Stylistic contrast and narrative function in *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*

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ABSTRACT. *The Battle of Clontarf was fought in A.D. 1014 by the forces of Brian Boru, over-king of Munster, and his allies against the forces of Viking Dublin, Leinster and their foreign allies. The saga 'The War of the Irish and the Foreigners'* (Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib) *was written about events leading up the conflict and gives a dramatic account of events on the battlefield. It became the archetype for many later legends about Clontarf. This paper explores stylistic contrast in the saga between the terse description of events in the early Viking Age and the florid account of the reign of Brian Boru. This contrast has led some readers to conclude that two separate narratives were conflated in* Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib – *the first being a summary of annals and the second being a saga. However this paper argues that there is a unity of purpose throughout the work and that its stylistic divisions were deliberately contrived to help glorify Brian's victory at the Battle of Clontarf.*

In 2014, Ireland celebrated the 1000th anniversary of the Battle of Clontarf, fought on Good Friday, just north of the city of Dublin. A series of events including battle re-enactments, fireworks, sporting events, and lectures marked the occasion in Dublin and in Munster. The battle was fought between the forces of Brian Boru, over-king of Munster, and his allies (including forces from Munster, Connacht and Alba), and the forces of Viking Dublin, Leinster and their allies (including men from Orkney, the Hebrides and a mercenary fleet of Scandinavians). The scale of the battle was noted in eleventh-century Insular chronicles and across Europe in the writings of Ademar of Chabannes and Marianus Scotus in Mainz.[1] It is however later literature, rather than contemporary sources which secured a key place for the battle in Irish popular culture.

The saga 'The War of the Irish and the Foreigners' (*Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*) was the archetype for the development of many later legends about Clontarf. In this paper I explore stylistic contrast between the description of events before the reign of Brian Boru and during it. The former is related as a

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[1] *Adémar de Chabannes, Chronique,* ed. J. Chavanon (Paris, 1897), pp 176–8 (chs 53–5); *Mariani Scotti Chronicon*, ed. G. Waitz, M.G.H. SS 5 (Hannover, 1844), pp 481–562, *s.a.* 1014.

catalogue of viking raids and battles in a terse, fact-laden manner. In contrast, the description of Brian's reign is composed in an ornate literary style, replete with sumptuous descriptions and drama (including single combats, polarisations of character and supernatural occurrences). This contrast might draw some readers to conclude that two separate narratives have been conflated – the first being a summary of annals and the second being a saga. However both parts of the narrative draw from annalistic sources and show historical distortions which betray a unity of purpose.[2] This paper concludes that the stylistic contrast between the two parts of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* was deliberately contrived by their author. Stylistic contrast is used in *Cogad* to signal the subordinate and preparatory role of the first part which narrates events before Brian's reign. It promoted the significance of the second and larger part of the text concerned with Brian and events at Clontarf.

I

The skill and success of the author of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* is demonstrated by its literary impact. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh has presented the argument that *Cogad* originated during the reign of Muirchertach Ó Briain, great-grandson of Brian, between 1103 and 1113.[3] The question of dating has recently been re-opened by Denis Casey who suggests a late eleventh- or early twelfth-century date,[4] though it has been argued elsewhere that Muirchertach's reign remains the most likely period of composition.[5] Muirchertach showed the same ambition as Brian to dominate all Ireland. He was extremely successful in the opening years of the twelfth century. On occasion Muirchertach's actions appear to consciously mirror those of his great-grandfather.[6] For example, in 1002 Brian deposited twenty-two ounces of gold on the altar of Armagh to help win the support of this powerful church. In 1103 Muirchertach presented a similar donation of eight ounces with a future promise of 'eight score cows', but did not win the backing of the archbishop.[7] *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* may have been composed in an attempt to win over those (including the clerics of Armagh) who were unwilling to accept the descendants of Brian as kings of all Ireland.

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[2] Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, '*Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* and the Annals' in *Ériu*, xlvii (1996), pp 101–26, at p. 102; Clare Downham, 'The "annalistic section" of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*' in *Peritia*, xxiv–xxv (2013), pp 141–72.

[3] Anthony Candon, 'Muirchertach Ua Briain, politics and naval activity in the Irish Sea, 1075–1119' in Gearóid Mac Niocaill and P. F. Wallace (eds), *Keimelia: studies in medieval archaeology and history in memory of Tom Delaney* (Galway, 1988), pp 397–415; Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Cogadh Gáedel re Gallaib: some dating considerations' in *Peritia*, ix (1995), pp 354–77.

[4] Denis Casey, 'A reconsideration of the authorship and transmission of *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh*' in *R.I.A. Proc*, cxiii C, (2013), pp 1–23.

[5] Clare Downham, 'Scottish affairs and the political context of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*' (forthcoming).

[6] Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Cogadh Gáedel re Gallaib', pp 368–74; Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru: Ireland's greatest king?* (Stroud, 2007), pp 45–6.

[7] *Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the earliest period to the Year 1616*, ed. John O'Donovan (7 vols, Dublin, 1845–51), ii, 974–5 (*s.a* 1103).

The impact of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* on subsequent literature and perceptions of Brian Boru was both rapid and enduring.[8] The bardic poem *Aonar dhuit a Bhriain Bhanba* ('To you alone, Brian of Ireland'), composed in the early thirteenth century and attributed to Muiredach Albanach Ó Dalaigh, lamented that a new group of foreigners (the English) had arrived in Ireland, but there was no Brian Boru on hand to expel them.[9] The notion that Brian had expelled foreign power from Ireland became a persistent theme in later representations of the battle, despite the fact that a Scandinavian elite persisted in Dublin until 1171. In a similar vein the fourteenth-century poem *Abair riomh a Éire, a ógh* ('Tell me oh pure Ireland') calls for Brian's descendant Muirchertach Ó Briain to fight another 'war between the Irish and the foreigners'. This phrase seems to echo the title of the earlier text.[10] The 'Annals of Loch Cé' shows how Clontarf also came to be regarded as a defining moment in Irish history. This set of annals open with a florid description of the battle based on *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*.[11] The 'Annals of Loch Cé' were given their current form by the Ó Duibhgeannáin school of history in the sixteenth century, but was compiled from earlier materials. In the 'Annals of Loch Cé' the battle of Clontarf is presented as a new starting point in Irish history, perhaps akin to the status conferred on the battle of Hastings in English historiography.

While the history of Ireland was often conceived, both within Ireland and outside it, as a succession of invasions and oppressions, Brian Boru represented a figure who successfully fought back against 'foreigners'.[12] Brian has a place in Irish historiography similar to King Arthur or King Alfred in Britain, as a defender against alien oppressors. The hearkening back to Brian as a great hero gained a certain piquancy during periods of military campaigning by the English against the Irish. The troubles of the seventeenth century gave rise to hugely popular accounts of Brian Boru and his final battle in *Cath Chluana Tarbh*, and Geoffrey Keating's *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*.[13] Parallels can also be drawn between sections of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* and the seventeenth century 'Annals of Clonmacnoise' compiled by Conall Mag Eochagáin, and the

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[8] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Caithréim Cellacháin Chaisil: history or propaganda?' in *Ériu*, xxv (1974), pp 1–69, at p. 5; Aoife Nic Ghiollamhaith, 'Dynastic warfare and historical writing in north Munster, 1276–1350' in *Camb. Med. Celt. Studies*, ii (1981), pp 73–89, at pp 78–80. For the Icelandic perspective, see Rosemary Power, 'Njáls saga and the Battle of Clontarf' in *Peritia* (forthcoming).

[9] For context cf. Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, 'Two poems attributed to Muireadhach Albanach Ó Dálaigh' in *Ériu*, liii (2003), pp 19–52.

