

In LCC 6 (1975), pp. 5-16.

13100. Johnson (Máire): Vengeance is mine: saintly retribution in medieval Ireland.

In Vengeance in the middle ages (2010), pp. 5-50.


In ECI 11 (1996), pp. 7-45.

Documents and discusses the emergence and importance in eighteenth-century Irish language political poetry of vernacular names such as Caitlín Ní Uallacháin, Síle Ní Ghadhra, Móirín Ní Chuilleanáin (or Ní Luineacáin, or Ní Ghiobarláin) and Gráinne Mhaol (or Ní Mháille).


The significance of mael in Finn’s original name of Demné Mael.

7326. Stanchcliffe (Clare): Creator and creation: a preliminary investigation of early Irish views and their relationship to biblical and patristic traditions.

In CMCS 58 (Winter, 2009), pp. 9-27.
On the theme of Creation in Irish and Latin literary sources (mostly treatises, sermons and poems) from the 7th to 9th centuries.

4184. Greene (David): Tabu in early Irish narrative.

1847. Ó Cathasaigh (Tomás): Curse and satire.
   Repr. in Coire sois, pp. 95–100.

2450. Carey (John): The encounter at the ford: warriors, water and women.
   Explores the association of fluvial water with female sexuality and its interaction with warlike activity.

10446. Ó Bráin (Máirtín): Cluasa capaill ar an rí: AT 782 i dtraidisiún na hÉireann.
   Discusses the relationship between the various literary and folk versions of this folktale type (represented in Irish tradition by the stories of Labhraidh Lóngsach and of King Eochaid).

2432. Hollo (Kaarina): Conchobhar’s ‘sceptre’: the growth of a literary topos.
   In CMCS 29 (Summer, 1995), pp. 11–25.
   Outlines the development of theme of the peace-bringing royal sceptre in early Irish literature.

   On the goddess of sovereignty; extraordinary conceptions and births; association with love and the death of a lover.

   Highlights the use of laughter to express one’s disapproval, and its detrimental effect on the social status of its victim. App. contains a note on suicide in early Irish literature.

5732. Herbert (Máire): An grá sa tseanfhilíocht.

2435. Corthals (Johan): Early Irish retóiríces and their late antique background.
   In CMCS 31 (Summer, 1996), pp. 17–36.

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Original address:
Suggests that they originate in the 6th c. in imitation of Latin poetry and rhetorical style. Includes observations on Bergin’s law.

    Discusses the metaphorical use of *éigne*, *có*, *maighre*, *brádún* in conjunction with proper names denoting water features to allude to chiefains.

468. Bransbäck (Birgit): Synge’s Old Maurya and Old Irish *imbas forosnai*.

    *In* ScI 41 (1990), pp. 18–34.
    Discusses an occurrence of the watchman motif, suggesting it may be part of a general Celtic theme in this saga and not a direct Irish influence.

2569. Wiley (Dan M.): Niall Frossach’s true judgement.
    Argues that reddening (*imdergad*) and eruption of steam (*dé*) are connected with an Irish hagiographical motif, and that their attribution to Niall is politically motivated.

    Brings together examples of this theme in Irish, Welsh and Cornish; discusses its origins and later development in Latin; outlines its use in art and in non-Celtic European languages. Cf. A. Breeze, 'The Blessed Virgin and the Sunbeam through Glass', *Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies* 2 (1991), 53–64.

11038. Coira (M. Pía): The high-kingship of Alba in classical poetry of Scotland: the evidence from classical and pre-classical poetry.
    Examines the interconnection of the high-kingship, king’s spouse, *Goill* and prophecy motifs in Scottish praise poems. In Appendix: List of poems quoted.

    *Ad Vitam Tripátita*, 146.7–14 (as ed. by W. Strokes, 1887 [Best 1, p. 240]), where fishermen are said to be able to distinguish salmon by river.

6468. Ó Conluain (Proinsias): The Red Hand of Ulster.
17860. Ó Háinle (Cathal): Varia de amore.  

1. Bhe an lán de stuaíomh and quinque lineae amoris [Interprets the use by the poet of the words lámh and gníomh in the light of the medieval Latin poetic trope of the quinque lineae (or gradus) amoris]; 2. Bhe an faoi an falachán [Proposes that the wording of the reference to Absalom’s hair in the first q. of this poem is influenced by a misunderstanding of Eng. disteyne (‘outshine’) in the suggested source of this poem (i.e. Chaucer’s ballade Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses sterile in the prologue to the Legend of good women) as disseyne (‘contempt’)].


13001. Carey (John): The sea and the spirit: two notes.  

[1.] Profundissimum divinae cognitionis pelago: the Irish context of Eriugena’s voyage of the mind (On the Irish background to the metaphor of the ocean journey found in Periphyseon IV); [2.] The mice, the Eucharist, and the satirist: St. Brendan and the Book of Kells (The desecration of the Eucharist by cat and mice in the Incarnation page is compared to an incident in Vita sancti Brandoni).

2240. Wright (Charles D.): The Irish ‘enumerative style’ in Old English homiletic literature, especially Vercelli Homily IX.  
In CMCS 18 (Winter, 1989), pp. 27–74.

Argues that Old English homilists adapted numerical motifs from Old Irish and Hiberno-Latin models.

In Éigse 25 (1991), pp. 28–44.

Types of characters spared from physical violence in early Irish literature.

