

Books from Ireland, Fifth to Ninth Centuries

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Abstract. The first part is concerned with extant books produced in Ireland and surviving elsewhere, the second with texts composed there but transmitted through copies made elsewhere, which alone survive. I also investigate text-historical evidence that allows one to trace copies of Late Antique texts from Ireland into seventh-century Northumbria, further evidence of the export of books from Ireland. The external survival of books made in Ireland, of texts composed in Ireland but not preserved there, and of texts read in Ireland and exported provides a counterweight to any positivist argument from the paucity of early medieval books made and preserved in Ireland that Irish book-culture was not as advanced as Bede's or Aldhelm's references would suggest. A similar case may be derived from vernacular texts. The only early manuscripts containing substantial quantities of Old Irish have survived on the Continent, but a large body of Old Irish texts has survived in Ireland, though few extant copies are anywhere near as old as the texts. Early Irish book-culture is therefore attested both through early manuscripts not in Ireland and through early texts not surviving in early Irish copies. The early medieval manuscripts preserved in Ireland, such as the gospel books of Durrow and Kells, have survived because of their special status as relics. Comparison with the evidence of manuscripts and texts from Africa and Spain in the early middle ages puts the Irish material into perspective.

Keywords: early-medieval Irish manuscripts, book culture, text transmission, Ireland, Northumbria, Durham, Bobbio, St Gallen, palaeography, Insular Latin, Hibernensis, patristics, classical texts, biblical exegesis, earliest vernacular Irish literature.

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Let me begin in familiar territory in the third book of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*:¹

At that time there were many of the English people, both high-born and low-born, who in the days of Bishop Fínán and Bishop Colmán left the land of their birth and took themselves off to Ireland, whether for the sake of godly learning or a

1. *This paper represents the text of two lectures—they divide at p 26—delivered on consecutive days as the 50th O'Donnell Lectures in Celtic Studies at Oxford, 20–21 May 2004, and reprised under the auspices of the Michael O'Clery Institute at University College, Dublin, on 11 March 2005. My thanks to Dr Roy Flechner for his comments on the lectures and on the draft paper, and to Professor Donnchadh Ó Corráin for access to his unpublished bibliography of medieval Irish books and texts.

Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III 27, ed. C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica* (Oxford 1896), i 192.

more ascetic life. Indeed some of these people quickly committed themselves faithfully to the monastic life; others took delight in travelling around the cells (*cellae*) of teachers (*magistri*) to devote themselves to study. The Irish received them all with great generosity and took care to provide them with their daily sustenance without payment, even providing books to study (*libros quoque ad legendum*) and the free guidance of a teacher.

Fínán and Colmán were bishops in Lindisfarne, Irishmen, successors of St Aídán; Bede is here looking back to the period 651 to 664, when the infant church of the English looked to Ireland for christian learning. That this is not peculiarly a reflection of the mission from Iona to Northumbria is also clear. It was probably in this period, too, while Ceanwalh was king in Wessex, that:²

there came into his territory from Ireland a man from Francia, by name Agilbert, who had stayed no little time in Ireland for the sake of studying the scriptures (*legendarum gratia scripturarum*).

Perhaps influenced by the impact of Columbanus, even Francia in the middle of the seventh century might look to Ireland for learning and in particular for biblical learning—and we should remember that Agilbert was a friend of king Alchfrith of Northumbria, and of bishop Wilfrid, staunchly Roman on the subject of Easter.³ And later, in the 680s and '90s, among the West Saxons, abbot Aldhelm of Malmesbury was well aware of the attraction of Irish schools to teachers in England such as *Magister* Wihtfrith and *Magister* Heahfrith, whom he sought by letter and satire to discourage from their proposed journeys to Ireland.⁴

Knowing that the terms of engagement for an O'Donnell Lecturer are to address the contribution of the Celtic peoples to the English nation, I thought it fitting to think about the contribution made by the importation of books into England from Ireland. In spite of a vast amount of attention to those books that have survived—and argument about where they were actually made—it has proved very hard to focus on what books might actually have been brought from Ireland into England.

When Bede was studying at Jarrow or Monkwearmouth in the 690s, he had access to a diverse and by no means inconsiderable library.⁵ Much of it was built

2. *ibid.* III 7 (ed. Plummer, 140).

3. *ibid.* III 25, v 19 (ed. Plummer, 182–23, 325–26).

4. Aldhelm, *Epistolae* 3, 5, ed. R. Ehwald, MGH AA 15 (1913–19) 479–80, 486–94.

5. The evidence for Bede's reading is gathered by Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon library*, E. A. Lowe Lectures 2002 (Oxford 2006) 191–228.

up by the importation of books from Rome, and Bede himself is at pains to mention, in his history of the abbots, that the founder Biscop, known as Benedict, had several times visited Rome and had brought back books to support the liturgy, the study of the bible, and christian generally in Northumbria.⁶ One of his latest imports, in 678, was John, *archicantator* of St Peter's basilica in Rome, who wrote down a customal for the liturgical year at Jarrow; 'these writings', Bede tells us, 'have been preserved to this day in the monastery, and copies have now been made by many others elsewhere'.⁷

Roman books, and the use of Roman script in England, from Kent and Surrey to Northumberland, have been just one of the excitements offered by the study of books surviving from seventh-century England.

Books from Ireland had also certainly reached Jarrow. To take a firm instance, in 686, Adomnán, abbot of Iona and one of the most important churchmen of the north of Ireland, had visited Jarrow. Bede characterises him as 'a good man, learned (*sapiens*), and a most distinguished biblical scholar' (*scientia scripturarum nobilissime instructus*).⁸ Bede would himself later recast for a wider audience Adomnán's only surviving exegetical work, *De locis sanctis*.⁹ While this may be the only work incontestably by an Irishman that was incontestably known to Bede, it does not represent the only book from Ireland that reached Northumbria and was probably not the only one at Jarrow.

If Bede ever travelled the forty-odd miles to Lindisfarne, he would surely have found books in some numbers there that had been made in Ireland, or at least in Iona, whose monastic culture was essentially Irish. Over the thirty years of the Columban mission in Northumbria, books would have been brought to set up the new church and to be used in educating and training the first Northumbrian readers and copiers of Latin texts. I shall not speculate on how long it may take to teach a converted people their new faith, the Latin language which was its medium, (even Irish for those who wanted to study), the new technologies of

6. Bede, *Historia abbatum*, §§ 4, 6, 9 (ed. Plummer, 367, 369, 373).

7. Bede, HE IV 18 (ed. Plummer, 241). Pádraig Ó Riain takes the possibility that John brought a copy of the Hieronymian martyrology as the starting point for a discussion of the Northumbrian and Columban components of an Irish martyrology, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland: the evidence of the Martyrology of Tallaght*, H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 3 (Cambridge 1993) 1–3.

8. *ibid.* v 15 (ed. Plummer, 315–16); Adomnán, *Vita S. Columbae*, II 46, ed. A. O. & M. O. Anderson (rev. ed. Oxford 1991) 178–79.

9. Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* (Clavis §2332) is best edited by L. Bieler in D. Meehan, *Adomnán's De locis sanctis* (Dublin, 1958). Bede's *De locis sanctis* (Clavis §2333), ed. J. Fraipont, CCSL 175 (1965) 251–80.

reading and writing, and even the craft of parchment-making: the answer may well be less time than one thinks.¹⁰ But no new works could be added to a study-collection of books without *exempla* from which to copy them. It is likely that Jarrow had obtained books from Lindisfarne as well as those brought from Rome, and it is entirely possible that Bede was accustomed to handling Irish-made books.

The differences between Irish books and Roman books would have been obvious to someone there in (say) 680 or 690. Indeed, it is not hard to imagine that in Lindisfarne some of the books may have been kept in satchels to hang from pegs in the Irish manner. Yet copyists trained in Northumbria learnt to imitate both. Not all *scriptoria* adopted the Roman uncial script at all, and those that did so employed it as a superior register for special uses, while still using the Irish system of scripts for more ordinary purposes.¹¹ The eighth-century gospel book, now Durham Cathedral, MS A. II. 16, presents the extraordinary picture of three gospels copied from an Irish exemplar by two scribes, one 'Insular', the other supplying just two quires in an uncial hand, while the fourth gospel was copied in a more conspicuously Irish-trained hand from an Italian exemplar.¹² This cross-over between Irish and Roman scripts, Irish and Roman exemplars, indicates an indiscriminate fusion between the influence of books and techniques imported from Rome and the inheritors of an Irish tradition at Lindisfarne.¹³ Towards the end of the eighth century we see the two systems assim-

10. For example, in Kent the writing of a law-code in Old English in the name of king Æthelberht followed quickly after the arrival of missionaries from Rome.

11. M. B. Parkes, *The scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow*, Jarrow Lecture 1982 (Jarrow 1983), associated the adoption of uncial script with Wearmouth-Jarrow, where Biscop's Roman books served as models. T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge 2000) 332-36, argued that its use in Northumbria began earlier under Wilfrid's influence at Ripon in the 670s, spreading to Wearmouth-Jarrow around 690, and he emphasises that its use was a statement of support for the Romanising party. This leads him to make a tendentious claim: 'The most politically sensitive script was the grandest in the range employed by a scriptorium, the one at the top of their hierarchy of scripts' (334). Uncial did not supersede the use of half-uncial or minuscule script in Northumbria, and at Lindisfarne the half-uncial of the Lindisfarne Gospels was surely the highest register in use there. While the use of uncial for special books at Wearmouth-Jarrow no doubt expressed a proud alignment with the cultural products of Rome, it did not represent the repudiation of other influences.