[10] Katharine Simms, 'The Battle of Dysert O'Dea and the Gaelic resurgence in Thomond' in *Dál gCais*, v (1979), pp 55–66, at p. 60; Nic Ghiollamhaith, 'Dynastic warfare', p. 80.

[11] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Annals, Irish' in John T. Koch (ed.), *Celtic culture: a historical encyclopaedia* (5 vols, Oxford, 2006), i, 69–75, at p. 73.

[12] It is relevant to note that the Irish word for a foreigner (*gall*) describes foreigners and people in Ireland who were perceived to be descendants of foreigners: E. G. Quin (ed.), *Dictionary of the Irish Language based mainly on Old and Middle Irish materials: compact edition* (Dublin, 1984), *s.v.* Gall.

[13] Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail (ed. and trans.), *Cath Chluana Tarbh: the Battle of Clontarf* (Irish Texts Society, Dublin, 2011); *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn: the history of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating*, ed. and trans. David Comyn and Patrick S. Dinneen (4 vols, London, 1902–14), iii,156–7 (ii.16).

genealogical tract 'On the Fomorians and Norsemen' compiled by the seventeenth-century antiquary, Duald Mac Firbis.[14] Literary outpourings linked with *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* have continued, with particular enthusiasm during the Celtic Revival.[15] They cemented the place of Clontarf in Irish national sentiment, but promoted a skewed impression of the battle.

The Battle of Clontarf has been regarded as a symbol of Ireland's struggle for independence and a turning point in Irish history.[16] The politician and scholar Eoin Mac Néill regarded it as a 'decisive event in European history' and Alice Stopford Green declared that it 'ended the possibility of foreign sovereignty in Ireland'.[17] As the twentieth century progressed historians increasingly questioned whether Clontarf's historical impact had been exaggerated. While historians may debate the contemporary impact of Brian's victory, the celebration of the battle is a historical phenomenon in itself.

Despite the significance *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* in securing the literary legacy of Clontarf, only three manuscripts containing the text have survived. The earliest copy is found in the 'Book of Leinster' preserved in Trinity College, Dublin, which was compiled in the second half of the twelfth century.[18] Unfortunately a break in the manuscript means that only the first twenty-nine sections of *Cogad* survived in this manuscript. Another version of the text dating to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century survives in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1319, although leaves are missing from both the beginning and end of this version.[19] The only complete text of *Cogad* which has survived is a copy made by the famous Irish scribe Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, of a transcript from the lost *Leabhar Chon Chonnacht Uí Dhalaigh* ('The Book of Cú Connacht Ó Dalaigh). Ó Cléirigh's copy is kept in the National Library at Brussels.[20] The two later copies of *Cogad* appear to be more closely related to

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[14] *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach: the great book of genealogies*, ed. and trans. Nollaig Ó Muraíle (5 vols, Dublin, 2003–04), iii, 44–51; *On the Fomorians and the Norsemen by Duald McFirbis*, ed. and trans. Alexander Bugge (Christiana, 1905); *The Annals of Clonmacnoise, being annals of Ireland from the earliest period to AD 1408 translated into English A.D. 1627 by Conell Mageoghagan*, ed. Denis Murphy (Dublin, 1896), *s.a.* 830, p. 133.

[15] Nineteenth-century examples include: W. H. Drummond, *Clontarf, a poem* (Dublin, 1822); J. Augustus Shea, *Clontarf, or the field of the green banner* (New York, 1843); J. S. Knowles, *Brian Boroihme* [sic] *or the maid of Erin* (New York, *c.* 1856); R. H. Hime, *Brian Boru and the Battle of Clontarf, a ballad* (London, 1889); Patrick Cudmore, *The Battle of Clontarf and other poems* (New York, 1895).

[16] In 1843 Daniel O'Connell planned a rally at the battle site calling for the repeal of the act of Union, an event considered so inflammatory that it was banned by the British prime minister: Robert Sloan, 'O'Connell's Liberal rivals in 1843' in *I.H.S.*, xxx (1996), pp 47–65, at p. 63.

[17] Eoin Mac Néill, *Phases of Irish history*, (Dublin, 1937), p. 273; Alice Stopford Green, *History of the Irish state to 1014* (London, 1925), p. 421. Both authors were cited by A. J. Goedheer, *Irish and Norse traditions about the battle of Clontarf* (Haarlem, 1938), pp 106–7.

[18] T.C.D. MS 1319 (H.2.18); R.I. Best, Osborn Bergin and M.A. O'Brien (eds), *The Book of Leinster, formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, (6 vols, Dublin 1954–83),v, 1319–25.

[19] T. K. Arnott and E. J. Gwynn, *Catalogue of the Irish manuscripts in the library of Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin, 1921), pp 351–97.

[20] Bibliothèque Nationale, Brussels, MS 2569–2572, ff 103–35; J. van den Gheyn, *Catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique* (13 vols, Brussels, 1901-48), vii, 46–8.

each other than the recension witnessed in the Book of Leinster. The text of *Cogad* was divided into 121 sections by James Henthorn Todd in his published edition of the text and his section numbers will be referred to in this paper.[21] From the surviving manuscripts we have a very incomplete view of the circulation of *Cogad* but the impact of the narrative is well attested.[22]

II

The success of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* can be understood in part by reference to its literary merits. The events of Clontarf make for a compelling story, but their dramatic potential was enhanced by references to otherworldly happenings, clashing personalities, and familial rivalries. The saga is composed in an ornate manner. This florid style is characterised by strings of alliterative and rhyming words, including multiple adjectives and doublets or triplets of synonyms. By way of example, this is a description of the reign of Brian in *Cogad*:[23]

> Robi in rigi cathach coccadh congalach inridach airgneach esadal, toseach na rigi sin. Robi, immoro, in rigi sberach sadal somemnach sithemail sona somaineach saidbir fledach fuirigech fothamail fo deoid a dered.

> The beginning of that reign was filled with battle, war and conflict, with attacking, plundering and disquiet. However, its end was bright, pleasant, joyful, peaceful, happy, prosperous and rich, feast-filled, full of plenty and secure.

Cogad shares these flamboyant stylistic features with some other major works of Irish literature composed in the late eleventh or twelfth century, including the second recension of *Táin bó Cuailnge* ('The Cattle Raid of Cooley'), *Mesca Ulad* ('The Intoxication of the Ulstermen') *Cath Ruis na Ríg* ('The Battle of Rosnaree') and the second recension of *Togail Troí* ('The Destruction of Troy'). This style was not widely diffused across the surviving corpus of Middle Irish texts.[24] The deployment of this flamboyant Middle Irish style may be significant for interpreting the composition of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*.

The origins of the flamboyant Middle Irish style both in terms of extended narrative and verbal ornament have long been debated. Rudolf Thurneysen first advanced the notion that the *Táin*'s extended narrative was influenced by classical texts.[25] The perception that classical literature had a profound impact

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[21] James Henthorn Todd (ed. and tr.), *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh: the war of the Gaedhil with the Gaill* (Rolls Series, London, 1867) [hereafter *Cog. Gaedhel*].

[22] Downham, 'The annalistic section'.

[23] *Cog. Gaedhel*, §lxiii, pp 100–1. This translation is quoted from Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru*, p. 44.

[24] Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical compositions in medieval Ireland: the literary context' in Kevin Murray (ed.), *Translations from classical literature: Imtheachta Aenias and Stair Ercail ocus a Bás* (Irish Texts Subsidiary Series, London, 2006), pp 1–20, at p. 12.