1648. Meek (Donald E.): The banners of the Fian in Gaelic ballad tradition.  
In CMCS 11 (Summer, 1986), pp. 29–69.

[1.] Analogues of the banners in Germanic and other cultures; [2.] Banners in Irish tradition outside the fían; [3.] Banners associated with the fían; [4.] The banner quatrains in later tradition (incl. names of banners, e.g. Deilbh Ghreine, Fudang Doghra, Aoincheamach, Dún Naomhtha, Lámh Dhearg, Synab Ghbhaithe, Loch Lainneach); [5.] Forms and composition of the BDL poem [see [6]]; [6.] Edition (Poem beg. Naoinear a chuidhm[or] já choill, ed. from NLS MS Adv. 72.1.37 (Dean of Lismore’s Bk); with Engl transl. and notes). Figs.

420. Ó Cuív (Brian): A poem of prophecy on Ua Conchobair kings of Connacht.  

Ó Cuív (Brian) (ref.)


Mac Cana (Proinsias) (ref.)


Argues that the reference to ‘white, weak arms’ used in the description of the maiden in Aisling Meic Conglinne lines 1169-1170 is a topos inherited from the Indo-European poetic language.


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Argues that the idea of the overseas Otherworld is not natural to the Irish tradition.

*Republ.* in *The Otherworld voyage in early Irish literature*, pp. 113-119.


Revisits the testimonies of traditions concerning werewolves in Ireland presented by J. Reinhart and V. Hull 1936 (*in Best 2* 1201); especially on the anecdote of the Ossory werewolves told by Gerald of Wales and others.

[(In Dutch:) The ‘evil’ eye in medieval Irish wisdom texts.]
Cf. the Author’s discussion (*in English*) in *Celtica* 24 (2003), pp. 1-38.

Discusses the function of prophecy, etc. in *Toigil bruidne da Derga*.

*In CMCS* 3 (Summer, 1982), pp. 41-75.

For part I, see *CMCS* 2 (Winter, 1981), pp. 47-72.

2404. Breeze (Andrew): The Blessed Virgin’s joys and sorrows.
*In CMCS* 19 (Summer, 1990), pp. 41-54.
Ascribes the poem *Cúig cáis as mhó le Moire* (*see L. McKenna, Dioghlaim dána, no. 20*) to the later Donachadh Mór Ó Dálaigh (*fl. ca. 1400*).

9863. Sayers (William): Gunnarr, his Irish wolfhound Sámr, and the passing of the old heroic order in *Njáls saga*.
*In ANF* 112 (1997), pp. 43-66.
Also on the Irish connotations of the Sámr incident in this saga.
328. Cormier (Raymond J.): Pagan shame of Christian modesty?
   Cú Chulainn’s frenzy is abated by the baring of women’s breasts.

1758. Nagy (Joseph Falaky): The wisdom of the *geilt*.
   *In Éigse* 19/1 (1982), pp. 44–60.

614. Davies (Morgan T.): Kings and clerics in some Leinster sagas.
   Exemplified chiefly by Cath Dún Bolg and Cath Almaine, including anecdotes from *Fragmentary annals of Ireland*.

12606. Ingridsdotter (Kicki): Motivation for incest: Clothru and the Battle of *Druim Criaich*.
   Discusses the episode of Clothru’s incest with her brothers, found in *Aided Mèidhe*, the prose and metrical *dindshenchas* of Druim Criaich, and Cath Boinde.

4057. Freeman (Philip M.): Visions from the dead in Herodotus, Nicander of Colophon, and the *Táin bó Cualnge*.
   Draws attention to citation of Nicander (probably datable to 2nd c. B.C.) by Tertullian concerning a Celtic belief in visions of the dead appearing to those who sleep by tombs of ancestors. Suggestion that this is comparable with recovery of the *Táin* in *Fallsigud Tána bó Cualgne*.

   With discussion of related terms.

   *In NThT* 58/1 (2004), pp. 46–60.
   [(In Dutch:) Human sacrifice as a literary motif in medieval Ireland.]


   Investigates the narrative role and function of birds in early Irish literature.

17463. Ro dw ay (Simón): Affectionate cannibalism and the blood drinking motif in Gaelic literature.

   Analyses the content and transmission of Arthurian characters and motifs in Gaelic folktales and ballads.
   For part II, see CMCS 3 (Summer, 1982), pp. 41-75.

   Comments on the evil eye motif in Irish literature.

2026. Ó Háinle (Cathal): *Congaibh ort, a mhac aoimh mná* (DG 103): content and form.
   Argues that late medieval death imagery influenced its composition, and esp. that a rhythmical device is used in order to convey the notion that the speaker in the poem is Death personified.
   Paper read at the Gerard Murphy Commemorative Conference, 4 December 1999.

   Studies the motifs and images associated to the theme of the poet mourning his patron, and argues that they reflect the special status enjoyed by the *ollamh flatha*. Includes a list of poems cited, with references.

11935. Sayers (William): The three wounds: tripartition as narrative tool in Ireland and Iceland.
   *In Incognita 1* (1990), pp. 50–90.
   Irish examples drawn from *Táin bó Cúailnge*.

14181. Hemming (Jessica): ‘I could love a man with those three colours’: gazing and the tricoloured beloved.
   *In Longes mac nUiserrn, etc.*

In Mediaevalia 29/2 (2008), pp. 53–73.