12. CLA 2.148a, 148b, 148c.

13. The two traditions also touch, though this time without combining, in MS A. II. 17, known as the Durham Gospels: here nine uncial leaves from Wearmouth-Jarrow (CLA 2.150) were bound, not later than the tenth century, with a somewhat smaller gospel book in half-uncial (CLA 2.149), 'written' (as Lowe puts it) 'probably in Northumbria, in a great centre of calligraphy in the

lated in a copy of Bede on Proverbs, which uses uncial for the lemmata from the text, a set minuscule for the commentary.¹⁴

Uncial manuscripts from Northumbria, such as the early-eighth-century Codex Amiatinus, were once thought to have been the work of Italian scribes in England, but following the work of E. A. Lowe it has been accepted that English scribes learnt to write that hand just as they learnt to write an Irish hand.¹⁵ What is hard to think oneself into is the question whether someone born in Northumbria and trained to write from Irish models, perhaps by an Irish master, would be conscious of the difference between an 'Irish' book and an 'English' book. How long would it take before the imitation acquired characteristics of its own that would set it apart from the model?

At one level, one might imagine that this was just a matter of time, but the reality was not so simple. St Aidán had brought christianity to Northumberland, and for thirty years the church was led and sustained from Iona and Ireland. In the next generation, there was a breach in these relations, though never a complete one, which lasted some twenty years after the synod at Whitby in 664. After that, however, the new king of Northumbria in 685, Aldfrith, was an Irish-speaking, Irish-schooled man of learning, *uir in scripturis doctissimus* (HE IV 26), who was actually in Iona at the time when the crown was brought to him along with the body of his brother king Ecgfrith, slain in battle against the Picts.¹⁶ Aldfrith appears to have paid for the copying and distribution of Adomnán's work *De locis sanctis*, and we may wonder how closely the copies resembled the Irish-written exemplar.¹⁷ Much later than that, the ninth-century poet Æthelwulf writes about the Irish *scriptor* Ultán in his monastery in Northumbria.¹⁸ Influence from Ireland did not disappear with the first generation of missionaries.

direct line of Irish tradition, or else in Ireland itself. The Durham Gospels have been published in facsimile, ed. C. D. Verey, T. J. Brown, E. Coatsworth, EEMF 20 (Copenhagen 1980).

14. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 819 (SC 2699) (saec. viii/ix), CLA 2.235, written, as Lowe expresses it, 'most likely in Northumbria, in a centre like Jarrow or Wearmouth'.

15. CLA 3.299. E. A. Lowe, 'A key to Bede's scriptorium', *Scriptorium* 12 (1958) 182–90: 184, recalled that Traube and later François Masai were of that opinion and set out to prove that it was Northumbrian work.

16. *Vita S. Cuthberti*, III 6, ed. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of St Cuthbert* (Cambridge 1940) 104; comment by R. Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona. Life of St Columba* (Harmondsworth 1995) 46–47.

17. I take that to be the meaning of Bede's words in HE v 15 (Plummer, 317): 'Porrexit autem hunc librum Adamnan Aldfrido regi, ac per eius est largitionem etiam minoribus ad legendum contraditus' ('Adomnán gave this book to king Aldfrith, through whose generosity it was circulated to younger people to read'); Colgrave mistranslates *minores* as 'the lesser folk', though he does not make this mistake in a comparable passage in HE IV 9).

18. Æthelwulf, *De abbatibus*, lines 206–69, ed. A. Campbell (Oxford 1967) 18–23.

Conversely, an eighth-century psalter commentary, now Rome, BAV MS Pal. lat. 68, has the name of the scribe entered—in the Irish fashion—but his name is Northumbrian. Lowe calls the script ‘Anglo-Saxon minuscule’ but comments, ‘written by Edilbrict son of Bericfrid (fol. 46), probably in the north of England. The *-tur* symbol points to an English scriptorium, as do the vernacular glosses, but script and decoration point to Ireland’.¹⁹ The inclusion in the commentary of vernacular words in both Irish and English—‘dialectal forms are Northumbrian’, says Ker—reinforces the difficulty. The scribe was a Northumbrian, he appears to have learnt his scribal craft in Ireland or at least in a recognizably Irish tradition, but where he wrote is beyond the scope of palaeography to discern.

Lowe says of a copy of St Paul’s Epistles, surely once owned and used at Lindisfarne, now in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B. 10. 5, ‘one can, with conviction, attribute it to an Irish hand’, ‘written in England, probably by an Irish scribe’; or in Alan Bishop’s words, ‘probably written in an Anglo-Irish centre in Northumbria (the Irish symptoms are prominent)’, ‘an extreme case of what is considered typically Irish in book-production’.²⁰ It cannot be assumed that a scribe’s hand will change according to the place of writing, so, on the basis of script, ‘an Irishman could have written it anywhere’.²¹ The manuscript was at Durham in the fourteenth century, when it was one of several manuscripts attributed to the hand of Bede himself—not possible as script, thought Lowe, though the date was about right. The signs that caused Lowe to locate the writing in England were not so much its later provenance as ‘numerous interlinear glosses and marginalia by contemporary and somewhat later Anglo-Saxon hands’ and ‘first lines in somewhat larger Anglo-Saxon majuscule’. The distinction between Irish and Anglo-Saxon scribes he achieved ‘by paying heed to the temperamental differences of the two nations, which existed even then’, which is scarcely a palaeographical reason.²² As for place of writing, he seems to have

19. CLA 1.78; N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford 1957) 457–8 (no. 388); D. N. Dumville, *A palaeographer’s review: the Insular system of scripts in the early middle ages i* (Osaka 1999) 57. The text has been edited by M. McNamara, *Glossa in psalms: the Hiberno-Latin gloss on the psalms of Codex Palatinus Latinus 68 (Psalms 39:11–151:7)*, *Studi e Testi* 310 (Rome 1986).

20. CLA 2. 133; the first quotation is from Lowe’s introduction to CLA 2, p xvi; T. A. M. Bishop, ‘Pelagius in Trinity College B. 10. 5’, *Trans Camb Biblio Soc* 4 (1964–8) 70–77: 70, 73.

21. William O’Sullivan, ‘Manuscripts and palaeography’, in *A New History of Ireland, i: Prehistoric and early Ireland*, ed. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Oxford 2005) 511–48: 513.

22. CLA 2, p xvi.

accepted the fact of Irish scribes at work in England but not English scribes at work or even learning their craft in Ireland. Lowe saw something in the script which he interpreted as signalling the nationality of Irish or English scribes writing in distinct varieties of the same tradition. It was not something he could see in the script, however, that told him where someone was writing. He assumed that Anglo-Saxon annotators were writing in England and supposed that the book they annotated was also English, however prominent its Irish symptoms. All this must be treated with some circumspection.

With books from an earlier date, no one could claim to look at a book made in the 650s and 660s and say whether the scribe was Irish or English, the place of writing Iona or Lindisfarne.

Since the beginning of modern interest in what is now called Insular palaeography—Ludwig Traube's usage from the 1890s²³—there has been intense concern to draw precisely the boundary between English and Irish—and sadly the manuscripts that may have been made by Welsh neighbours were too often assumed not to form part of the picture (though Lowe did on occasion allow 'written in Ireland or Wales').²⁴ Nationalist motives have been seen at work. There have been bitter arguments about whether a particular manuscript was Irish-made or English-made. (The habit of insisting on a late date for the Book of Kells to remove its production from Iona in Irish Britain to the island of Ireland strikes me as particularly curious.) Claims are made for or against the Irishness of anonymous texts with no clear provenance or connexions. And claims are made and contested for the range of reading displayed by Irish writers and *a priori* for the availability in Ireland of a wide range of texts.

The tradition of an Irish Classical library dates back before the beginning of modern scholarship, though it was Kuno Meyer who attempted to give it an historical context in his lecture, *Learning in Ireland in the fifth century and the transmission of letters*, delivered in Dublin in September 1912. He attributed much to the migration of Gallo-Roman scholars in the face of Huns, Goths, Vandals, and Alans in Gaul, who (according to a paragraph in a glossarial context in an

23. L. Traube, 'Perrona Scottorum', *Sitz-Ber Bay Akad*, phil.-philol. Kl. 1900, 469–537: 470–76, repr. in his *Vorlesungen und Abhandlungen*, ed. F. Boll, P. Lehmann, & S. Brandt (Munich 1909–20), iii 95–119: 95–100.

24. CLA 6.828, a fly-leaf fragment, now Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 342 bis, f B (saec. vii/viii), script described as 'Insular majuscule and minuscule', unidentified text as 'Glossae super Amos'. Lowe also refers to 'Celtic vernacular glosses', which appear more Irish than Welsh, to judge from the quotations in Bischoff, 'Wendepunkte' (see n. 98), no. 10. The tenth-century host-manuscript is originally from England but came to rest at Saint-Bertin.

eleventh-century booklet from western France, now in Leiden) fled ‘in transmarinis, uidelicet in Hiber<n>ia’, bringing a great advance in learning wherever they went. Heinrich Zimmer had dated this paragraph to the late sixth century, and Meyer identified these ‘Gaulish professors’ with the *dominicati rethorici* to whom Patrick responded with indignation: pagan rhetoricians, Meyer thought, who taught the Irish a tradition of Kunstprosa in both Latin and Irish.²⁵ The earliest and somewhat isolated support for a knowledge of Classical Latin verse by an Irish writer came from the poems of one Columbanus—hence the vigorous opposition to Michael Lapidge’s persuasive case that the poet was not the sixth-century saint but a later Columbanus, an Irishman active close to Carolingian court circles at the end of the eighth century.²⁶ The textual history of the poems, which is very different from that of the earlier Columbanus’s letters, certainly supports this case against the founder of Bobbio.

Setting aside the obvious deficiencies of Meyer’s case, the propagandists have often enough argued with better reasons. Yet I feel that I am instinctively a sceptic about claims for a miracle of Irish learning in a dark age. On point after point after point, however, I have found myself unable to accept much that has been said to the contrary.²⁷ The evidence is more interesting than partisans have said.