[25] Rudolf Thurneysen, *Die Irische Helden- und Königsaga* (Halle, 1921), pp 96–7.

on Middle Irish literature has been explored in depth by Brent Miles.[26] From as early as the tenth or eleventh centuries vernacular adaptations of classical works were appearing in Ireland. Early examples are *Scéla Alexandair* ('The Story of Alexander') which drew on various Latin texts and *Togail Troí*, based on *De Excidio Troiae Historia* attributed to Dares the Phrygian.[27] Other Middle Irish compositions include *Imtheachta Aeniasa* ('The Adventures of Aeneas') which was based on Virgil and *In Cath Catharda* ('The Civil War,') which drew on the *Bellum Civile* of Lucan.[28] One could say that Ireland blazed a trail in developing early vernacular versions of the classics, which foreshadowed English and continental adaptations of the late twelfth century. It has been argued that the act of adapting classical stories may have encouraged the development of more sustained and discursive pieces of literature in Irish.[29] Furthermore, the analysis of meanings and synonyms prompted the development of a flamboyant literary style which was both flowery and verbose. In a similar vein, Laura Ashe has argued that the English adaptations of classic works in the mid-twelfth century laid the foundations for the development of a new romance genre in England.[30] In both the Irish and English adaptations, the classics may have served as models for the development of new forms of literature concerned with grand themes of national heroes and history. Nevertheless the most influential text in medieval Europe, the Bible, had long provided examples of extended compositions with overarching teleological themes.[31]

Stylistic innovations in Middle Irish literature may have drawn inspiration from a range of sources. Rich vocabulary and a verbose alliterative style are not characteristic of the Latin texts that were adapted in this period. These are qualities which could have been drawn from Irish oral storytelling where ornate stylistic elements could be deployed for dramatic effect.[32] The Middle Irish tales which exhibit the new flamboyant style drew tropes and characters from Irish tradition.[33] An existing corpus of Hiberno-Latin texts also presented examples of florid style, wordplay and extended narratives.[34] Ní Mhaonaigh has sensibly cautioned against a single source theory for the

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[26] Brent Miles, *Heroic saga and classical epic in medieval Ireland* (Woodbridge, 2011).
[27] Miles, *Heroic saga,* pp 55–7. These texts were soon followed by *Merugud Uilixis meic Leirtis* ('The wandering of Ulysses son of Laertes'), *Togail na Tebe* from Statius's Thebaid, and the Irish Achilleid: Erich Poppe, '*Imtheachta Aeniasa:* Virgil's Aeneid in medieval Ireland' in *Classics Ireland*, xi (2004), online version (http://www.classicsireland.com/2004/poppe.html) (9 Jan. 2014).
[28] Miles, *Heroic saga*, pp 57–8.
[29] Hildegard L. C. Tristram, 'Aspects of tradition and innovation in the Táin Bó Cúailnge', in Richard Matthews and Joachim Schmolze-Rostosky (eds), *Papers on language and medieval studies presented to Alfred Schopf* (Frankfurt, 1988), pp 19–38, at pp 22–4.
[30] Laura Ashe, *Fiction and history in England, 1066–1200* (Cambridge, 2007).
[31] Kim McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present in early Irish Literature* (Maynooth, 1990), p. 50.
[32] John R. Harris, 'Aeneas's treason and narrative consistency in the mediaeval *Imtheachta Aeniasa*' in *Florigelium,* x (1988–91), pp 25–48, at p. 34.
[33] Folklore would also continuously draw from imported materials and show common features with tales from other lands through international tale motifs.
[34] Hildegard Tristram, 'Latin and Latin learning in the Tain Bó Cuailnge' in *Z.C.P.*, xlix–l (1997), pp 847–77, at p. 872.

origin of the late Middle Irish narrative features found in *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*.[35] The literary style used in *Cogad* may have been consciously developed from a fusion of influences.

The narrative effect of the expansive and linguistically gilded style used in the later sections of *Cogad* was to slow the pace of the narrative while displaying the verbal skill of the author.[36] This ponderous style replete with synonyms, alliteration and rhyme may have been deployed to mark the significance of particular sections of the story.[37] Like jewels on a reliquary, the verbal ornament might convey the significance of the narrative content.

The flamboyant Middle Irish style adopted in *Cogad* was used in some other texts with grand teleological narratives. It was used to recount the battles and the deeds of heroes in ancient Greece and Rome as in the second recension of *Togail Troí* and *In Cath Catharda*; it enriched eschatological texts detailing the final fate of humanity, as in *Scéla Laí Brátha* and *Scéla na hEsérgi*.[38] Significantly this grand style was also used to write about Irish warriors and battles, as with *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*, *Mesca Ulad* and second recension of *Táin bó Cuailnge*. The new aesthetic may have seemed well suited to epic narrative, although it was not universally adopted for this purpose.[39]

The author of *Cogad* may have been influenced by literary developments within Ireland, but also by the development of historical writing in England. The years from 1075 to 1225 have been identified as 'the great age of historical writing' when grand narratives were developed which dealt with the affairs of England as a whole.[40] The crisis of 1066 prompted learned men to consider the origins of England and to promote a sense of continuity with the English past. National identity was also a pressing concern in Ireland in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This period saw an intensified struggle between powerful Irish over-kings to establish themselves as rulers across Ireland.[41] These struggles encouraged reflection on national identity and unity, and grand scale historical themes.[42] As viking ports increasingly fell under the control of Irish provincial kings in the eleventh century, Irish contacts overseas increased.[43] Irish lay and ecclesiastical rulers cultivated contacts abroad, through

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[35] Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical compositions', p. 16.

[36] Cf. Erich Poppe, 'Favourite expressions, repetition, and variation: observations on *Beatha Mhuire Eigiptacdha* in Add.30512' in Erich Poppe and Bianca Ross (eds), *The legend of Mary of Egypt in medieval Insular hagiography*, (Dublin, 1996), pp 279–99, at p. 281.

[37] Schlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction: contemporary poetics* (London, 1983), p. 56.

[38] Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical compositions', p. 12.

[39] Miles, *Heroic saga*, p. 94.

[40] Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings, 1075–1225* (Oxford, 2000), pp 616–18.

[41] More overt expressions of political and cultural unity are hinted at through increasing use of the terms 'men of Ireland' and 'king of Ireland' in the eleventh century and their intrusion into earlier texts; see Máire Herbert, 'Crossing literary and historical boundaries: Irish written culture around the year 1000' in *Camb. Med. Celt. Studies*, liii–liv (2007), pp 87–101, at p. 92.

[42] Donncha Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin, 1972), p. 127.

[43] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Nationality and kingship in pre-Norman Ireland', in T. W. Moody (ed.), *Historical Studies XI: nationality and the pursuit of national independence* (Belfast, 1978), pp 1–35.

pilgrimages, the Schottenklöster, diplomacy, ecclesiastical reform and scholar-ship.[44] These contacts prompted Irish scholars to compare their history with that of other nations, but also to consider the creative forms in which *historia* could be composed.[45] Historical works in twelfth-century Europe, including *Cogad*, combined 'history, biography, hagiography and romance' to 'form a complex whole, not a range of easily distinguishable genres'.[46] In a manner comparable to the greatest twelfth-century English historians, the author of *Cogad* compiled materials from earlier textual authorities, especially in the early sections of the work.[47] In the more expansive later sections of the narrative, non-textual sources, including the author's own imagination, were given freer reign.

    A range of indigenous and external influences maybe perceived in *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*. Irish annals are followed closely throughout the text, but king lists, genealogies and verses attributed to Irish saints are also included.[48] Stock literary themes including otherworldly intervention in human affairs play their part and *Cogad* was framed within an established literary genre of *Catha* or 'battles'.[49] External influences can be traced through overt classical references. For example, Brian is compared with Caesar and Alexander while his son Murchad is likened to Hector son of Priam and to Hercules.[50] Erich Poppe has suggested that the phrase *lúirech thredúalach* ('thrice woven corslet') found in *Cogad* derived from *Imtheachta Aeniasa* as a translation from Virgil's 'lorica trilix'.[51] Biblical resonances are also laced throughout the text. This is exemplified in references to a forty years' rest in hostilities and an earthquake during a battle, both of which have parallels in the Old Testament.[52] The hero of the narrative, Brian, is said to possess the qualities of the biblical leaders Solomon, David and Moses.[53] Brian's death for his people on Good Friday also has echoes of the martyrdom of Christ. *Cogad* also bears comparison with well-known medieval European histories and biographies. Echoes of Bede, Asser and Einhardt have been recognised at different points in the narrative, although there is a lack of consensus whether the author of *Cogad* consciously drew from these texts.[54] *Cogad* presented a teleological view of past events as a

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[44] Aubrey Gwynn, 'Ireland and the continent in the eleventh century', *I.H.S.*, viii (1953), pp 193–216.