10996. Bateman (Meg): Boats in the Gaelic imagination.
In SGS 24 (2008), pp. 53–72.

13675. Ó Cathasaigh (Tomás): The threefold death in early Irish sources.
In SCJ-NS 6 (1994), pp. 53–75.
Focuses on the offences committed by four figures in early Irish literature (Áed Dub, Diarmaid mac Cerbaill, Muircertach mac Era, and Grác) which caused them to be punished with such death.
Repr. in Coire sois, pp. 101–120.

13789. Ó Mac hain (Pádraig): The poetry of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn: themes and sources.
In Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (2010), pp. 55–87.

Discusses the influence of Old Testament prophetic themes on Adomnán’s political thought.

7071. McManus (Damian): Good-looking and irresistible: the hero from early Irish saga to classical poetry.
Discusses the role of male physical beauty in Irish literature, arguing that the elements and themes in the set description of the patron in classical verse derive from the duine díglaim, or ‘personal profile’, of kings and heroes in early narrative literature.

Edition of Version 1, based on MSS TCD H 2, 16 and TCD H 3, 18; and of Version 2, based on Egerton 1781 and RIA B iv 1; with English translation and notes. Includes an examination of the historical background and literary themes.

5734. Ó Fiaich (Tomás): Na hamhráin ghrá.
In LCC 6 (1975), pp. 59–87.

5172. Ryan (Salvador): The persuasive power of a mother’s breast: the most desperate act of the Virgin Mary’s advocacy.
Discusses a European religious literary motif, including Irish examples.

15508. Brady (Lindy): An Irish sovereignty motif in Laxdale saga.
11. An unnecessary emendation (vs. W. Stokes’s emendation of *snidhfe̍d* to *sn̄a[di]hfe̍d* in RC 12 (1891), pp. 306-08 ([§14]), reproduced in E. A. Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired* (1982); also discussion of the theme of womenfolk’s intervention in political affairs); 2. OIr. *-tochus* (interprets MS *toṣa* [§67] as *tochus*, prototonic fut. 1 sg. of *do-cing* ‘steps, strides forward; advances, comes’); 3. A redactorial intrusion [in §69].

Gray (E. A.) (ref.), Stokes (W.) (ref.)


ad G. Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée III* (1973), pp. 21-89; examines the aquatic and equine motifs occurring in the dindshenchas of Bóand, and discusses their relation to the Celtic and Scandinavian mythical figure of the water-horse.

16341. Pettit (Edward): Three variations on the theme of the dog-headed spear in medieval Irish: Celtchar’s *īaun*, Conall Cernach’s *Derg Drúchtach*, Lugaid’s *flesc*.


In *NACCS* 2 (1992), pp. 65–82.

On the recasting of the original threefold death motif due to the reservation of *crochad* ‘hanging’ for exclusive Christian use.

1626. Meek (Donald E.): *Táin bō Fraích* and other ‘Fráech’ texts: a study in thematic relationships. Part II.


[1.] Fraích and his stolen cattle (compares and contrasts *Táin bō Fraích, Tochmar Treblainne* and poem *Carn Fraioch, soitheach na saorchlann*); [2.] General conclusions.

For part I, see *CMCS* 7 (Summer, 1984), pp. 1–37.

6775. Dunn (James H.): Síle na gcfoch.
1427. McManus (Damian): Elegy on the death of Aodh Ó Conchobhair (1309).
Incomplete poem by Aonghus (mac Taidhg) Mac Carebhail Bhuidhe, beg. Beag ná bháith Aodh oidhich Chúinn (33 qq.), ed. from MS RIA A iv 3 (743) with Engl. transl. and notes. Stylistic feature of echo (generally involving parallelism or antithesis) between opening and closing couplets in many quatrains discussed. Also on the identification of meic Carebhoill (= Aonghus (mac Taidhg) Mac Carebhail Bhuidhe) and Aonghus Ruadh (= Aonghus Ruadh Ó Dálaigh) in Fear Flathia Ó Gnímh’s poem Cuimseach sin a Bhearnbhail Òig §§ 4 and 5 resp.

4503. Power (Rosemary): Geasa and áidóg: magic formulae and perilous quests in Gaelic and Norse.
In ScS 28 (1987), pp. 69–89.

In Ériu 43 (1992), pp. 69–92.

10443. Ó Cuív (Brian): An raibh adharca ar do mhinistir?
In Béaloidneas 52 (1984), pp. 70–74.
Provides an example of the motif of The Fool as Murderer (AT 1600) from Imtheachta na n-oimhhideath; text based on RIA B iv 1.


1660. Merdrignac (Bernard): Folklore and hagiography: a semiotic approach to the legend of the immortals of Landeven nec.
In CMCS 13 (Summer, 1987), pp. 73–86.
Explores motifs in Irish and Welsh literature and biblical imagery used in Vita Winwaloei by Abbot Weilisten.

In JIES 19/1-2 (Spring/Summer, 1991), pp. 73–92.

In CMCS 48 (Winter, 2004), pp. 75–99.
Studies the development of the motifs of the Passion (in particular the ‘Five Wounds’) and Death of Christ in devotional bardic verse, and argues that this genre shows that bardic poetry evolved and was subject to external influences during the 1250–1650 period.
5663. Carey (John): The uses of tradition in *Serglige Con Culainn*.
   Also on the status of the *Briathraethse Con Culainn*.

351. Ó Cathasaigh (Tomás): The theme of *aimmne* in *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin*.
   *Repr.* in *Coire sois*, pp. 342-351.