25. K. Meyer, *Learning in Ireland in the fifth century and the transmission of letters* (Dublin 1913) 5–6, 10. The passage from Leiden, MS Voss. lat. F. 70, ff 74–83 (saec. xi), f 79^v, had been published by L. Müller, ‘Sammelsurien’, *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie und Pädagogik* 93 (1866) 385–400: 389, including the conjectural emendation to ‘Hibernia’. Meyer was led to it by H. Zimmer; see K. Meyer ‘Aus dem Nachlass Heinrich Zimmers’, *Z Celt Philol* 9 (1913) 87–120: 119, saying that, ‘Zimmer regards this entry as originally written not later than the sixth century in the West of Gaul’. Meyer also notes Zimmer’s recent interest in early scholarship in Ireland: ‘Zimmer was at one time inclined to trace classical learning in Ireland to Gaulish missionaries at the end of the 4th century (Sitzungsber. 1909, p. 563), at another to scholars emigrating from Gaul in the second half of the 5th (1910, p. 1085)’ (*Learning in Ireland*, 21–22 n 5).

26. M. Lapidge, ‘The authorship of the adonic verses *Ad Fidolium* attributed to Columbanus’, *Studi medievali* 3rd ser. 18 (1977) 815–80; Heinz Löwe, ‘Columbanus und Fidolius’, *Deutsches Archiv* 37 (1981) 1–19; P. C. Jacobsen, ‘Carmina Columbani’, in *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. H. Löwe (Stuttgart 1982) 434–67.

27. ‘Miracle’ is the expression used by Edmondo Coccia, who investigated with disinterested scepticism the expanding scholarship on early Irish learning, ‘La cultura irlandese precarolingia: miracolo o mito’, *Studi medievali* 3rd ser. 8 (1967) 257–420. Its scepticism becomes a negative chain-reaction. This was characterised by Ó Cróinín as ‘the first in a long and tedious line of modern attempts to deny all merit to Irish achievements’, *Engl Hist Rev* 113 (1998) 398; he prefers ‘the famous article by Johannes Duft’, ‘Iromanie—Irophobie’, *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte* 50 (1956), 241–62, who summed up ‘the successive swings of the pendulum in the first half of this century’ (*Int Hist Rev* 22 (2000) 619).

Some years ago the Dutch historian Marco Mostert wandered into this fray and sought to bring some sweet reason to the question.²⁸ He realised that Lowe expressed the difference between Irish and English books in rather emotive terms. Lowe's judgements, founded on stated reasons, none the less, still command general respect though one may disagree with individual conclusions. Mostert took the line that Lowe was conservative about assigning an Irish origin to any manuscript, whereas other students have tended to want to magnify the number of Irish books.²⁹ Lowe's reasoned judgements would provide a safe foundation for basic conclusions about the books that had survived from Ireland and the witness they bore to early Irish book-culture.

Mostert worked his way through Lowe's colossal survey of more than 1800 manuscripts written before c.800, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, and he counted some seventy-seven items for which Lowe allowed an Irish origin, setting out the results as an appendix to his paper.³⁰ He then proceeded to a conclusion based on this tally: 'the number of seventy-seven survivals is still rather too low to support the existence of any developed scholarly culture' (102). He does not state what figure would satisfy him, nor how any such figure might be arrived at. Worse, forty-four out of seventy-seven are only 'written presumably in Ireland', according to Lowe, and, worse still, there is a massive preponderance of liturgical books for use in church over books for study, fifty-two out of seventy-seven.³¹ No attempt is made to compare this ratio with the equivalent figures from other parts of Europe at this period before conclusions are inferred. 'This is slightly worrying,' writes Mostert, 'for we are led to believe that Ireland was a country where already in the seventh century exegesis was flourishing. Why then do we not have one single seventh-century copy left of exegetical texts?'³² He did at least count the copy of the Pauline Epistles, now in Würzburg, MS M. p. th. f.

28. M. Mostert, 'Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, or Insular? Some considerations on "Irish" manuscript production and their implications for Insular Latin culture, c. AD 500–800', in *Cultural identity and cultural integration. Ireland and Europe in the early middle ages*, ed. Doris Edel (Dublin 1995) 92–115.

29. This charge was not directed at the only older listing by Walther Schultze in the third part of his paper, 'Die Bedeutung der iroschottischen Mönche für die Erhaltung und Fortpflanzung der mittelalterlichen Wissenschaft', *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 6 (1889) 185–98, 233–41, 282–98: 287–95, which has 117 items but includes manuscripts of the ninth century and excludes those surviving in Ireland or Britain. Its information is very often secondhand and lacking in shelf-marks.

30. Mostert, 110–15.

31. Mostert, 101, 104.

32. Mostert, 105.

12 (CLA 9.1403), as a book for study: it was laid out to take an interlinear gloss, and was indeed heavily annotated in both Latin and Irish—but the manuscript was copied in the late eighth century, even if much of its annotation was brought together from earlier *exempla*.

Mostert does not attempt to answer the question, Why? It is assumed that, if such works had existed, we should have at least one contemporary manuscript: in the absence of a seventh-century copy, he preferred to deduce that we were *mised* to believe that seventh-century Ireland was a place of biblical study. I cannot help thinking that the evidence of Bede, well known and cited again above, is strong enough to stand up against this line of thought. It is a sad business to see palaeographical positivism pushed so far to the front of anyone's reasoning.

Mostert reflects that 'we know *of* a dozen theological texts ...'.³³ Is the distinction between theology and exegesis the substantive point? No. Why, anyway, is it knowing *of* these texts? There are surviving texts. And I can think of only one theological text by an Irishman of which we have *report* without having the actual text—the annotated psalter made by Columbanus in his twenties (according to his biographer Jonas), that would be before AD 590, for which the proposed identifications with extant texts have never been persuasive.³⁴ Is the argument, then, that an extant text composed in Ireland in the seventh century cannot stand *in loco codicis*? That would contradict the exordium of his paper.³⁵

It is a limitation on palaeography that it cannot really be practised without extant manuscripts, though some of the canons of textual criticism are based on the fact that one can sometimes detect features of a lost manuscript in the extant copy. Palaeography is inevitably a positivist discipline—it depends on observation, and only observable phenomena can be observed—but one must avoid

33. Mostert, 105.

34. The evidence of a commentary is provided by book-lists of the ninth century from Bobbio and St. Gallen (D. A. Bullough, 'The career of Columbanus', in *Columbanus: studies in the Latin writings*, ed. M. Lapidge (Woodbridge 1997) 1–28: 4–5n). His age at the time of writing is questionably inferred from Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita S. Columbani*, I 3, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRG us (Hanover, 1905) 158: 'Tantum eius in pectore diuinarum thesauri scripturarum conditi tenebantur ut intra adulescentiae aetate detentus Psalmorum librum elimato sermone exponeret multaue alia, quae uel ad cantum digna uel ad docendum utilia, condidit dicta' ('The treasures of divine scripture were so held in his breast that even as a young man he would expound the book of Psalms in polished speech and he composed many other sayings, whether worthy of the liturgy or useful for teaching').

35. 'We ought to include also those texts which do not survive in contemporary copies but on philological or historical grounds can be shown to have been written in the period under consideration' (Mostert, 92).

allowing attention to manuscripts to seduce one into nonsense. We can surely agree that a Latin text cannot exist without material support. It is a common experience to find that a text survives only in manuscripts of much later date than its original composition—but it was not transmitted without the existence of earlier and now invisible copies.

A peevish critic might say that Mostert's method has helped him towards his conclusion. His tally was seventy-seven 'Irish' items in *Codices Latini antiquiores*; the index compiled by Rutherford Aris made it ninety-five.³⁶ Would that have been enough to reassure Professor Mostert that there was more of a Latin culture than he had supposed? I have not made my own count based on Lowe's judgements. But Mostert made a virtue of Lowe's caution in inferring an Irish production and then turned the resulting low figure into the basis of reasoning. Mostert himself understates—dare I say lowers?—Lowe's figures, which in turn might themselves understate the archaeological verity.

Mostert did not count the copy of St Paul's Epistles, formerly in Durham and now Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B. 10. 5 (CLA 2.133), already mentioned, which Lowe said 'with conviction' was the work of an Irish scribe. He did not count the divided fragments in Durham of an early gospel book (CLA 2.147), of which Lowe says, 'the text is of the Irish family', and 'written by a scribe trained in a pure Irish tradition'. Lowe, however, used the description 'insular majuscule' in his own majuscule heading; Mostert discounted this manuscript because Lowe, in the light of the manuscript's subsequent history, had said it was 'written presumably in Northumbria'. Lowe was sometimes too much guided by subsequent location in presuming the place of writing: the portability of books cannot always be so easily ignored, and this presumption, as we shall see, will always go against Ireland rather than in its favour. Another gospel book of Irish appearance and textually Irish in its affinities, Durham Cathedral, MS A. II. 17 (CLA 2.149), from later in the seventh century, was (says Lowe) 'written probably in Northumbria in a great centre of calligraphy in the direct line of the Irish tradition, or else in Ireland itself'; not counted by Mostert. Lowe was concerned with script and could not be sure; in following him so conservatively, Mostert has failed to count manuscripts that may have been exported from Ireland—so it seems to me—but every example is contentious. It would do no harm to my reasoning to allow that they were copied from a lost exemplar exported from Ireland, but Mostert ignored all such invisible books.

36. R. B. Aris, *An index of scripts for E. A. Lowe's Codices Latini Antiquiores* (Osnabrück 1982) 9 (early Irish), 14–15 (Irish).