[45] John Carey, *A new introduction to Lebor Gabála Érenn* (Irish Texts Society, Dublin, 1993), pp 2–6; John Carey, *The Irish national origin-legend: synthetic pseudo-history*, Quiggin Pamphlet 1 (Cambridge, 1994), pp 1, 24; F. J. Byrne (ed. and trans.), 'Clann Ollaman Uaisle Emna' in *Studia Hib.*, iv (1964), pp 54–94.

[46] Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings*, p. 629. For other Irish works which drew information from earlier histories but added literary elaboration see Michael Clarke, 'An Irish Achilles and a Greek Cu Chulainn' in Ruairí Ó hUiginn and Brian Ó Catháin (eds), *Ulidia 2: Proceedings of the second International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales* (Maynooth, 2009), pp 238–51 at p. 244.

[47] Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings,* pp 619–24.

[48] Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru*, p. 66.

[49] Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical compositions', pp 16–17.

[50] *Cog. Gaedhel*, §§xcv, cxv, pp 166–7, 204–5, 252.

[51] Erich Poppe, '*Imtheachta Aeniasa*', n. 3; Erich Poppe, 'A Virgilian model for *lúirech thredúalach*?' in *Ériu*, liv (2004), pp 171–7.

[52] Judges 3:11.

[53] *Cog. Gaedhel*, §cxv, pp 204–5.

[54] Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru*, pp 131–3; Goedheer, *Irish and Norse traditions*, pp 30–1, 39.

struggle between the forces of good and evil, where a heroic leader takes centre stage and changes the course of history. To suit these overarching themes *Cogad* re-packaged events in Irish history. The result was a historical work cleverly attuned to the contemporary political and cultural interests of its audience.

<div align="center">III</div>

An analysis of the content of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* can shed light on the place of the early sections of the text within the narrative as a whole. It can be argued that the work is structured in a way which highlights the achievements of Brian Boru in the context of a broad sweep of Irish history. The temporal starting point of the narrative with the arrival of vikings in Ireland is significant in highlighting the story that will be told.[55] The title 'War of the Irish and the Foreigners' refers to one 'war' but many battles are commemorated. The implication is that the Battle of Clontarf was the finale to a conflict that had pitted Gael against foreigner from the moment vikings set foot in Ireland until the final victory and sacrifice of Brian Boru.

The material in the first three sections of *Cogad* can be seen to provide an abstract of the time frame covered within the text. Section one outlines the oppression caused by vikings for two centuries until Brian. The second section gives a list of over-kings of Cashel (Munster) until Brian, and section three provides a list of over-kings or Tara (notionally of Ireland) until Brian. These three sections immediately highlight Brian as the climax of the account, and the end point to a story of viking depredations. The sections furthermore identify him as the summit of kingship in Munster and all Ireland. In style, these three sections show features common to the verbose flowery style adopted in later portions of the narrative, with the characteristic piling-up of adjectives, synonyms, alliteration and rhyme. Reference is made to attacks: 'o Danaraib dulgib dúrchridechaib' ('by fierce hard-hearted Danes'), and 'mor do dod. & d'imned, de thár & de tharcassul, ra fulngetar fir Herend' ('great hardship and fatigue, contempt and indignity, did the men of Ireland suffer').[56] The first three sections can be seen to constitute a 'key utterance' for the text as a whole.[57]

In terms of plot, sections 4–39 of *Cogad* can be seen to provide background details for the main part of the narrative. While sections 1–3 present the whole time frame of *Cogad* (*circa* 795–1014), sections 4–39 provide a compressed account of viking military activity from the vikings' arrival to the Battle of Tara in 980.[58] These sections are composed in a terse, factoid-laden prose style devoid of the flowery and rhetorical language which characterises the main saga. It was dubbed the 'annalistic section' by Albertus Goedheer, a label which has stuck but which belittles the skilful manipulation of precursory texts to provide a back story to Brian's reign.[59] In terms of purpose, the early

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[55] Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings*, p. 619.

[56] *Cog. Gaedhel*, §§i–iii, pp 1–5; Best et al. (eds.), *Book of Leinster*, v, 1319 (fol. 309a1–10).

[57] Monika Fludernik, *An introduction to narratology* (Abingdon, 2009), p. 47.

[58] It is possible that sections xxxvii–xxxix which cover events in 948–80 were interpolated into the original text; they overlap chronologically with the account of Mathgamain's reign which follows. See Ní Mhaonaigh, '*Cogad Gaedel re Gallaib* and the annals', p. 103.

[59] Goedheer, *Irish and Norse traditions*, p. 32.

sections of *Cogad* can be shown to prepare the reader for the account of Brian's deeds that follow. The rhetorical impact of these sections is discussed in greater detail below.

Sections 40–62 provide a separate narrative arc which provides further background to Brian's reign. The account is centred on Brian's family and their conflicts with vikings in Munster and Irish rivals. The positive description of Brian's father and brother Mathgamain serves to glorify Brian's pedigree; nevertheless he is shown to exceed them in his qualities as leader. The greater relevance and significance of these sections in the overall composition is signalled in a slower chronological pace and more ornate language.[60] Sections 40–62 present the 'complicating action', or challenge to the hero, on which the drama is founded.[61] Brian's role in defeating the vikings of Limerick is highlighted, but this is followed by the treacherous murder of his brother Mathgamain by Irish rivals which he must avenge. These sections mark out Brian as the emerging champion of the narrative. Brian inherits Munster as a war-torn province but shows determination and courage against his enemies. The bias is self-evident.

Sections 63–80 deal with Brian's reign, and his excellence as a leader. Brian is shown to avenge the death of his brother, and punish the vikings who had allied with Mathgamain's murderer (§§63–5). The extension of Brian's power through military campaigns across southern Ireland is discussed in surprisingly brief fashion, perhaps as these actions could not be justified as 'revenge' (§66). Thereafter the account focuses on Brian's punishment of Leinster and Dublin for their disobedience (§§67–71). The brutal subjection and enslavement of vikings is described and justified, on the grounds that 'all the evil they had done was avenged on them in full measure' ('gach olc daronsat tarras orro foman tomais').[62] This argument would lose much of its force without the early sections of *Cogad* listing viking depredations. Brian then proceeded to extend his sway across Ireland. The unification of Ireland is said to herald a time of peace and perfect governance under Brian (§80). This is described in terms reminiscent of the reign of King Edwin in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and that of King Alfred related by Asser.[63] This should have been a happy ending, but Brian is shown to endure further peril.

Brian's wife Gormflaith sets in train the next complication or plot development in *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*. The events related in sections 81–100 are a consequence of Gormflaith goading her brother Maelmorda, king of Leinster, to oppose Brian. The creation of two opposing power blocs is outlined (§§81–8), followed by a lavish and detailed description of the troops and their arrangement on the battlefield (§§89–99). After this accumulation of dramatic tension the battle opens in a single combat by two well-matched warriors (§100). Sections 100–15 represent the climax of the narrative.

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[60] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, p. 56.

[61] For the seminal article on this concept within narrative analysis see William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, 'Narrative analysis', in June Helm (ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (Seattle, 1967), pp 12–44, at pp 32–3.