758. Killeen (J. F.): The debility of the Ulstermen: a suggestion.
   The *ces noínden* is not interpreted literally as a coward inflicted upon the
   entire adult male population of the Ulstermen, but rather the application of
   the weakness-of-woman-in-labour metaphor, to the theme of supernatural or
   magic immobilization of groups, found throughout epic literature, folklore and
   hagiography.

1089. Breeze (Andrew): The instantaneous harvest.
   *In Éiri* 41 (1990), pp. 81–93.
   A survey of material from Céltic and other languages.

1887. Ó Buachalla (Breandán): Briseadh na Bóinne.
   The account in Gaelic poetry of the Battle of the Boyne and its aftermath.

12636. Ryan (Salvador): `No milkless cow': the cross of Christ in medieval Irish
   literature.

3666. Sjöblom (Tom): Before *geis* became magical: a study of the evolution
   of an early Irish religious concept.
   Critical anthropological assessment of D. Greene, *Tabu in early Irish narrative*,

   Examines descriptions of technically complex objects and artefacts occurring in
   early Irish literature.

442. O’Leary (Philip): Honour-bound: the social context of early Irish heroic
   *geis*.

16794. Kiselev (Mikhail): Some notes on the origin of the motif of the Ulaid’s false
   beards in *Cath Aenaig Macha* and *Cùir Armann*.

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372. Ó Concheadhainn (Tomás): Smacht ri agus nuire.
    In Celtica 16 (1984), p. 86.
    The motif of the Secure Doorless House in bardic poetry.

    In CMCS 13 (Summer, 1987), pp. 87-96.
    A study of this motif in British and Continental art and literature and its
    appearance in Welsh poetry of the 15th and 16th centuries.

15192. Ó Háinle (Cathal): Three apólogues and In cath cathar dé.
    In Éirin 65 (2015), pp. 87-126.
    Provides an edition of three seventeenth-century apólogues based on events of
    the Roman civil war: 1. qqs. 22-31 of Rug cousamh ar chrice Midhle (text from
    RIA A y 2); 2. qqs. 26-39 of Cótir stil re seanamh Guaidheal (text from TCD
    H 6. 7); 3. qqs. 15-26 of A Thoiridhealbháigh, turn th'ai greadh ch by Pear Flatha
    Ó Gnímh (text based on TCD H 5. 6). Standardized text, English translation,
    notes, and discussion of each apóologue in the context of the poem in which it
    occurs.

    Compares the two versions (found in Expugnatio Hibernica and The Song of
    Dermot and the Earl) of the spectral visit to Robert fitz Stephen's camp, and
    discusses the appearance phantasmal armies in early Irish literature.


9559. Sayers (William): Fusion and fission in the love and lexis of early Ireland.
    In Words of love (2008), pp. 95-109.
    Examines scenes of love and loss from the mythological cycle, from the Ulster
    and kings' cycles, and the Fenian cycle.


6554. Ó Bróin (Brian): Some ascension motifs in medieval Irish saints' lives.
    In Ezlas 1 (2006), pp. 97-118.

5416. Chekhonadskaja (Nina Y.): Der Wagen und der Wagenlenker in den
    irischen Heiligenleben.

899. Sayers (William): Mani maídi an nem ...: ringing changes on a cosmic
    motif.

Discusses the cosmic motif of the three elements (earth, air/sky, water/sea) in early Irish literature. Contains a brief appendix on the deity Núada.

10889. Hudson (Benjamin): Time is short: the eschatology of the early Gaelic church.

In Last things (1999), pp. 101–123.

On the Doomsday theme in early Irish literature.


Studies animal metaphors in poetry by South East Ulster filk and Clan Donald bards from the 17th and 18th centuries.

528. Mac Cana (Proinsias): Mongán mac Fiachna and Immram Brain.

In Ériu 23 (1972), pp. 102–142.


Mac Cana (Proinsias) (ref.)

3490. Rees (Brinley): No diadau amrywiol: [7.] Y rhif ‘33’.


Calls attention to the significance of the number ‘33’ in the list of names of the gnáth-fiann in Acalam na senórach.


In ZCP 52 (2001), pp. 102–117.

Argues in favour of a direct connection between early European iconography and mythic episodes and characters from early Irish literature, focusing on the Irish goddess of sovereignty.

1761. Mac Craith (Micheál): Óvid, an macalla agus Cearbhhall Ó Dálaigh.

In Éigse 19/1 (1982), pp. 103–120.

I. Forás an mhacalla mar dheismireacht liteartha. II. An dán Gaeilge.


2528. Ó Háinle (Cathal): Máin aithrighe dhìamh, a Dhé revised.

In Ériu 54 (2004), pp. 103–123.
New edition of the poem (supersedes L. McKenna 1919 [Best 2, 1759, 65-68], based on Book of O’Conor Don 50r-51r [33 qqs.]; now attributed to Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn. With a selection of variant readings from other MSS, translation, commentary and textual notes. Also includes a discussion of the motif of the blood-spotted hand, shown to differ in its structure from that in Gesta Romanorum but analogous to that used by Shakespeare for his Lady Macbeth. Provides an appendix with the translation of the Gesta Romanorum version of De amore inordinato.

1230. Clancy (Thomas Owen): Fools and adultery in some early Irish texts.

   As (probably) described in Topographia Hiberniae by Giraldus Cambrensis.