Mostert also failed to take into account another very striking feature of his list of seventy-seven items. Only fifteen have survived in Ireland into modern times. His tally includes the very early sample of writing, saec. viiⁱⁿ, preserved on waxed wooden tablets found in 1913 in Springmount Bog, Co Antrim, now in the National Museum, but a schoolmaster's specimen of three psalms, rare and valuable though it is for the study of script, was hardly a book.³⁷ The figure of books *in* Ireland is hardly subject to the variable counting that affects books *from* Ireland, but some adjustments must now be made. We should now add the psalter found in a bog at Faddan More, Co Tipperary, in July 2006, and judged to date from saec. viii/ix.³⁸

What has survived in Ireland from before AD 808 is one sacramentary, the Stowe Missal; one New Testament, with other texts, the Book of Armagh; two psalters, Cathach Coluimb Chille, the earliest of all, and the Faddan More psalter; and eleven gospel books.³⁹ The only non-liturgical texts are the Lives of

37. CLA Supplement 1684; J. N. Hillgarth, 'Visigothic Spain and Early Christian Ireland', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 62 (1962) 167–94: 184; G. Charles-Edwards, 'The Springmount Bog tablets: their implications for Insular epigraphy and palaeography', *Studia Celtica* 36 (2002) 27–45.

38. The date is advanced by Bernard Meehan in the early publication, *The Faddan More Psalter*, supplement to *Archaeology Ireland* (Autumn 2006) S 11.

39. Twelve manuscripts now in Dublin are listed consecutively, CLA 2.266–277, and Mostert, 110–11. The Stowe Missal (saec. viii/ix), Royal Irish Academy (RIA), MS [Stowe] D. ii. 3, ff 12–67, is CLA 2.268, and its *cumdach* is in the National Museum; the Book of Armagh (AD 807–8), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), MS 52, CLA 2.270, was long kept in a decorated leather book-satchel made for a different book; the Cathach Coluimb Chille (saec. viiⁱⁿ), RIA MS 12 R. 33, CLA 2.266, now separated from its eleventh-century *cumdach* in the National Museum; the Faddan More psalter is still under conservation. The gospel books in approximate date-order are: (1) Usserianus I (saec. viiⁱⁿ), TCD MS 55, CLA 2. 271, separated from its lost *cumdach* not later than the seventeenth century; (2) the Book of Durrow (saec. vii²), TCD MS 57, CLA 2.273, separated from its *cumdach* in the seventeenth century; (3) the Book of Kells (saec. viii), TCD MS 58, CLA 2.274; (4) the Book of Dimma (saec. viii²), TCD MS 59, CLA 2. 275, whose *cumdach* remains in the library; (5) Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson G. 167 (saec. viii), CLA 2.256, now imperfect, 'written doubtless in Ireland', taken to England in 1688; (6) the Book of Mulling (saec. viii^{ex}), TCD MS 60, CLA 2.276, now separated from its *cumdach*; (7) leaves from a second gospel book (saec. viii/ix), from the *cumdach* of the Book of Mulling, TCD MS 60, ff 95–98, CLA 2.277; (8) fragments of St John's gospel (saec. viii/ix), bound with the Stowe Missal before it was enshrined, now ff 1–11, CLA 2. 267; (9) the gospels of the Domnach Airgid (saec. viii/ix), RIA MS 24 Q. 23, CLA 2. 269, separated from its *cumdach* in the National Museum, which was only opened as recently as 1832; (10) the Garland of Howth, Usserianus II (saec. viii/ix), TCD MS 56, CLA 2.272; (11) Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. D. ii. 19 (saec. viii/ix), CLA 2.231, Mac Regol's Gospels. One should add the fragment from an Irish gospel book, now in Cambridge MA, Houghton Library, MS Typ. 620 (saec. viii²) ('Addenda to *Codices latini antiquiores*', *Mediaeval*

St Martin and St Patrick copied with the New Testament in the Book of Armagh. The implication of such a miserable tally is perhaps that there was really no learned book-culture in seventh- or eighth-century Ireland, perhaps not even a whole bible for study as distinct from the psalms, epistles and gospels used in the liturgy.⁴⁰ The evidence of texts voids the deduction from an absence of surviving manuscripts.⁴¹ And we should remember that the extant books include some of the greatest monuments of early medieval manuscript art, the Book of Durrow and the Book of Kells. Such books are not produced in a setting little used to the disciplined copying of texts.

The common feature of books surviving within Ireland—apart from the bog books—is that they were treated as relics, and that factor preserved just these few.⁴² In the case of the late-sixth- or early-seventh-century psalter known as *Cathach Coluimb Chille* ‘St Columba’s Battler’, it is not even clear whether those who venerated the reliquary were aware that inside the case was a small book—until the relic was opened in 1813.⁴³ The shrine known as *Domnach Airgid* ‘Silver church’ was opened as recently as 1832 to reveal a gospel book, defective already before it was placed in the shrine, which was itself not originally intended to house this book.⁴⁴ Veneration as relics also preserved a number of manuscripts from the ninth and tenth centuries, and in Ireland Lowe’s Carolingian cut-off date at c.800 does not mean very much.⁴⁵

Studies 47 (1985) 323–24), removed from a binding of unknown provenance.

40. Michael M. Gorman, ‘The myth of Hiberno-Latin exegesis’, *Revue Bénédictine* 110 (2000) 42–85.

41. Apart from any other evidence, the canon-collection known as the *Hibernensis* quotes almost every book of both Old and New Testaments. The occasional instances of second-hand quotation do not alter this fact.

42. P. Sims-Williams spells this out in making comparison with early gospel books from Wales, ‘The uses of writing in early medieval Wales’, in *Literacy in medieval Celtic societies*, ed. A. H. Pryce (Cambridge, 1998) 15–38: 20–22. From Wales the eighth-century Llandeilo gospels are now at Lichfield (CLA 2.159), but those associated with St Cadog, St Asaph, and St Beuno are lost.

43. Sir William Betham, *Irish antiquarian researches* (Dublin 1827) 109–121. Much of this work is concerned with books kept in reliquaries, two of which Betham owned at the time, among them the Book of Dimma, on which he writes at length.

44. G. Petrie ‘An account of an ancient Irish reliquary called the Domnach Airgid’, *Trans Roy Ir Acad* 18 (1837) 14–24; J. H. Bernard, ‘On the Domnach Airgid MS.’, *Trans Roy Ir Acad* 30 (1892–6) 303–12; Cormac Bourke, ‘The Domnach Airgid in 2006’, and Charles Doherty, ‘The earliest cult of Maccartan’, *Clogher Rec* 20 (2006) 31–42, 43–69.

45. It would do no violence to the argument to count London, Lambeth Palace, MS 1370 (saec. ix), Mac Durnan’s Gospels. The proportion of psalters increases if one takes into account books of the tenth to twelfth centuries.

The Irish leaves from the gospels of Matthew and Mark, now serving as flyleaves in three books belonging to Durham cathedral, are fragments from a book that has belonged to the community of St Cuthbert since long before they settled at Durham.⁴⁶ If it did not come from Lindisfarne itself, it came from one of the churches in its orbit. It may have been kept by the monks of St Cuthbert in their wanderings after the flight from Lindisfarne. Unlike the Lindisfarne Gospels, it did not retain the status of a relic, and at some point it was used to provide flyleaves in the bindings of other books; twelve leaves survive from three bindings. The copy of the Pauline Epistles already referred to fared rather better.⁴⁷ Institutional continuity at Durham preserved a group of seven complete manuscripts as well as fragments of five others from the Northumbrian church in the seventh and eighth centuries, not a large group, but a group explained by a shared fortune. Books from the library of Wearmouth–Jarrow scarcely survive at all. Would the palaeographical positivist deduce that this was too little for Bede to have read and written there? We shall see that similar factors have preserved groups of Irish manuscripts at St Gallen and (allowing for local transfer into public guardianship) from Reichenau and from Bobbio.

Such institutional continuity did not exist anywhere within Ireland. Relics may enjoy a surrogate continuity. The Book of Armagh, for example, depended for centuries on being preserved by a lay family who were hereditary stewards of the relic. The last of these, Florence Mac Moyre, is said to have pawned the book in 1680. By 1699 it belonged to Arthur Brownlow (1645–1711), a linen manufacturer in Lurgan, who took an interest in Irish manuscripts and showed the book to the Welsh scholar, Edward Lhwyd.⁴⁸ Its preservation thereafter was due to the

46. Twelve leaves have survived as flyleaves in Durham Cathedral, MS A. II. 10, ff 2–5 and 338, 339; MS C. III. 13, ff 192–95; and MS C. III. 20, ff 1–2; their sequence is inferred in CLA 2.147. Lowe's judgement of the script is 'written presumably in Northumbria, by a scribe trained in the pure Irish tradition. The text is of the Irish family and has striking affinities with Codex E of the Gospels (London, Egerton 609, saec. ix^{cs}), copied from an Insular exemplar'.

47. T. A. M. Bishop identified five leaves now bound in BL MS Cotton Vitellius C. VIII as belonging with the sixty-seven leaves of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B. 10. 5 (CLA 2. 133); these were removed for Sir Robert Cotton in the early seventeenth century.

48. Lhwyd had stayed with Brownlow briefly in 1699, an occasion remembered by Brownlow in his only known letter to Lhwyd, dated at Lurgan, 10 June 1704 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashm. 1814, f 285; see also Lhwyd to Dr Thomas Molyneux, dated at Ballymoney, Co Antrim, 29 January 1699/1700, in K. T. Hoppen, *Papers of the Dublin Philosophical Society* (Dublin 2008) 700–06, no. 404). Lhwyd's transcript from the Irish notes in the Book of Armagh, ff 17^r–18^r and 16^v, is now TCD MS 1392, no. 2, f 5. His description of the manuscript was printed from his papers, supplied by C. W. Williams-Wynn to the Revd Charles O'Connor, *Rerum Hibernicarum*

interest of successive generations of the Brownlow family, who owned it until 1853.⁴⁹ In either family one generation's negligence might have broken the tradition and condemned the manuscript to oblivion. Such risks attended all our surviving book-relics—and untold others that perished. The fate of library books was still more insecure.