[62] *Cog. Gaedhel*, §lxix, pp 116–17.

[63] *Bede, Ecclesiastical history of the English people*, trans. Leo Shirley Price (London, rev edn 1995), II, xvi, p. 134; *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (Oxford 1904; rev. imp., by Dorothy Whitelock, 1959) §§91–3, 98–106, pp 76–81, 85–96.

The battle is described in graphic terms with reference to weapons, woundings and the fate of individuals. It is also presented in metaphorical terms as if all the elements of heaven and earth were engaged in combat. The account culminates in the violent death of the aged king Brian Boru (§§113–15) who has spent the battle in prayer. The events of 1014, including the Battle of Clontarf, are presented in the most depth and with the greatest literary embellishment within *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*.

Sections 116–18 of *Cogad* can be interpreted as the coda of the narrative. They show the immediate impact of Brian's death and list the casualties of the conflict. Section 118 ends with reference to the fulfilment of Brian's will. I suggest this marks a natural closure to the narrative. The last three sections of the text (§§119–21) are something of an anti-climax in relating the deeds of Brian's son Donnchad after the battle. In terms of narrative structure they seem to sit awkwardly with the rest of the saga, although they describe events after Clontarf. It is possible that the last three sections of *Cogad* were added after the original composition to show favour to the descendants of Donnchad mac Briain. The probable addition of pro-Donnchad elements to *Cogad* has been discussed by Denis Casey.[64]

Within *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* the viking wars which precede Brian's reign are related in rapid succession. Then gradually the narrative zooms in towards its focus, continually slackening in chronological pace, and employing more sumptuous language until the apical events of the battle of Clontarf are related. Within the narrative as a whole, the centuries preceding Brian's reign are presented as mere contextual details. The early sections of *Cogad* provide a narrative backdrop to Brian's rise to power. They have been a focus of interest to historians, but are regarded as possessing little merit as literature.

IV

Sections 4–39 of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* can be seen to serve a range of narrative functions which prepares the reader for the main account of Brian's life that follows. In terse and somewhat formulaic language, wave after wave of viking fleets are described across a time frame of two centuries in Ireland. The brevity of the language is evocative of chronicle accounts upon which the author drew extensively. However, the language does differ from chronicles in being more dynamic and in providing interconnections between events which are not linked in the annals. Not only was the author of *Cogad* embroidering the story of past events drawn from earlier chronicles, he was also rewriting and editing the past. At times events are telescoped together; a linear time sequence is often not observed and perhaps most importantly, the author is selective in his presentation of events.[65]

The main chronicle sources which the author of *Cogad* drew from have been identified by Máire Ní Mhaonaigh. These include a Munster/Clonmacnoise conflation of annals related to an ancestor of the 'Annals of Inisfallen' and local information from Lismore, and a source or early version of the

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[64] Casey, 'A reconsideration', p. 21.
[65] Ó Corráin, *Ireland*, pp 91–2; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'High kings, vikings and other kings' in *I.H.S.*, xxi (1977–8), pp 283–323, at p. 295; Ní Mhaonaigh, '*Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* and the annals', pp 105–6; Downham, 'The annalistic section'.

'Fragmentary Annals of Ireland'.[66] The appendix has been drawn up by comparing *Cogad* with Irish chronicles to show the range of years covered in the early sections of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*. This highlights how the chronology of different sections of *Cogad* overlap.[67]

Comparison between *Cogad* and the chronicles also hint at authorial selectivity as to which records of viking activity were deemed significant to the glorification of the descendants of Brian Boru. For example, throughout the text of *Cogad*, chronicle records of alliances between vikings and Irish rulers are not included. It is hard to credit that the author of *Cogad* had no knowledge of these alliances (for example they feature prominently in the 'Fragmentary Annals of Ireland'). Perhaps these records of cross-cultural connections were overlooked as they did not fit with the theme of antagonism between Gaels and vikings in *Cogad*. Some of the more famous viking events which were widely reported in Irish chronicles are missing in *Cogad*. For example, *Cogad* does not report the martyrdom of Blathmac on Iona in the year 825, but does record the defeat of the Osraige by foreigners in the same year. *Cogad* does not mention the death of Ívarr 'king of the Northmen of all Ireland and Britain' in 873, but does give details of a contemporary viking attack on Kerry.[68] By comparing *Cogad* with extant Irish chronicles, the sources and compilatory methods of the author of *Cogad* may be analysed. It appears that the author was not simply copying chronicles. Rather, he filleted them for material which suited his interests (namely viking attacks with a geographic bias towards Munster) and sometimes reconstituted events based on a mixture of chronicle content (as with the description of the career of the viking leader Turges, discussed elsewhere by Ó Corráin).[69] Throughout the early sections of *Cogad* the past was manipulated to serve the propagandist needs of the present.

The geographical division of records of viking attacks in *Cogad* tends to sandwich events in Munster (Brian's home province, which has a disproportionate share of attention) with records of events which take place in other parts of Ireland. For example, after the arrival of vikings in Ireland the raids on churches in Munster are listed first (§5), then raids in other areas are listed (§§6–7). The author then describes the arrival of fleets at Limerick (§8) before describing viking fleets which appear in the north of Ireland and in Dublin (§§9–12), before switching again to events in Munster (§13). This geographical structuring of data has the effect of keeping Munster in the foreground, while also taking account of events across Ireland. The pattern is evocative of late ninth-century material in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, where Wessex is the main geographical focus but events from other English kingdoms are interwoven.[70] Both in *Cogad* and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle there is an emphasis on the territory which is the perceived political core, combined with

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[66] Ní Mhaonaigh, '*Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* and the annals', pp 125–6; Clare Downham, 'Viking camps in ninth-century Ireland: sources, locations, and interactions' in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin X* (2010), pp 93–125, at p. 100.

[67] Downham, 'The annalistic section' explores the chronology in further detail.

[68] *Annals of Ulster*, *s.aa.* 825, 873; *Chronicon Scotorum*, *s.aa.* 825, 873.

[69] Ó Corráin, *Ireland*, pp 91–2.

[70] T.A. Shippey, 'A missing army: some doubts about the Alfredian chronicle' in *In Geardagum*, iv (1982), pp 41–55, at p. 50; Clare Downham, *No horns on their helmets? Essays on the insular Viking age* (Aberdeen, 2013), p. 33.

pretensions to create a 'national' record. Implicitly it can be argued that *Cogad* promoted a view of Ireland as a unified entity with Munster at its helm. This prepares the reader for the glorious (albeit temporary) unification of Ireland under Brian Boru which is described later in the narrative.

The influence of the first forty sections of *Cogad* as a convenient, if distorted summary of viking activity, can be seen in the work of later historians.[71] The seventeenth-century scholar Duald MacFirbis drew extensively from the early part of *Cogad* in his tract 'On Fomorians and Norsemen', as did Geoffrey Keating in *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*.[72] The early sections of *Cogad* have beguiled more recent historians with their clarity. An illustrative example is Roger Leech's suggestion that 'one fact which might emerge from a closer study of CGG is that in the first half of the ninth century the Norse systematically raided one part of Ireland at a time'.[73] However, as noted above, *Cogad* did not follow a strict chronological sequence.[74] Chronicle material was sometimes repackaged in geographical themes. This may create a misguiding impression that a grand overall strategy guided the activities of multiple viking fleets in early ninth-century Ireland. It may be tempting for historians to follow the representation of events in *Cogad* without realising how material has been adapted and manipulated.