16904. Simms (Katharine): Images of the galloglass in poems to the McSweeneys.
   In World of the galloglass (2007), pp. 106–123.
   Appendix: Thirty-two bardic poems addressed to the MacSweeneys.

5147. Imhoff (Helen): The themes and structure of Aided Echach maic Mairede.
   Provides a survey of references to this story and a literary analysis focusing on its theological themes, in particular that of the sacrament of baptism.

5090. Ó Cuív (Brian): The wearing of the green.
   Finds allusions to green as the symbolic colour of Ireland in eighteenth-century Irish poetry.

16174. McCone (Kim): A brief ornithology of sex.
   Explores the sexual connotations of geese and swans particularly in medieval Irish and ancient Greek material.


444. Breeze (Andrew): The Virgin’s tears of blood.

Concludes that ‘the Virgins tears of blood’ of modern Irish folklore, rather than being ‘native’ or ‘Celtic’, is a relic of an international European tradition that was well developed in England. Refers to four Irish instances: (1) anon. *Fearr beagnn cloinne ná clann*; (2) anon. *locad Criosd camoain a mháthar* (see L. McKenna, *Diogháim dána* (1938), nos. 27a, 30 [Best 2 1323a]; (3) *Gin go ghearthaír caim siur* by Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn (11487) (see L. McKenna, *Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn* (1931), poem 13 [Best 2 1728]; (4) a prose translation of *The long charter of Christ* by Uilliam Mac an Leagha, dated to ca. 1461–63 (see A. Breeze, in Celtica 19 (1987), pp. 111–120). Cf. also the motif of numbered tears in two poems by Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn (*Aoidhe meise ag máthair Dé* and *Iomdha r ód dreach go Dia* (see L. McKenna, *Dán Dé* (1922), nos. 2 and 6 [Best 2 1323]).


Refers to four Irish instances of the theme of the charter of Christ: (1) *Cairt a síothchána ag síol Ádhaimh* by Tadhg Og Ó hUiginn (11448) (see L. McKenna, *Dán Dé* (1922), no. 3 [Best 2 1323]); (2) *Brion n dubeadh diomlár Dé* (see L. McKenna, *Aithidhghúim dána* (1939), no. 84 [Best 2 1692]); (3) *Seacht duoimhe mo thir dhúthaigh* by Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn (11487) (see L. McKenna, *Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn* (1931), no. 21 [Best 2 1728]); (4) a prose translation of *The long charter of Christ* (B-text) by Uilliam Mac an Leagha, dated to ca. 1461–63, contained in MSS King’s Inn 10, BL Additional 11809, and RIA 3 B 22.


316. Ó Ciardha (Pádraic P.): Beach/beach colais.


On the metaphorical use of *beach colais*, *beach colais* and *beach* as a term of praise in Classical Irish verse and some later Modern Irish poems, based on the importance of the *beach colais* `comot (bee)’.


3192. Minard (Antone): The ghost who drowned the world: a migratory legend in medieval Celtic tradition.


13402. Bishop (Judith L.): They kept their skirts on: gender-bending motifs in early Irish hagiography.

In Ulidia 1 (1994), pp. 115–121.
Studies misogynistic attitudes present in early Irish literature, particularly in the Ulster Cycle.

15034. Ó Ciosáin (Niall): Bacaigh agus ‘boccoughs’: fiasnáise ar chultúr na Gaeilge sa naoi céad déag.
Examines the portrayal of beggars in English and Irish language sources.

Discusses the Scriptural theme of the ‘divisions of man’ in Irish and Old English literature.

11770. Ivanov (Sergey): Three colours of the tree.
In ZCP 59 (2012), pp. 119–128.
Investigates the source of the motif of colour-changing trees in the Irish and French medieval literary traditions (with particular reference to In tenga bithnuin).


With reference to Fingal Rónáin and Pwyll and the role of honour and status in early Irish and Welsh society.

3613. Nagy (Joseph Falaky): Otter, salmon and eel in traditional Gaelic narrative.
Suggests that these water creatures have similar and overlapping functions as conduits of otherworldly power, wisdom and madness.

7003. Ní Chatháin (Próinséas): Traces of the cult of the horse in early Irish sources.

13863. Ó Háinle (Cathal): ‘Ab fír é anda fada ó shin’: a detached apologue?
In Érin 64 (2014), pp. 123–143.

12 qq. (perhaps part of a longer poem); earliest MS Maynooth C 88. With English translation, textual notes, and a discussion of the “baptism of tears” motif found in it (which suggests a close parallel with the Middle English poem of St. Erkenwald).

In ZCP 32 (1972), pp. 125–166.

1. The role of the elements; 2. The new critical perspective. Re-appraisal of theme of retribution by supernatural powers, particularly through invocation of the elements, in Shakespeare’s King Lear; examines medieval concepts of ‘prince’s truth’, ‘divine right’ and ‘elemental power’; some comparisons from Celtic literature.


The Threefold Death motif in Diamait’s response to Maedórrán: Fé frit, a gilla, ar Diamait, rom goin dálai, rom loosce dálai, rom lesce dálai (see D. Greene, Fingal Rónain and Other Stories (ll. 912-13) [= BILL 5065]).

Greene (David) (ref.)


13403. Reid (Jennifer Karyn): Human frontiers in medieval Irish religious literature.

Explores ideas of gender present in medieval Irish religious literature in connection with the received notion of a genderless Christian eschatological body.