Although parchment is durable in favourable conditions, Ireland has a damp climate, and early and medieval Irish buildings were mostly not durable constructions, so that the physical conditions for survival were exceedingly precarious. Nor were books usually regarded as permanent artefacts: old books were habitually superseded by newer books, as can be illustrated for Ireland. Within Ireland, one eighth-century liturgical fragment in Latin was palimpsested in the twelfth century to supply the parchment to finish copying an epitome of Eriugena's *Peri Physeon*.⁵⁰ A tenth-century copy of a commentary on Matthew in mixed Latin and Irish has come down to us only as binding-leaves in a late-twelfth-century book from Lanthony priory, which had an Irish dependency at Duleek.⁵¹ Similarly, a copy of Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis* is now represented by two leaves, with seven glosses in Irish, end-leaves from the former medieval binding of a computistical manuscript from the west of England.⁵²

scriptores ueteres (Buckingham 1814–26), vol. i, pp. lvi–lviii, which first brought the manuscript to wider notice.

49. W. Reeves, *Memoir of the Book of Armagh* (Lusk 1861) 5–8.

50. CLA 2.232, 'written no doubt in Ireland, where the MS. still was in the eleventh or twelfth century, when the manuscript was used for rewriting'; omitted by Mostert. Lowe was able to make out enough of the lower script to comment on parallels in the Bangor Antiphony and the Stowe Missal, but his comments on the twelfth-century upper script are misleading. The reused leaves form the last quire of the third physical component of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. 3. 15 (SC 3511), which reached Oxford in 1601. Its route from Ireland is unknown. The three scientific texts copied in two stages are revealing on Irish scholarship in the first half of the twelfth century (P. P. Ó Néill, 'An Irishman at Chartres in the twelfth century—the evidence of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. III. 15', *Ériu* 48 (1997) 1–35). The owner of the book could manage a phrase in French, and Ó Néill somewhat overreads the contents to conjecture that he had studied in the French schools. No evidence points to Chartres.

51. The host was London, Lambeth Palace, MS 119 (s. xii, Lanthony), John of Lanthony's compilation of comments on Revelation. The fragments are now Lambeth Palace, MS 1229, no. 7–8, reproduced and edited by L. Bieler & J. P. Carney, 'The Lambeth commentary', *Ériu* 23 (1972) 1–55, who would date the work to the early eighth century. If an Irish manuscript from Duleek had reached Lanthony and been consigned to the bindery, might other leaves be found in original bindings from Lanthony?

52. The host was Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. 5. 19 (saec. xii¹) (SC 2148). The two leaves are now separated as Bodl. MS Lat. th. d. 7 (s. xii?) (SC 2148*). The glosses were printed by W. Stokes, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 31 (1889–92), 253–54. Dr Julian Harrison

Nothing could have survived by benign neglect—waterlogging excepted—without active efforts to maintain the favourable conditions. We do not need to invoke viking attacks and internal wars to explain the loss of manuscripts: it requires only a loss of interest in the books produced by an earlier generation.

How books have been lost is in general a very difficult topic—we tend to treat medieval libraries as if they were always conservative, we assume that books were always valuable and generally useful, yet in every century books were being destroyed by overuse, or neglect, or being scrapped—but that is a topic for another occasion. Loss and survival are opposites. And before one can form any judgement on the basis of how much or how little has survived, one has to appraise the routes of survival.

The route from Lindisfarne, via various wanderings, to Durham has meant that a few items have survived that were continuously owned by the community of St Cuthbert from the seventh or eighth century into modern times. This is much less than survived at St Gallen, where the monastic community has existed almost throughout the period of transmission—the only break was under the influence of Napoleon between 1801 and 1803—and where in 1416 Poggio found the precious library safely neglected (or should that be rhetorically neglected?) ‘in a most dark and out of the way prison at the base of a tower, not fit even for those condemned to death’.⁵³

Let me offer four contrasting examples from Ireland. The Book of Armagh, written in 807–08, and now in Trinity College, Dublin, contains the whole New Testament preceded by a truly remarkable dossier of seventh-century texts relating to St Patrick, almost an archive in its own right, and followed by the late-fourth-century Life of St Martin of Tours, a very widely known work of Late Antique hagiography from Roman Gaul.⁵⁴ The book was made for Tor-

tells me that the contents are related to contemporary manuscripts from Malmesbury (Bodl. MS Auct. F. 3. 14 (SC 2372)), Worcester (Bodl. MS Auct. F. 1. 9 (SC 4137)), and Winchcombe (London, BL MS Cotton Tiberius E. IV).

53. Poggio to Guarino Veronese, dated at Konstanz, 16 December 1416, ‘Erant enim non in bibliotheca libri illi, ut eorum dignitas postulabat, sed in teterrimo quodam et obscuro carcere, fundo scilicet unius turris quo ne capitalis quidem rei damnati retruderentur’ (ed. T. Tonnelli, *Poggii epistolae* (Florence 1832–1861), i 25–29; ed. H. Harth, *Poggio Bracciolini. Lettere* (Florence, 1984–7), ii 153–56). The same words are used in an undated letter to Giovanni Corvini (ed. Harth, ii 444–47).

54. The text of the entire manuscript is given in print-facsimile by John Gwynn, *The Book of Armagh* (Dublin 1913); for a reappraisal of the hands and interpretation of the codicology, R. Sharpe, ‘Palaeographical considerations in the study of the Patrician documents in the Book of Armagh’, *Scriptorium* 36 (1982) 3–28.

bach, coarb of St Patrick in 807–08, and it became one of the emblems of the office of coarb, surviving even after the medieval disruption in the church and through the upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the hands of its hereditary stewards. Here, alone, are Latin works by Irish authors in a manuscript preserved continuously in Ireland, though two of the works in question, Patrick's own *Confessio* and Muirchú's Life of the saint, also have a textual history outside Ireland.

The Life of St Columba, by Adomnán, famously survives in a near contemporary manuscript now in the public library at Schaffhausen.⁵⁵ The work was finished in Iona in or soon after the year 697, and the scribe of the oldest copy, Dorbéne, was promoted to senior office in Iona in 713 and died the same year. The manuscript itself, however, was discovered in the abbey of Reichenau on its island in Lake Constance only in 1621.⁵⁶ Other manuscripts of early Irish origin or association have survived from Reichenau, including fragments from a dozen books from the eighth or very early ninth century, for the time being in the public library at Karlsruhe.⁵⁷ Dorbéne's copy of the Life of St Columba was separated from this group in the eighteenth century, when it was taken into the public library at the nearby town of Schaffhausen.

By contrast a group of nine or ten *uitae* of Irish saints circulated among hagiographical compilers in Ireland between the thirteenth century and the late fourteenth century. The lost manuscript (which I have called Φ) containing this group of texts was probably written no later than the ninth century, perhaps even in the eighth century, to judge from the early orthography of Irish place- and personal names retained by the latest and most faithful copyist.⁵⁸ Where or

55. Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, MS Generalia 1 (datable to 697×713) (CLA 7.998); Mark Stansbury, 'The composition of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', *Peritia* 17–18 (2003–04) 154–82.

56. The discoverer was Fr Stephen White SJ [d. in or after 1646]. He later communicated his discovery to James Ussher (1581–1656), archbishop of Armagh, who was able to use the results in addenda at the back of his *Ecclesiarum Britannicarum antiquitates* (Dublin 1639) (P. Grosjean, 'Notes sur quelques sources des Antiquitates de Jacques Ussher', *Analecta Bollandiana* 75 (1957) 154–87: 163–64). Since the 1850s Ussher's transcript has been in the library at Merthyr Mawr House, Bridgend, MS F. 119 (R. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' Lives* (Oxford 1991) 45n).

57. CLA 8.1083–5, 1088–92, 1116–1118 (11 items). In October 2006 there was much comment in the republic of the learned about the proposal from the government of Baden-Württemberg to sell the manuscript collections at Karlsruhe.

58. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' Lives*, 297–339. My dating of the lost exemplar has been conservatively modified without argument by John Carey in *Speculum* 68 (1993) 260–62. There are no vernacular manuscripts of this date to provide a secure control. A principle in place-name research is that one seeks dated evidence of forms written as an expression of the writer's under-

how it had survived from the eighth or ninth century until the fourteenth is unknown. Since this group of texts was used by three compilers whose works are known to us, and who worked in very different environments, the manuscript cannot have had the security of stable institutional ownership. It has not survived, but its descendants—which have themselves survived only by precarious routes in private ownership—bear witness to a whole group of Latin saints' Lives composed and read in pre-viking-age Ireland.

Two other Latin saints' Lives survive from seventh-century Ireland. The *Vita I S. Brigittae* is known from about forty medieval copies, mostly from France and Germany. The oldest copies date from the late ninth and tenth centuries and were made in Germany: it is quite unknown when or how the text reached Germany, but it was surprisingly popular for a text containing a lot of Irish names.⁵⁹ Even more popular over a much wider area was the Life of St Brigit by Cogitosus, signed in the subscription at the end of the text, 'Orate pro me Cogitoso culpabili Aedo nepote'. More than sixty medieval copies of this text from France, Germany, Italy, and England are known today, and another twenty manuscripts contain lessons derived from it. Of all Lives of Irish saints, this one achieved the widest circulation. The two oldest copies were both made in north-east France—Saint-Amand and Reims—in the early ninth century, probably from the same exemplar.⁶⁰ One can almost plot the dispersal of copies outwards from this area over the ninth to eleventh centuries.

For texts of the same genre, then, we have here four very different textual histories—survival in an early copy or only in later copies, survival in Ireland or only outside Ireland—but the texts still bear witness to the flourishing Latin hagiography of Ireland in the seventh and eighth centuries. From these four examples, you will discern two points about the title of these lectures. First, in referring to 'books', I am not concerned to discriminate between the physical book and the texts that form its content. A manuscript can bear a witness richer standing and not copied from a written exemplar. In this case the copyist's ignorance of Irish led to literal retention of the forms in the exemplar.