A further rhetorical function of the early part of *Cogad* may have been to win the trust of the audience. The information in these sections was predominantly compiled from precursory texts. In presenting a fact-laden account reliant on pre-existing chronicles, the intention may have been to persuade the audience of the authenticity of the narrative. Having won the audience's trust, they might be more inclined to believe the ambitious claims concerning Brian's family and his deeds which are recorded after. As Ruth Morse has argued, 'Calling a text "historical" might have been a legitimating function. It might defend the embroidery of a narrative based on another narrative (which had been extracted from a text defined as "historical") like so many of the expansions created in the course of the twelfth century'.[75] It has also been noted by Robert Bartlett that polemical histories might be particularly inclined to draw on earlier documentation, as if to build a dossier for their case.[76] The priority of the author of *Cogad* was not unbiased historical accuracy according to modern scholarly standards, but within the medieval spirit of *historia*, the presentation of the past to serve a particular end.

The early sections of *Cogad* have a rhetorical function in priming the reader to be positively disposed towards Brian Boru and his achievements, and negatively disposed towards vikings.[77] The details of two centuries of viking

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[71] While two stylistically contrasting parts of *Cogad* may have been conceived as parts of a unified whole, it is notable that later authors drew selectively from different parts of the narrative.

[72] *On the Fomorians*, ed. and trans. Bugge; *Foras feasa ar Éirinn*, eds and trans. Comyn and Dinneen, iii, 156–7 (ii.16).

[73] Roger H. Leech, 'Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh and the Annals of Inisfallen', *N. Munster Antiq. Jn.*, xi (1968), pp 13–21, at p. 20, note 28.

[74] Downham, 'The annalistic section'.

[75] Ruth Morse, *Truth and convention in the Middle Ages, rhetoric, representation and reality* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 6.

[76] Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings*, p. 627.

[77] For a discussion of primary effect, see Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, p. 120.

depredations against the Irish are presented in a one-sided way. The cumulative impression of relentless oppression makes Brian's success in achieving a decisive victory over vikings seem all the greater.[78] Furthermore as vikings were shown to commit crimes across Ireland, Brian could be represented as the dispenser of justice for all Ireland, avenging the wrongs wrought by all vikings before him. In presenting a 'War of the Irish and the Foreigners' the real political complexities of different Irish and viking allegiances were swept aside. Two centuries of history are summarised as a conflict between 'good' (represented by Gaels) and 'bad' (represented by vikings). This prepares the reader for the portrayal of Brian as hero and rightful king of all Ireland.

<div align="center">V</div>

The style of sections 4–39 of *Cogad*, for the most part, contrasts with later material in the text. Their terse fact-laden manner, has an almost list-like quality in recording the arrival of successive viking fleets to Ireland. The stylistic brevity adopted in sections 4–39, fits with the fast chronological pace of the narration. A relatively unadorned register is used for the background details. A more ornate and expansive literary style is reserved for material of greater significance for the narrator, namely the life of Brian and the Battle of Clontarf. To use (an admittedly somewhat crass) visual comparison, in the 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*, sepia tone is used to portray background events in Kansas and technicolour is deployed for the main narrative in *Oz*. In *Cogad*, events before Brian's life are presented in a rather monotonous style, but the life of Brian required a more vivid and elaborate linguistic palette. The different literary styles deployed within *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* may be perceived as part of the artistry of the text rather than the awkward assimilation of two stylistically contrasting elements.

Cogad is not unique among Middle Irish texts in providing a terse data-loaded back-story, followed by an extended narrative in flamboyant literary style. Such narrative preconstruction is also found in *In Cath catharda* (the Irish adaptation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* or *Bellum Civile*).[79] The first chapter of the work briefly enumerates world empires from the Assyrians to the Romans with lists of names and numbers of years. The information appears to have been drawn from the writings of Isidore of Seville and Orosius.[80] When the account proceeds to describe the invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar (which draws from Bede) the narrative pace slows and a more ornate literary style is adopted.[81] These sections precede the main account of the Civil War. Therefore in both *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* and *In Cath Catharda* pre-existing

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[78] Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru*, p. 45.

[79] Whitley Stokes (ed. and trans.), *In Cath Catharda: the Civil war of the Romans. An Irish version of Lucan's Pharsalia*, in Ernst Windisch and Whitley Stokes (eds), *Irische Texte* (4 vols, Leipzig, 1880–1909), iv, part 2. online version (http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G305001/) (9 Jan. 2014).

[80] *Seven books of history against the pagans by Paulus Orosius*, trans. Andrew T. Fear (Liverpool. 2010); 'The *Chronica Maiora* of Isidore of Seville', trans. Sam Kwoon and Jamie Wood, in *e-Spania*, vi (2008) (http://e-spania.revues.org/15552#text) (9 Jan. 2014); Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical Compositions', p. 6.

[81] Bede, *Ecclesiastical history of the English people*, trans. Leo Shirley Price (London, rev. edn 1995), I. ii, p. 47.

texts were mined to provide a historical backdrop to the main story although in *Cogad* this narrative back-story takes up a larger proportion of the text.[82]

The narratives composed and adapted in Ireland during the eleventh and twelfth centuries reveal a burgeoning interest in broad sweeps of history, ancient battles and heroes. Historical backdrops were employed in a range of narratives to provide a bigger context which helped to underline the importance of the main narrative and set the scene for what is to come. In *Cogad* the stylistic distinction of the back-story to the main narrative may help signify its function within the text.

VI

The early sections of *Cogad* differ in style to the later account of Brian's reign. Arguably the terse style employed in the early sections highlights their place as preparatory to the main narrative concerning Brian's family and the Battle of Clontarf. From section 40 of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*, the narrative changes in style and direction. The emphasis shifts towards events concerning Munster and less attention is given to events elsewhere in the island. The text is organised around the challenges faced by Brian's family, the Dál Cais. A different set of stock phrases draw attention to the main actors. More insight is given into motives of actors and more detail is provided in describing the events that take place. The narrative culminates in the vivid and intensely detailed account of events at Clontarf replete with dramatic conversations and heroic deeds. The presentation of Brian as saviour against the vikings and his death on Good Friday is represented in almost Christ-like fashion at the end of *Cogad*. Brian's martyrdom, like Christ's, may have been perceived as a major turning point in history.

Cogad was an important text in establishing a perception of the Battle of Clontarf as a watershed in Irish history. The ambitious range of the early

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[82] The idea of adding a historical prologue to provide context is seen in some other classical adaptations. For example *Imtheachta Aeniasa* (an Irish adaptation of Virgil's Æneid) opens with material based on pseudo-Dares account of the destruction of Troy: George Calder (ed. and trans.) *Imtheachta Aeniasa* (Irish Texts Society, London, 1907), lines 1–52; Erich Poppe, *A new introduction to Imtheachta Aeniasa: the Irish Aeneid* (Irish Texts Society, Dublin, 1995), pp 6–7, 20. Stylistic contrast and function maybe perceived within *Táin bó Cuailnge* ('The Cattle Raid of Cooley') in the Book of Leinster. 'The Boyhood Deeds' of the hero Cú Chulainn (*Macgnímrada Con Culainn*) are written with brevity, using repetitive formulae and the historic present to describe events in a narrative flashback. This contrasts with the verbose style and present tense in the surrounding prose: Cecile O'Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (Dublin, 1967), pp 21–33, 158–71.The stylistic contrast may not simply be explained by the 'The Boyhood Deeds', being an older or newer text slotted in to the *Táin*. The stylistic contrast maybe intended to signal the narrative purpose of 'The Boyhood Deeds' as a background narrative in relation to the surrounding text. See Daniel F. Melia, 'Parallel versions of the Boyhood Deeds of Cuchulainn' in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, x (1974) pp 211–26, at p. 214; Uáitéar Mac Gearailt, 'The language of some late Middle Irish texts in the Book of Leinster' in *Studia Hib.*, xxvi (1991–2), pp 167–216; Myles Dillon, *Early Irish literature* (Chicago, 1948), p. 3; Kevin O'Nolan, 'Homer, Virgil and oral tradition' in *Béaloideas*, xxxvii–xxxviii (1969–70), pp 123–30, at p. 127, n. 7; Miles, *Heroic saga*, pp 164–74.

sections of *Cogad* was both chronological and geographical, representing the woes suffered by the whole of Ireland at the hands of the vikings. This brings to mind Ashe's comment about historical literature in twelfth-century England: 'The text is the land and its ability to contain a sweep of history is metonymic of the land's own ability to do so.'[83] In a similar way, Irishness is presented in *Cogad* through a shared past and a unifying hero who avenges and protects his people. The positive view of Irish identity is reinforced by the negative portrayal of vikings as a common enemy.[84] The historical wrongs stacked up against the vikings provided a justification and cover for whatever means Brian and his descendants used to impose their rule across Ireland.