15194. McManus (Damian): Celebrating the female in Classical Irish poetry: the wife.

Examines how the patron’s wife is referred to or addressed in Classical poetry and surveys the qualities most frequently praised in the iaragombair addressed to her.

618. Poppe (Eric h): Deception and self-deception in Fingal Rónain.
Analysis of the terms *bréic* ‘deceit’ and *fír* ‘true/truth’.

   *In Early medieval Ireland and Europe [Fs. Ó Cróinín] (2015), pp. 130–178.*
   Examines features present in this narrative that are typical of Irish hagiography.

1518. Ó Cuív (Brian): A passage in *Aided Con Culainn*.
   *In Éigse 15/2 (Geimhreadh, 1973), p. 140.*
   On the warning given by Cú Chulainn’s mantle in LL; cf. *Aided Con Culainn* (*Comp. Con Cul.* § 22).

13109. Mac Cana (Proinsias): Note on the motif of the wading giant in Irish and Welsh.

1519. Ó Conchennáin (Tomás): The act of wounding in the death of Muirchertach mac Erca.
   *In Éigse 15/2 (Geimhreadh, 1973), pp. 141–144.*
   MS TCD H 2. 7 tacra slainta ucht to be expanded as *tachraidh sleg ina ucht* ‘a spear meets him in the chest’ in tale *Aided Muirchertach meic Erca* § 41 (*BILL* 5.117). Emendation illustrates how previous editorial misinterpretation obscured the motif of the threefold death in this tale.

2694. Breeze (Andrew): The three sorrowful tidings.
   Relates this medieval theme, attested in a note by Uílliam Mac an Leagha in MS Laud misc. 610, to other European examples.

2798. Edel (Doris): Caught between history and myth? The figures of Fergus and Medb in the *Táin bó Cúalnge* and related matter.
   Studies the evolution of the figures of Medb and Fergus through the various stages of revision of the *Táin*, focusing on the progressive marginalization in the narrative of their love triangle with Ailill.
   *Addendum in ZCP 51 (1999), p. 211.*


   See Aithd. D. I, 302-07. A masterpiece of the European contemptus mundi genre. Mithidh do chuibhbreach, a chuirp (Aithd. D., no. 79) may be by the same author.

1520. Ó Cuív (Brian): The motif of the threefold death.
   In Éigse 15/2 (Geimhreadh, 1973), pp. 145–150.
   Includes a list of Latin and Irish phrases designating ‘death, dying’.

605. Meek (Donald E.): Place-names and Literature: evidence from the Gaelic Ballads.
   In Uses of place-names (1998), pp. 147–168.
   The use of place-names in various Fenian ballads, incl. Beann Ghulbain (Laoidh Dhiarmaid, beg. Gleann Siodh an gleann so rín thaoibh), Carn Fraoch, Loch Maigh (Laoidh Phraoich, beg. Osnadh earad a Cluain Fraoich), etc.

12679. Rebert (Maria A.): The Celtic origins of chess symbolism in Milun and Eliduc.
   In In quest of Marie de France (1992), pp. 148–160.

15925. Mac Cana (Proinsias): The Irish analogues of Mélusine.
   In Islanders and water-dwellers (1996), pp. 149–164.

   Earliest recension of story of Cormac son of Tadgh mac Céin and the badgers (occurring under the lemma Gaileng in Sanas Cormaic), ed. with Engl. transl. and notes from MSS RIA D ii 1 (Book of Uí Mhaine), TCD 1318 (H 2.16; YBL), RIA 23 P 16 (Leabhar Breac). Story reflects a dietary taboo based on older original meaning of tadhg ‘badger’.

11941. Sayers (William): The motif of wrestling in early Irish and Mongolian epic.

3442. Borsje (Jacqueline): The movement of water as symbolised by monsters in early Irish texts.
   Discusses the development of the motif of sea-monsters that move water, arguing that, although there are early references to the classical Charybdis in Hiberno-Latin texts, the connection of the two concepts is first seen in the muiniris of Echtra Pernois maic Léiti.

2712. Sayers (William): Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards, baldness and tonsure.

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Examines the social and legal importance associated with facial and head hair, as can be demonstrated by its treatment in early Irish literature.

1669. Ó Cróinín (Donnacha A.): Tobairín na leamhnachta.
In Éigse 17/2 (Geimhreadh, 1977-1978), pp. 155-156.
A story taken down by the author from his mother Éilís Ní Iarfhlaithe (†1956) in 1945, about ‘a well of new milk’, which healed the sick.

14414. Ó Riain (Gordon): Táinig an tráth nóna: old age in Classical Irish religious verse.
Examines the theme of old age in Classical Irish religious poetry and discusses the motif of nóin in this context.

In BBCS 32 (1985), p. 156.

243. Mac Cana (Proinsias): The topos of the single sandal in Irish tradition.
In Celtica 10 (1973), pp. 160-166.


5353. Sayers (William): Teithí Hen, Gúaire mac Áedáin, Grettir Ásmundarson: the king’s debility, the shore, the blade.
In StC 41 (2007), pp. 163-171.
On a motif cluster appearing in the death narratives of ageing kings in the Celtic and Norse traditions.

18293. Darwin (Gregory R.): The Méhusine legend type and the landscape in insular and continental tradition.
In Landscape and myth in North-Western Europe (2019), pp. 163-179.
Represented in Ireland by the story of the Lady of Inchiquin.