59. *Vita I S. Brigittae* is best available in print in John Colgan's *Triadis thaumaturgae acta* (Louvain 1647, repr. Dublin 1997) 527–42, from a seventeenth-century transcript of a lost manuscript, perhaps saec. x, from St Magnus, Regensburg; the oldest surviving copy is London, BL MS Add. 34124 (saec. ix), also from southern Germany. Discussion by R. Sharpe, 'Vitae S. Brigittae: the oldest texts', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 81–106.

60. There are two usable seventeenth-century editions, Colgan, *Triadis thaumaturgae acta*, 518–26, and the Bollandists' AASS, Feb. 1 (Antwerp 1658) 135–41. The most important complete witness is Reims, MS 296 (saec. ix, Saint-Thierry, Reims); Paris, BN, MS lat. 2999 (saec. ix¹, Saint-Amand), which now breaks off early in the text, agrees very closely as far as it goes.

in specific details about book-culture than the mere survival of texts, but these texts circulated only in a physical form, written on parchment or other material. Second, there is some emphasis on the word 'from'. The gospel books, psalters, and missal that survive in Ireland speak loudly about the development of the Insular hand, and that palaeographical story can be pursued abroad on the trace of books that left the country. Texts too speak of Latin learning in Ireland, and those composed in Ireland have almost all left the country. We must follow them. Both species of evidence, manuscripts and texts, bear strong witness to what Bede tells us about the schools and teachers of seventh-century Ireland.

From the beginning of our historical sources, there were men on the move, into Ireland and out of Ireland. Palladius was sent to Ireland by pope Celestine in 431; Patrick came into Ireland in the fifth century from Britain; VVinniau, Finnio, came into Ireland from Britain in the sixth century; and Samson came into Ireland from Wales before leaving to cross Cornwall on his way to Brittany. There were Irish settlements in the western peninsulas of Britain, where literate contacts between Irish and British peoples certainly took place; their inscribed stones are proof, though there is nothing in these contexts that allows us to speak of books. VVinniau wrote to Gildas, Gildas replied, and we presume that this sixth-century exchange of letters went from Ireland to Britain and back to Ireland. We can try to follow it. The response was known in Ireland, since it is mentioned by Columbanus.⁶¹ It was also used in a florilegium of patristic sources, made probably in Ireland rather than in Wales, in the second half of the seventh century, which has preserved substantial extracts from Gildas's letter. This florilegium was used in Ireland by the compilers of the Irish canon-collection *Hibernensis*.⁶² It now survives only in a ninth-century manuscript made at Tours, later owned at Worcester cathedral priory, and now at Cambridge.⁶³ It contains other material of Irish origin, such as the early Irish synodal text associ-

61. Columbanus, *Ep.* 1, §7, ed. [L. Bieler in] G. S. M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera* (Dublin 1955) 8.

62. The evidence is presented and discussed by R. Sharpe, 'Gildas as a father of the Church', *Gildas: new approaches* (Woodbridge 1984) 193–205.

63. The manuscript is now Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 279, from where the Gildas excerpts were first published in part by David Wilkins in 1737 and in full by A. W. Haddan in 1869; most conveniently edited by Hugh Williams, *Gildas* (London 1899–1901) 256–71. There are glosses in this manuscript in Breton and in Irish (TP ii 38); discussed by H. Simpson, 'Ireland, Tours, and Brittany: the case of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 279', in *Irelande et Bretagne: vingt siècles d'histoire*, ed. C. Laurent & H. Davis (Rennes 1994) 108–23.

ated with St Patrick, *Synodus episcoporum*, and a collection of excerpts from Mosaic law, *Liber ex lege Moysis*—on which several Irish glosses were miscopied from the exemplar by the Turonian scribe. That exemplar was surely from Ireland, and so most likely were the sources from which the other texts were copied at Tours. The texts are sufficiently interrelated—especially the selection of extracts from the *Hibernensis*, a selection which oddly complements the florilegium in the same manuscript. This exemplar was most likely carried through Brittany, a route taken by several texts of a similar character. I am tempted to make a little joke about the reversal of space and time: scholarship has had to track the text of Gildas's letter from Cambridge back to Worcester to Tours to an exemplar from Brittany and perhaps previously from Ireland, or copied from an Irish book, which was at one or more removes derived from a copy of the letter sent from Britain to VVinniau. The text's journey was precisely the reverse.

Columbanus is the first individual of whom we can say with some confidence that he took books out of Ireland. His letters were composed in Burgundy at the beginning of the seventh century; some of the texts from which he cites may have been carried with him from Ireland, though this would be difficult to establish. Apart from the bible, he quotes several works of Jerome and Cassian, which he may have known in Ireland; the sixth-century sermons now collected as those of Caesarius of Arles may more likely have come to his hands in Francia, and the works of pope Gregory the Great, his contemporary, were not even all available before he left Ireland. Textual affinities are hard to pursue, and analysis of the biblical texts from which he quotes has produced no clear results.

Individuals who left Ireland, certainly those scholars who left with some intention of staying on the Continent, would most likely have taken one or two books with them—the cleric is always depicted holding his book—and those who had visited Ireland for the sake of study would surely want to take resources home with them. The Irish bishop, Dagán, who visited Canterbury c.604 (possibly on his way to or from the Continent), and the Irish delegation that travelled to Rome in 630, returning in 632, were perhaps more likely to have brought books back with them to Ireland, since they went on short-term legations.⁶⁴

64. Dagán is mentioned in the letter addressed by bishop Lawrence of Canterbury, bishop Melitius of London, and bishop Justus of Rochester to the bishops and abbots of Ireland, which is quoted in part by Bede, HE II 4 (Plummer, 87–88); discussion by Roy Flechner, 'Dagán, Columbanus, and the Gregorian mission', *Peritia* 19 (2005) 65–90. The mission to Rome is reported by Cumman towards the end of his near contemporary letter to Ségéne, written in 632–33, ed. M. J. Walsh & D. Ó Cróinín, *Cumman's Letter De controversia paschali and the De ratione computandi* (Toronto 1988) 92; for the years in question, see their introduction, 4–7.

Those Irishmen who went to set up churches abroad would surely have taken books. Books for divine service would have been necessary, and the familiar liturgy preferred; with rules and penitentials too, the familiar was no doubt chosen even by those who pursued the religious life in lands already converted to christianity. After Columbanus, we know about Aídán, who in 634 left Iona to help the Irish-educated king Oswald to establish the church in Northumbria, where the supply of Irish copyists, presumably monks and students themselves, seems to have lasted well past the missionary phase.

Fursu, *uerbo et actibus clarus sed et egregiis insignis uirtutibus* ‘renowned by word and deeds but famous also for his uncommon miracles’, came from Ireland with his companions Foíllán, Gobbán, Dícuill, and Ultán, and preached the gospel among the East Angles in the 630s and 640s.⁶⁵ He had devoted himself since childhood to sacred books and monastic discipline, and as a holy man drew crowds in Ireland. In East Anglia he set up a monastery at *Cnobberesburg* on a site given to him by king Sigeberht—who had learnt the faith in Francia and already supported the Burgundian bishop Felix in his kingdom⁶⁶—where he taught the monastic life. Still later Fursu moved on to Francia, and with the patronage of the child-king Clovis II of Neustria and his *maior palatii*, Ercunwald, he set up a monastery at Lagny, where he died in 649.

The roll-call of those who took books from Ireland to the Continent is long and may be recited in brief. The mid-seventh-century successors of the hermit Gallus at St Gallen established a centre with lasting Irish connexions in Switzerland. Cellán at Peronne in the late seventh century corresponded with the English teacher Aldhelm.⁶⁷ Foreigners who had studied in Ireland and returned home may have wanted to take home with them some of the resources they had used during their time in the cells of the Irish teachers, so that when Agilbert

65. Quotation from Bede, HE III 19 (Plummer, 163). The source of Bede’s narrative was a copy of the seventh-century *Vita S. Fursei* (BHL 3209–10; ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRG iv (1902) 423–40, omitting *uisiones*), which survives in manuscripts of the ninth century and later.

66. A book associated with St Felix in East Anglia was seen by John Leland in 1534 at Eye priory: ‘Monachi constanter adfirmant librum fuisse Felicis, et uerisimile est. Nam praeterquam quod sit scriptus litteris maiusculis Longobardicis refert uenustatem mire uenerandam’ (‘The monks constantly assert that it was Felix’s book, and it is plausible, for, as well as being written in Lombard majuscule script, it has a marvellously venerable beauty’). M. R. James bears witness that it was cut up in the late nineteenth century (R. Sharpe & others, *English Benedictine libraries* (London 1996) 151).