The early sections of *Cogad* were integral to the saga's role as propaganda for the descendants of Brian Boru. The stylistic and narrative contrast between the first part of *Cogad* (which provides a biased summary of viking activity) and the second part (which is a dramatic saga of Brian's achievements) was deliberate. These contrasts give force to the view that Brian's reign was a turning point in Ireland's struggle against viking oppression. The reality of that view is contested among historians. The anniversary of 2014 has provided an opportunity to reflect on the literary merits of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib,* as well as the significance of the conflict within Irish historiography.[85]

Appendix

Standard *I.H.S.* abbreviations are used, with the addition of the following:

'Ann. Roscrea'	Annals of Roscrea
'Ann. Cotton'	'Annals in Cotton MS Titus A xxv' [Annals of Boyle]
Ann. Bk. Leinster	*Annals from the Book of Leinster*
Fragmentary	*Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*

When used for entries in *Cog. Gaedhel* [ ] indicates those sections which are unique to MSS D and B.

Todd §§	Section theme	Corresponding annals
1	Viking oppression	
2	Kings of Cashel	
3	Kings of Tara	
4	Vikings arrive	*A.F.M.* 807[= 812]; *A.U.* 812; *Chron. Scot.* 812.
5	Raids on churches of S.W. Ireland	*Ann. Clon.* 819 [= 822]; *A.F.M.* 820 [= 822]; *Chron. Scot.* 822. ?(*Ann. Clon.* 820[= 823]; *Ann. Inisf.* 823; *A.U.* 823; *Chron. Scot.* 823). *Ann. Inisf.* 824; *A.U.* 824.

[83] Ashe, *Fiction*, p. 208.
[84] Ó Corráin, 'Nationality and kingship', pp 31–2.
[85] I should like to thank David Dumville for providing access to bibliographic items I could not otherwise obtain. I would also like to thank the *I.H.S.* reviewers for their feedback and recommendations.

(Continued)

Todd §§	Section theme	Corresponding annals
6	Raids on churches of N.E. Ireland	*Ann. Clon.* 820[= 823], 821[= 824]; *Ann. Inisf.* 823, 824; *A.U.* 823, 824; *Chron. Scot.* 823, 824; *A.F.M.* 822[= 824].
7	Raids on churches across Ireland	*Chron. Scot.* 828; *A.U.* 828; *A.F.M.* 823 [= 825]; *A.U.* 825; *Chron. Scot.* 825. *Ann. Clon.* 830[= 833]; *A.F.M.* 831[= 833]; *Chron. Scot.* 832[= 833]; *Ann. Inisf.* 833. *A.F.M.* 830[= 832]; *A.U.* 832; *Chron. Scot.* 832. *Ann. Clon.* 830[= 834]; *A.F.M.* 833[= 834]; *A.U.* 834; *Chron. Scot.* 834. *A.F.M.* 834[= 835]; *A.U.* 835; *Chron. Scot.* 835.
8	Fleets arrive at Limerick	*A.F.M.* 833[= 834]; *A.U.* 834; *Chron. Scot.* 834. ?(*A.F.M.* 844, 845[= 846]; *A.U.* 846).
9	Arrival of Turges, his attacks in Leth Cuinn	*Ann. Clon.* 836[= 839]; *A.F.M.* 838[= 839]; *A.U.* 839, *Chron. Scot.* 839. *Ann. Clon.* 837[= 840]; *A.F.M.* 839[= 840]; 'Ann. Roscrea' 239; *A.U.* 840; *Chron. Scot.* 840. 'Ann. Cotton' 251; *Ann. Clon.* 842[= 845]; *A.F.M.* 843[= 845]; *Ann. Inisf.* 845; *A.U.* 845; *Chron. Scot.* 845. *A.F.M.* 830[= 832]; *A.U.* 832; *Chron. Scot.* 832; *Ann. Inisf.* 842.
10	Prophecies	
11	Turges attacks along River Shannon	'Ann. Cotton' 251; *Ann. Clon.* 842[= 845]; *A.F.M.* 843[= 845]; *Ann. Inisf.* 845; *A.U.* 845; *Chron. Scot.* 845. *Ann. Clon.* 834[= 837], *A.F.M.* 836[= 837], *A.U.* 837, *Chron. Scot.* 837. *Ann. Clon.* 835[= 838]; *A.F.M.* 837[= 838]; *A.U.* 838; *Chron. Scot.* 838.
12	Fleets arrive at Dublin	*Ann. Clon.* 838[= 841]; *A.F.M.* 840[= 841]; *A.U.* 841; *Chron. Scot.* 841. *A.U.* 839.
13	Fleets arrive in Munster	*Ann. Clon.* 842[= 845]; *A.F.M.* 843[= 845]; *Ann. Inisf.* 845; *A.U.* 845; *Chron. Scot.* 845.
14	Death of Turges	'Ann. Cotton' 251; *A.F.M.* 843[= 845]; *Ann. Inisf.* 845; *Ann. Bk. Leinster* (ll. 3110–11); 'Ann. Roscrea' 243; *A.U.* 845; *Chron. Scot.* 845. *A.U.* 846.
15	Feast of Peter and Paul at Roscrea	['Ann Cotton' 251; *Ann. Clon.* 842[= 845]; *A.F.M.* 843[= 845]; *Ann. Inisf.* 845; *A.U.* 845; *Chron. Scot.* 845].
16	Fleets at R. Boyne, Lough Neagh, Dublin	*Ann. Clon.* 834[= 837]; *A.F.M.* 836[= 837]; *A.U.* 837; *Chron. Scot.* 837. *A.F.M.* 838[= 839], 839[= 840].

(Continued)

Todd §§	Section theme	Corresponding annals
17	Attacks by Dublin fleet	*Ann. Clon.* 833[= 836]. *Ann. Clon.* 834[= 837]; *A.F.M.* 836[= 837]; *A.U.* 837; *Chron. Scot.* 837.

18	Attacks by [Southern] {Limerick} fleet	*Ann. Clon.* 836[= 839]; *A.F.M.* 838[= 839];
		  A.U. 839; *Chron. Scot.* 839.
		?(*Ann. Clon.* 833[= 836]; *A.F.M.* 835[= 836];
		  Chron. Scot. 836)
		Ann. Clon. 834[= 837]; *A.F.M.* 836[= 837];
		  Chron. Scot. 837.
		A.F.M. 844[= 846].

19	Attacks by Dublin fleet	?(*Ann. Clon.* 833[= 836]; *A.F.M.* 835[= 836];
		  A.U. 836; *Chron. Scot.* 836)
		Ann. Clon. 838[= 841]; *A.F.M.* 840[= 841];
		  Chron. Scot. 841.
		Ann. Clon. 839[= 842].
		Ann. Inisf. 844.
		Ann. Clon. 842[= 845]; *A.F.M.* 843[= 845];
		  A.U. 845; *Chron. Scot.* 845.