   Argues that problematic OE deor in The Dream of the Rood line 46 is best taken, on grounds the use of Ir. derg in later Irish texts, as a loan word from Irish thus meaning ‘bloody’, different from deor: ‘dark’ inherited from Germanic.

2676. McManus (Damian): Varia: III. Miscellanea on bardic poetry: 11. Repent in good time!
   In Ériu 55 (2005), p. 166.
   Metaphor of timely repentance.

   [1.] Compares the two versions of Meágla Úighach and suggests that the author of Recension II changed and omitted original satirical elements so as to present the Ulstermen in a more favourable light. [2.] Argues against attempts at a positive interpretation of the episode of Medbh’s urination/menstruation, and suggests that the redactor of Recension II deliberately used the motif to create a misogynistic portrayal of Medbh.

1416. Poppe (Eric): Varia: II. King Ahab, Boia, Mac Da Thó and Ailill.
   The beginning of the biblical story of Ahab and Jezebel concerning wive’s advice (1 Kings, 21.4-5) served as a model in Wales and in Ireland (e.g. Scél na micce Meic Da Thó, Feld Bricrenn).


   Proverb concerning the relationship between animals (fox, cat) and their skins: gleall / re sionnach a chrúicenn and its use in two poems.

225. Mac Mathúna (Liain): Irish perceptions of the cosmos.
   Traces development of the three-fold division of the cosmos into sky, earth, and sea in Irish literature.

5163. Ó hÓgáin (Dáithí): An scriosradharc agus an buille mór: staidér ar eipic bhéil.
   Discusses the motifs and background of a folk tradition concerning Donal Cam O’Sullivan Beare and King Philip III of Spain.
11638. Sinns (Katharine): Bardic poems of apology and reconciliation.

5810. Busse (Peter): The poet as spouse of his patron: homoerotic love in medieval Welsh and Irish poetry?
   *In SC 2 (2003), pp. 175–192.*
   Investigates the origins and the European context of same-gender love poetry in Ireland.

1481. Ó Ríain (Pádraig): A study of the Irish legend of the wild man.
   *In Éigse 14/3 (Samhradh, 1972), pp. 179–206.*

13096. Radner (Joan Newlon): The significance of the threefold death in Celtic tradition.

13760. Ó Meachair (Micheál): Deabhóid don Chroí Ró-Naofa in Éirinn.


4259. Cataldi (Melita): Chaos as multiplicity: examples in medieval Ireland.
   Studies the formless and the form, uncontrolled multiplicity and unity as a literary theme in *Táin bó Cúaleinge* and *In tenga bithnua*.

   The source of Christ’s ‘leaps’ in Doineadh Mór Ó Dánaigh’s poem *Rugas octh léimeanna bíadh* is Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604).

227. Muhr (Kay): Water imagery in Early Irish.

3425. Johnston (Elva): Transforming women in Irish hagiography.

15787. Ó hÓgáin (Dáithí): ‘Has the time come?’ (MLSIT 8009): the Barbarossa legend in Ireland and its historical background.
   On the motif of the ‘Sleeping hero’.

13214. Wright (Charles D.): From monks’ jokes to sages’ wisdom: the joca monachorum tradition and the Irish Immacallam in dá thúarad.
   On the borrowing of motifs from medieval Latin scholastic and catechetical dialogues into the early Irish tradition.

2168. Ó Buachalla (Breandán): Aodh Eanghach and the Irish king-hero.
   Examines the bardic poetry motif of the prophesied redeemer king, exemplified by Aodh Eanghach.

   In Approaches to Greek myth (1990), pp. 200–238.
   The speaking ‘vital head’ of Orpheus is compared to that of Suátham in medieval Irish tradition.


13043. Mac Cana (Proinsias): The motif of trivial causes.
   Discusses two Irish examples, extracted from ‘The Quarrel about the Loaf’ (Ériu 1.128) and Fled Dáin na nGéid.

14791. Connolly (Seán): The power motif and the use of scripture in Cogitosus’ Vita Brigitae.
   In Aquitaine and Ireland in the Middle Ages (1995), pp. 207–220.

2044. Ó Cathasaigh (Tomás): The theme of lommrad in Cath Maige Mucrama.
   Repr. in Coire sois, pp. 330-341.


   In ÉtC 27 (1990), pp. 221–234.
Discusses chain symbolism in early Irish texts.

14025. Nagy (Joseph Fajlaky): The Celtic literary love triangle revisited. 
In 14th ICCS, Maynooth 2011 (2015), pp. 221–244.
Discusses two stories from Acaill na seanach featuring Manannán mac Lir: the Conn Manannán episode (3646-3671) and the Tonn Chlídna episode (3728-3858).

Discusses the sword ritual described in Serglige Con Culainn §2.15-17, and argues that the background for the demons mentioned in this and other texts in connection with the delivery of an oracular message about fights in the past is to be found in the Irish war goddesses (particularly the Morrígan).

On a sixteenth-century literary analogue in croisntacht form of the folk tale motif of the messenger who forgets his message or confuses it.

Argues that the early Irish tradition of descriptions of chariot and team was influenced by Isidore's authoritative account on horses. Includes an appendix listing the Old Irish terms used in the descriptions, with references to texts.

Studies the forms of this motif in Celtic, Old English and Old Norse literature.