67. Traube, ‘Perrona Scottorum’, 484–89. The source is William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* v §§ 188, 191, ed. Michael Winterbottom (Oxford 2007) 502, 508.

returned to Francia perhaps he took some Irish books with him—though such texts were not sufficiently prized by his successors to have survived in Paris. Similarly Englishmen who had attended Irish schools may account for Irish-made books in England. One particular English student in Ireland, Ecgberht, appears to have gathered others around him from the 650s onwards at *Rath Melsigi* (Clonmelsh, Co Carlow), from where Wihtberht and Willibrord set out to preach in Frisia.⁶⁸ Here, according to the attractive argument of Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, is that centre of calligraphy sought by Lowe, ‘in the direct line of the Irish tradition, or else in Ireland itself’, which trained the scribes who made Durham MS A. II. 17, and the Echternach gospels, now Paris, BN, MS lat. 9889, as well as other manuscripts associated with Willibrord’s foundation at Echternach, established in 698.⁶⁹ Continuing into the first half of the eighth century, names are harder to find: there is a trough in the evidence between the period attested by Merovingian hagiography and by Bede and the later expansion of continental book-culture towards the end of the eighth century. Joseph Scottus at the end of the century composed clever acrostic verses for Charlemagne and abbreviated Jerome’s commentary on Isaiah, which he sent to Alcuin. Columbanus at Saint-Trond around 800 now has the credit of composing the allusive Latin poetry once attributed to the founder of Bobbio. Dúngal, ‘praecipuus Scottorum’, answered Charlemagne’s queries and wrote both letters and verses at Saint-Denis and Pavia before ending his days at Bobbio; he left twenty-seven books with the community there, and some manuscripts owned or glossed by him have survived. Dícuill in Carolingian court circles wrote treatises on geography and astronomy, which have come down to us in copies of the ninth and tenth centuries. Clemens Scottus, Cruindmáel, and other ninth-century grammarians have left us their compositions. Sedulius Scottus in the 840s, 850s, with whom two major groups of manuscripts can be associated, including the remarkable group of Greco-Latin psalters, gospels, and epistles that attest to Irish interest in the study of Greek, can be tracked across Germany from traces left in manu-

68. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ‘Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the earliest Echternach manuscripts’, *Peritia* 3 (1984) 17–42. D. N. Dumville has held out against Ó Cróinín’s case: ‘interesting but tendentious’, he called it in 1985 (‘Late-seventh- or eighth-century evidence for the British transmission of Pelagius’, *Camb Mediev Celt Stud* 10 (Winter 1985) 39–52: 40 n 9), but by 1999 ‘a recent academic phantom’ (*A palaeographer’s review: the Insular system of scripts in the early middle ages* i (Osaka 1999) 87).

69. Durham Cathedral, MS A. II. 17, evidently travelled to Northumbria at an early date. Before the end of the tenth century it was already bound with a gathering, ff 103–11, saec. vii/viii (CLA 2.150), from an uncial gospel-book in the Wearmouth-Jarrow tradition.

scripts.⁷⁰ If he is correctly equated with the Irishman Suadbar in the Rhineland, this adds further evidence for his footprints.⁷¹ Irish students of Greek in Francia include Martinus Hibernensis at Laon and most famously Iohannes Scottus Eriugena. I mention last Donatus, bishop of Fiesole above Florence for forty years in the ninth century, and versifier of the Life of St Brigit. If we still had the earlier texts available to him about St Brigit, the stages by which her *uita* was reworked would be clearer than they are.⁷²

How far one can seriously imagine the systematic export of manuscripts made in Ireland to equip monasteries founded by the Irish missionary enterprise is a question we may ponder. The case of Lindisfarne appears persuasive, in spite of unresolved uncertainties.

Books from Bobbio form a challenging cluster, particularly in the early seventh century.⁷³ The question of whether an apparently Irish book was produced in Ireland and taken to Bobbio or produced in an Irish tradition on the Continent is a difficult one. Irish origin may be indicated by a combination of exclusively Irish characteristics and the route of survival in groups at Milan and Turin. Out of twenty manuscripts here whose script is characterised as Irish, Lowe allowed that nine were written in Ireland or ‘presumably in Ireland’.⁷⁴ In some cases a

70. Kenney, *Sources*, 556–60; D. N. Dumville, *Three men in a boat: scribe, language, and culture in the church of viking-age Europe* (Cambridge 1997) 39–51.

71. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ‘The Irish as mediators of antique culture on the Continent’, in *Science in Western and Eastern civilizations in Carolingian times*, ed. P. L. Butzer & D. Lohrmann (Basel 1993) 41–52.

72. D. N. Kissane, ‘*Vita metrica sanctae Brigidae*: a critical edition with introduction, commentary, and indices’, *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 77 (1977) 57–192; Sharpe, ‘*Vitae S. Brigidae*’, 96–98.

73. Mirella Ferrari’s 2007 Lyell Lectures, ‘The scriptorium and library of Bobbio’, are not yet published. A historian’s overview is provided by Michael Richter, *Bobbio in the early middle ages: the abiding legacy of Columbanus* (Dublin 2008).

74. These nine manuscripts have a date-range from vii² to viii/ix. They are: (1) Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS C. 5 inf. (680×691), the Antiphony of Bangor, CLA 3.311; (2) MS C. 301 inf. (saec. viii/ix), Psalms with Irish glosses, CLA 3.326 (though he suggests that the few leaves surviving from a possible copy of this book, now Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS F. IV. 1, fasc. 5–6 (saec. viii/ix), were made ‘probably at Bobbio’, evidently supposing that the manuscript was exported when new rather than later in the ninth century; (3) the flyleaves of MS D. 23 sup., saec. viii, CLA 3.329, fragments of Isidore’s *Liber differentiarum*, used in the binding of a seventh-century Orosius in Irish majuscule, CLA 3.328, which he thought was probably written at Bobbio; (4) the main part of MS F. 60 sup., saec. viii, CLA 3.336, ‘*Excerpta ex patribus*’, ‘written presumably in Ireland’, in this case despite the fact that some leaves in the book, ff 47–49, 55–57, 58, CLA 3.337, were written, ‘presumably at Bobbio’, as the secondary script over an obscure pri-

combination of Irish and other features points towards an Irish-trained copyist at work in Bobbio. The reuse of Arian texts from Lombardy, for example, is a certain argument against an Irish origin for the parchment of palimpsests, however Irish the hand—such as the supply-leaves added to an early seventh-century copy of the Books of Kings made at Bobbio.⁷⁵ A booklet containing Ambrose's treatise *De spiritu sancto*, now Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS D. 268 inf., certainly owned at Bobbio, and written by a scribe who used Irish majuscule as a display script and a cursive minuscule of continental form as his text script, presents a clear case of fusion—presumably in Italy.⁷⁶ The seventh-century gospel book, now Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS I. 61 sup., is more difficult.⁷⁷ The hands are taken to be Irish, and there is no visible evidence for where they wrote. Lowe says, 'Written by Irish scribes, probably at Bobbio', because of cursive colophons, want of Irish abbreviations, and variations in the preparation of the parchment; one of the illustrated hands (f 89^r) appears less Irish than the other (f 2^r). At some point the book acquired end-leaves (ff 90–91), also written in an Irish half-uncial hand, saec. vii¹ in Lowe's view, on reused leaves from a copy of Ulfilas. These leaves are surely from Bobbio, but they do not prove that the

mary script, CLA 3.338; (5) MS M. 67 sup., saec. viii, CLA 3.355, Augustine, *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus X*, 'written apparently in Ireland'; (6) Turin, MS F. IV. 1, fasc. 7, saec. viii/ix, CLA 4.453, a single bifolium from a commentary on Mark, written by the scribe of Milan, C. 301 inf., 'presumably in Ireland, perhaps in the same centre'; (7) MS F. IV. 1, fasc. 9, saec. viiiⁱⁿ, CLA 4.454, three leaves from a liturgical book, 'written doubtless in Ireland'; (8) MS F. IV. 24, f 93, saec. viii, CLA 4.457, a single leaf from the canonical epistles, 'written presumably in Ireland'; (9) MS O. IV. 20, saec. viii, CLA 4.466, fragments from a gospel book, 'written presumably in Ireland', overwritten at Bobbio in the fifteenth century.

75. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS G. 82 sup. (saec. vii), CLA 3.344b, the supply-leaves inserted in 344a, include palimpsested leaves from a fifth-century manuscript of Seneca's plays (346) and a sixth-century Gothic manuscript of Ezra and Nehemiah (not Latin, so not in CLA). In discussing the book to which these leaves were added (344a), itself written over a fifth-century copy of Plautus (345), Lowe appears to enter the realms of impossibility, saying, 'Written [saec. vi²] before Bobbio was founded, but apparently by Irish scribes, if one may be guided by the cumulative evidence'. This would not be a problem, if the book were made in Ireland or even at one of Columbanus's earlier foundations, but as a palimpsest of a copy of Plautus, it was surely made in Italy. Lowe later recanted on his early date, but I am far from convinced of the 'Irish' character of 344a in any respect.

76. CLA 3.334, 'Origin doubtless Bobbio. The curious use of two diverse scripts reflects the mixture of North Italian and Celtic culture'. Lowe's dating, saec. viii, is significantly later than saec. vii, proposed by Franz Steffens, *Lateinische Paläographie* (Fribourg 1903) pl 27a. Irish majuscule is used for headings and for the first two lines of each section of the text.

77. CLA 3.350, 'Irish majuscule, saec. vii²', says Lowe, though Bonifatius Fischer ventures an earlier date, saec. vii¹.

main text was made at Bobbio. In a delphic remark, Lowe observes, 'The MS. is remarkable for its text'. He left it to others to explain that its text is decidedly non-Vulgate in character. Do we have one or more Irish scribes working in Bobbio alongside at least one locally trained scribe but using an Irish exemplar? Did they prepare their parchment separately?