20	Fair foreigners vs. Dark foreigners	*A.F.M.* 849[= 851]; *A.U.* 851; *Chron. Scot.*
		  851; *Fragmentary* 233.
		A.F.M. 850[= 852]; *A.U.* 852; *Chron. Scot.*
		  852; *Fragmentary* 235.
		A.F.M. 845[= 847]; *Chron. Scot.* 847.

21	Viking defeats	*Ann. Clon.* 834[= 837]; *A.F.M.* 836[= 837];
		  A.U. 837; *Chron. Scot.* 837.
		Ann. Clon. 847[= 848]; *A.F.M.* 846[= 848];
		  Ann. Inisf. 848; *A.U.* 848; *Chron. Scot.* 848.

22	Viking defeats	*Ann. Clon.* 848; *A.F.M.* 846[= 848]; *Ann. Bk.*
		  Leinster (ll. 3114–5); *A.U.* 848; *Chron. Scot.*
		  848.
		A.F.M. 850[= 852]; *A.U.* 852.
		?(*A.U.* 856; *Chron. Scot.* 856).
		Fragmentary 252[= ? 856].

23	Fleet of Amlaíb mac rig Lochlainn	*A.F.M.* 851[= 853]; *A.U.* 853; *Chron. Scot.* 853; *Fragmentary* 239, 259. *Ann. Inisf.* 855.

	Their victories and defeat	*Ann. Clon.* 862[= 864]; *A.F.M.* 862[= 864];
		  A.U. 864; *Chron. Scot.* 864.
		A.U. 857; *Chron. Scot.* 857.
		A.F.M. 857[= 859]; *A.U.* 859; *Chron. Scot.*
		  859; *Fragmentary* 264.
		Fragmentary 278[= ?860].

24	Fleet of Oisli mac rig Lochlainn	*Ann. Inisf.* 866; *Fragmentary* 337; *Fragmentary* 340.
	His defeat	*A.F.M.* 864[= 866]; *Chron. Scot.* 866; *Fragmentary* 327. *A.U.* 866, 867. Cf. *Cog. Gaedhel* 29.

(Continued)

Todd §§	Section theme	Corresponding annals
25	Fleet of mac Amlaíb Their attacks and defeat Fair foreigners vs. Dark Foreigners	*A.F.M.* 871[= 873]; *Ann. Inisf..* 873; *Chron. Scot.* 873. *Fragmentary* 408[= ?872]. *A.U.* 875, 876, 877; *A.F.M.* 874[= 877]; *Chron. Scot.* 876, 877.
26	Forty years rest	*A.F.M.* 910[= 914]; *A.U.* 914; *Chron. Scot.* 913[= 914]; *Fragmentary* 458. *A.U.* 917. *A.F.M.* 884[= 887], *Chron. Scot.* 887.
27	Family of Ímar arrive at Dublin	*Ann. Clon.* 888; *A.F.M.* 885[= 888]; *A.U.* 888; *Chron. Scot.* 888. *Ann. Inisf.* 883. (*Ann. Inisf.* 893; *A.U.* 893). *A.F.M.* 890[= 895]; *A.U.* 895.
28	Ragnall m. Ímar and Ottir arrive at Waterford	*A.F.M.* 910[= 914]; *A.U.* 914; *Chron. Scot.* 913[= 914]; *Fragmentary* 458. *Ann. Clon.* 910[= 915]; *A.F.M.* 913[= 915]; *Chron. Scot.* 914[= 915]. *A.U.* 915, 917. *A.F.M.* 914[= 916]; *Ann. Inisf.* 916.
29	Interpolation	[Cf. *Cog. Gaedhel* 24.] [*Ann. Inisf.* 867.] ['Ann. Cotton' 255; *Ann. Clon.* 866[= 868]; *A.F.M.* 866[= 868]; *A.U.* 867, 868; *Chron. Scot.* 868]; *Fragmentary* 347. *A.F.M.* 916[= 918]; *A.U.* 918; *Fragmentary* 459.
[30]	Sitriuc ua Ímair arrives in Ireland	*A.F.M.* 915[= 917]; *A.U.* 917; *Chron. Scot.* 916[= 917].
[31]	Sitriuc ua Ímair takes Dublin	*Ann. Clon.* 917; *A.U.* 917; *Chron. Scot.* 916[= 917]. *Ann. Clon.* 915[= 919]; 'Ann. Cotton' 264; *A.F.M.* 917[= 919]; *Ann. Inisf.* 919; *Ann. Bk. Leinster* (l. 3216); *A.U.* 919; *Chron. Scot.* 918[= 919].
[32]	Gothrin m. Ímair attacks north and is defeated	*Ann. Clon.* 917[= 921]; *A.F.M.* 919[= 921]; *A.U.* 921; *Chron. Scot.* 920[= 921]. *Ann. Clon.* 916[= 920]; *A.F.M.* 918[= 920]; *A.U.* 920; *Chron. Scot.* 919[= 920].
[33]	Tamar m. Elgi arrives at Limerick	*Ann. Clon.* 918[= 922]; *A.F.M.* 920[= 922]; *Ann. Inisf.* 922; *A.U.* 922; *Chron. Scot.* 921[= 922].
[34]	The Limerick fleet plunders from L. Derg Conclusion: Deeds m. Elgi and Dublin fleet in Leth Cuinn and Leinster.	*A.F.M.* 920[= 922]; *Chron. Scot.* 921[= 922].

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Todd §§	Section theme	Corresponding annals
[35]	Introduction: History of Munster and the family of Ívarr. Ottir Dubh plunders Munster	*A.F.M.* 910[= 914]; *A.U.* 914; *Chron. Scot.* 913[= 914]; *Fragmentary* 458.
[36]	Multiple fleets and their oppressions	Cf. *Ann. Clon.* 832, ?*Ann. Lough Cé* 1014.
[37]	Family of Ívarr kill the king of Ireland and the king of Cashel	*Ann. Clon.* 945[= 950]; 'Ann. Cotton' 268; *A.F.M.* 948[= 950]; *Ann. Bk. Leinster* (l. 3133); *A.U.* 950; *Chron. Scot.* 949[= 950]. *Ann. Clon.* 946[= 951]; *A.F.M.* 949[= 951]; *A.U.* 951; *Chron. Scot.* 950[= 951]. *Ann. Inisf.* 951.
[38]	They kill the king of Tara, win the battle of Kilmoon, and kill two heirs to the kingship of Tara	*Ann. Clon.* 951[= 956]; *A.F.M.* 954[= 956]; *Ann. Bk. Leinster* (ll. 3131–33); *A.U.* 956; *Chron. Scot.* 955[= 956]. *A.F.M.* 976[= 970]; *Ann. Inisf.* 969; *Ann. Bk. Leinster* (l. 3137); *A.U.* 970; *Chron. Scot.* 968 [= 970]. 'Ann. Cotton' 272; *A.F.M.* 975[= 977]; *Ann. Inisf.* 977; *Ann. Tig.* 977; *A.U.* 977.
[39]	They kill the king of Leinster and the king of Cenél Conaill.	*Ann. Clon.* 971[= 978]; *A.F.M.* 976[= 978]; *Ann. Tig.* 978; *A.U.* 978; *Chron. Scot.* 976 [= 978].
	Their defeat at the battle of Tara	*Ann. Clon.* 974[= 980]; 'Ann. Cotton' 273; *A.F.M.* 978, 979[= 980]; *Ann. Inisf.* 980; *Ann. Bk. Leinster* (ll. 3139–43); *Ann. Tig.* 980; *A.U.* 980; *Chron. Scot.* 978[= 980].
[40]	Ímar ua Ímair arrives at Limerick with his sons, their oppression	*Ann. Clon.* 970[= 977]; *A.F.M.*[= 977]; *Ann. Inisf.* 977; *Chron. Scot.* 975[= 977].
[41]	Introduction: the Dál Cáis	