3309. Bray (Dorothy Ann): Further on white read-eared cows in fact and fiction. 
In Peritia 19 (2005), pp. 239–255.
On the possible association of the red-eared fairy cows of the Irish Otherworld and the wild cattle of Chillingham.

2633. Bliathnach (Maire): The sovereignty goddess as goddess of death? 
Studies the role of the Sovereignty Goddess as agent of the King's death in two Old Irish death-tales and draws parallels with Old Norse literature.


   Examines the vocabulary for buildings or furnishings in bardic poetry of the period 1200–1650. In Appendix: 1. List of poems composed about a patron’s house, or containing passages referring to a house and/or its furnishings; 2. A) Vocabulary for building and furnishing taken from nine thirteenth-century bardic poems; 2. B) Additional vocabulary from eleven fourteenth and fifteenth-century poems.

14418. Simms (Katharine): Images for the role of bardic poets.
   On ‘the poet as the patron’s lover’ and other motifs used to describe the relationship between poet and patron.


9771. Sayers (William): Kingship and the hero’s flaw: disfigurement as ideological vehicle in early Irish narrative.

3101. Breeze (Andrew): The Virgin Mary, daughter of her son.
   Studies the mater et filia topos in early Irish, Welsh and English poetry.


1701. McTurk (Rory): An Irish analogue to the Kráka-episode of Ragnars saga lodhrókar.
   Story, Brian na Diúgadh from Co. Mayo, which combines the motif of The Clever Peasant Girl (AT 875) with the legend of the Slaying of the Aged (= Wisdom of Hidden Old Man Saves Kingdom, AT 981), edited with English translation from Irish Folklore Collection, MS 1269.
10601. Picard (Jean-Michel): Variations on friends and friendship in early medieval Ireland.

   Discusses the rare motif of breast-feeding men, occurring in the lives of Colmán Elo, Beoch, and Flidchá of Brí Gobhann.

2648. Ó Dúshláine (Tadhg): Varia: III. More about Keating’s use of the dung beetle.

7387. Ó Tuama (Seán): The lineage of Gaelic love-poetry from the earliest times.

16305. Ryan (Salvador): “Scarce anyone survives a heart wound”: the wounded Christ in Irish bardic religious poetry.

   Particularly on the type known as crosán.

1492. Ó Súilleabháin (Pádraig): A gual gion gur lamhadh lé.
   In Éigse 14/4 (Geimhreadh, 1972), pp. 297–299.
   On Mary’s restraint from weeping at the Cross and her red tears in Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn’s poem Aoidhe meise ag máthair Dé; also on the motif of the three tears.


12886. Mac Mathúna (Séamus): Duibheagán an uafáis i dtraidisiún na Gaeilge: úacht, uaimh agus ifrémh.

7351. O’Brien (Elizabeth): Early medieval sentinel warrior burials.

8575. Hume (Kathryn): The ‘ruin motif’ in Old English poetry.
On possible sources for this motif, including Irish.

   Suggests that a Céltic prototype, of which Tochmarc Étain is the Irish analogue, underlies the Old French poem.

   In Celtica 21 (1990), pp. 368–376.

   In Ireland and Scandinavia in the early Viking age (1998), pp. 381–402.
   A survey of the portrayal of Irish-Scandinavian relations in early Irish literature.

15210. Lozac’hmeur (Jean-Claude): Pour une nouvelle herméneutique des mythes: essai d’interprétation de quelques thèmes celtiques.
   On the theme of theme of the Widow’s Son.

3237. Herren (Michael): The sighting of the host in Táin bó Fraích and the Hisperica famina.

2179. Simms (Katharine): The poet as a chieftain’s widow: bardic elegies.

14161. Thomson (Derick S.): The blood-drinking motif in Scottish Gaelic tradition.

19389. Breeze (Andrew): Cain’s jawbone, Ireland, and the prose Solomon and Saturn.
   Argues the literary motif of Cain slaying Abel with a jawbone is of Irish origin.

16307. Sayers (William): The laconic scar in early Irish literature.

518. Simms (Katharine): Images of warfare in bardic poetry.

11697. Ó hÓgáin (Dáithí): An Dall Glic agus an Óige.
In Féilscribhinn do Chathal Ó Háinle (2012), pp. 611–639.

Discusses the motif of the Blind Wise Man.


In Celtica 21 (1990), pp. 658–663.

14776. Bray (Dorothy Ann): A list of motifs in the lives of the early Irish saints.


Rev. by


Dáithí Ó hÓgain, in Bealoideas 67 (1999), pp. 194-199.

Clare Stancliffe, in CMCS 31 (Summer, 1996), pp. 73-75.

12823. Ó Cearúil ( Micheál): Torann a dheireadh: lÉis ar an eiscateolaíocht, ar an meabhaí sí agus ar an Lia Fáil.


Includes discussion of some eschatological terms: lá erdathe, bráth, buíresce, lá an bain, etc.


Rev. by

Brian Murdoch, in Medium ævum 70/2 (2001), pp. 324-326.


Rev. by


14460. Ó Caithnia (Liam P.): Apalóga na bhfilí. 1200-1650.

A catalogue and classification of over 400 apólogues, collected from printed bardic poetry and with an indication of the source; with List of Motifs, Indexes, Notes.

14542. Ó Tuama (Seán): An grá i bhfiliocht nua-uisle.


A critical commentary of the poems contained in Dánta gnúdha², ed. by T. F. O’RAHILLY (Best² 16906).