Lowe introduced a complication in his judgement of the early half-uncial gospel book used by archbishop James Ussher and known to biblical scholarship as Usserianus I, now Dublin, Trinity College, MS 55 (saec. viiⁱⁿ), CLA 2.271. He describes the script as 'Irish half-uncial' but comments (in the first edition), 'Written in an Irish centre, *presumably* at Bobbio, *to judge by* cursive influences in the script, the manner of denoting an omission, the kind of parchment used, and the similarity to two other Bobbio MSS'. If he were correct, then books travelled in two directions between Ireland and Bobbio; while Ireland no doubt did continue to import new texts, the gospels were not in short supply at home; and Lowe, often too inclined to follow provenance, here offers no suggestion when this book might have travelled to Ireland. I am more inclined to side with Bernhard Bischoff in thinking that the cursive features he interpreted as continental could be found in Ireland at the beginning of the seventh century.⁷⁸ In his second edition, Lowe modified a few words to say, '*hardly* at Bobbio, *despite Roman* cursive influences ...'. His Bobbio association, thus renounced, had in this case dragged other manuscripts along with it. The first is the early-seventh-century Orosius in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS D. 23 sup. (saec. viiⁱⁿ), CLA 3.328, 'an expert Irish majuscule (verging on minuscule) of the peculiar type seen in Codex Usserianus I . . . and the Ambrosian Basilius'. The second is a copy of the Rule of St Basil, now Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS C. 26 sup. (saec. viiⁱⁿ), CLA 3.312, 'not very expert type of Irish majuscule verging on minuscule, written by a scribe not native to the Irish manner', and therefore, Lowe supposed, 'written probably at Bobbio'. The possibility that books passed from Bobbio to St Gallen is perhaps less improbable, though instances based on script are far from certain: three tiny binding-fragments from the same leaf of a copy of Isidore's *Eymologiae*, saec. vii^m now St Gallen, MS 1399 a. 1 (CLA 7.995) (removed from the bindings of MSS 150 and 267), Lowe says, 'written in an Irish centre, presumably on the Continent, possibly at Bobbio to judge by the script and type of membrane'. For Malcolm Parkes these books, 'the earliest surviving

78. Hillgarth, 'Visigothic Spain and Early Christian Ireland', 182–83, quotes Bischoff's personal communication against Lowe.

manuscripts', all exhibit graphic features devised in Ireland by Irish scribes to assist in the reading of Latin.⁷⁹

The library at Bobbio included books travelling from Ireland with Columbanus and with others from c.590 onwards, and books continued to arrive for quite some period. Contacts were maintained and the Irish personnel renewed. Even in the early ninth century books were still coming from Ireland to Bobbio with Dúngal.⁸⁰ And one may not presume that a book was new when it was exported. When, for example, did the Bangor Antiphonary, written at Bangor—it is generally accepted—between 681 and 690, leave Ireland and arrive at Bobbio?

We have mentioned the early fragments of Isidore—perhaps from Bobbio, perhaps from Ireland—that have been recovered from bindings at St Gallen. On the whole, however, the books surviving from St Gallen date from the second half of the eighth century or from the ninth. Like Northumbrian books, they often pose unanswerably the question whether they were written in Ireland and carried abroad or written by Irishmen in Switzerland. In most cases there is nothing to suggest when they made the journey, certainly no evidence earlier than the 830s and 840s. Yet some books can be followed on their journey, as David Dumville so engagingly showed in his inaugural lecture in 1997: what is now known as the St Gallen Priscian, with its many Irish glosses, appears to have been in Cologne in 859.⁸¹

The existence of so many manuscripts made in Ireland but preserved abroad may in itself be a positive indicator for the nature of early Irish book-culture, but they are less than half the story.

Our attention has thus far been concerned chiefly with manuscripts, the hazards of determining whether books or their copyists had travelled from Ireland, and a positivist argument founded on what manuscripts have survived from the centuries before AD 800. The preservation of early medieval manuscripts in Ireland was exceptionally precarious, but books have survived in some numbers outside Ireland. I have suggested that the Irish books preserved at Durham among a

79. M. B. Parkes, 'The contribution of Insular scribes of the seventh and eighth centuries to the grammar of legibility', in *Grafia e interpunzione del latino nel medioevo*, ed. A. Maierù (Rome 1987) 15–30: 21; repr. (with revisions) in idem, *Scribes, scripts, and readers: studies in the communication, presentation and dissemination of medieval texts* (London 1991) 1–18.

80. Dumville, *Palaeographer's review*, i 27 and n 45.

81. Dumville, *Three men in a boat*, 25.

cluster of survivals from Lindisfarne might reflect deliberate provision for a dependent church. If the same were true at Bobbio, books from Ireland continued to arrive over an extended period, right through the seventh and eighth centuries, even when Bobbio was producing a large proportion of its own needs. The other significant clusters, such as those from Reichenau or St Gallen, comprise almost entirely books of the later eighth and ninth centuries, and they appear to reflect only the accidents of what individuals carried with them or collected around their own interests. Now, I want to focus more on Latin texts that were composed in Ireland yet whose survival has depended on routes external to Ireland.

This is true in the case of the oldest writer in Ireland, Patrick, whose *Confessio* would be known to us only in an incomplete form if we had just the Irish-made copy in the Book of Armagh. The secondary witness provided by *uitae* composed in Ireland is limited to two short passages of the work. There are, however, three copies from northern France, dating from the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, besides three closely-related copies from England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which are likely to derive from an exemplar from north-eastern France. The oldest of these, from Compiègne, dates from the tenth century.⁸² By this route we have two authentic works, but neither *Confessio* nor *Epistola ad Coroticum* has left any other trace to show who, outside seventh-century Ireland, may have read them in the early middle ages. There is no intrinsic reason why copies of these works should not have been known elsewhere even at an early date, but evidence has not been found. There are serious questions, still unanswerable, as to when and by what route these works reached north-eastern France.

Some very early penitential texts, dating from the sixth century, survive in ninth-century manuscripts from Brittany or with Breton connexions. The penitentials travelled with synodal texts, and those with an Irish origin are found grouped with texts whose origins were in western Britain. David Dumville has cautioned against assuming that their route to Brittany was a direct one, whether from Ireland or Britain,⁸³ but if they had crossed England and the Channel into

82. The manuscript sources and textual history of Patrick's writings are discussed by L. Bieler, *Libri epistolarum S. Patricii* (Dublin 1952). A convenient view of the abridged text in the Book of Armagh is provided by David Dumville, who complements the text of the Book of Armagh by restoring in italics the omitted passages (*Saint Patrick AD 493–1993* (Woodbridge 1993) 192–202). Bieler offers a reconstruction of the hyparchetype Ψ, source of the secondary tradition in the *uitae* for §§1–2 and 16–23 (*Libri epistolarum S. Patricii*, 23–27, 106–112).

83. D. N. Dumville, 'Ireland, Brittany, and England: transmission and use of *Collectio canonum*

northern France, they left no trace. Indeed, the direction of travel appears to be from Brittany into France: to take one example, a manuscript, Paris, BN lat. 12021, that contains the canons of Adomnán, extracts from the penitential of VVinniau, minor Irish canons, and the whole of the Irish canon-collection *Hibernensis*, as well as the Breton *Excerpta librorum Romanorum et Francorum*, was copied in France from an exemplar made by a Breton scribe for a Breton abbot (as the colophon declares), and was glossed in Old Breton.⁸⁴ It found a home at the abbey of Corbie in the Somme valley. The manuscript also contained the *Iudicia Theodori*, the work of students of archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, which were used by the compilers of the *Hibernensis* in Ireland.⁸⁵ It is to my mind very likely that these texts arrived on the Continent through Breton ports, where Irish rules were observed in some Breton monasteries until (we are told) the early ninth century.

Also early are some of the texts concerned with the calculation of the date of Easter, a subject of intense interest to Irish scholars at the end of the sixth century, when Columbanus (writing in AD 600) was versed in their (as he thought) well-founded judgements.⁸⁶ A note about Mo Sinu moccu Min (who died in 610) and his teaching on the *computus* was copied into a late-eighth-century copy of St Matthew's gospel, 'Insular' in its script, Irish in its text-type, 'with extensive commentary' (in Latin), itself a reflection of Irish biblical study in the eighth century.⁸⁷ In this case the book was almost certainly in Ireland until the beginning of the ninth century, when it was carried abroad. Another text concerned with the date of Easter, one of great interest, is Cummian's Letter to abbot Ségéne (Clavis §2310), datable on computistical grounds to the year 632/3.⁸⁸ This quotes from a wide range of computistical sources as well as from *Hibernensis*, in *Irlande et Bretagne*, ed. Laurent & Davis, 84–95.

84. Roy Flechner, A study and edition of the *Collectio canonum Hibernensis*, DPhil diss. (Oxford 2006) *70–*71, *155 (due to be published by the School of Celtic Studies in 2010). The colophon is given most fully in Paris, BN, MS lat. 12021, f 139^r, and abbreviated in two other copies from the same exemplar, Orléans, MS 221 (193) (saec. viii/ix), p 22, and its apograph, Paris, BN, MS lat. 3182, p 18.

85. Roy Flechner, 'The making of the Canons of Theodore', *Peritia* 17–18 (2003–4) 121–43.

86. Columbanus, *Ep.* 1 §§3–4 (ed. Walker, 2–7). The work of Anatolius, cited by Columbanus, has been restored from the status of 'Irish forgery' (Clavis §2303) to the third-century bishop Anatolius of Laodicea by D. P. Mc Carthy & A. Breen, *The Ante-Nicene christian pasch: De ratione paschali, the paschal tract of Anatolius of Laodicea* (Dublin 2003).

87. The manuscript is now Würzburg, MS M. p. th. f. 61 (CLA 9.1415). The note on Mo Sinu has been discussed by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Mo-Sinnu moccu Min and the computus of Bangor', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 281–97.

88. Printed from London, BL MS Cotton Vitellius A. XII, ff 79^r–83^r (s. xii^m), by James Ussher,

less technical patristic literature, shedding considerable light on the library accessible to Cummean. It survives in a booklet, along with a computistical letter by Bede, in an early-twelfth-century English copy, whose provenance is unknown. Bede himself had access to many of the same computistical authorities, very likely from Irish sources, though he shows no knowledge of Cummean's own letter.⁸⁹ How this text reached England and from what kind of exemplar it was copied in the twelfth century remain unknown. All other earlier Irish computistical texts survive outside Ireland.

With grammatical texts, we are on more contentious territory. Anonymous works of 'Insular Latin grammar' have been much contended over, but one that has been particularly controversial was certainly known in Ireland in the seventh century.⁹⁰ The writer's nom-de-plume is Virgilius Maro Grammaticus, and his *Epitomae* have reached us in ninth-century copies from Corbie (again) and from Columbanus's foundation of Luxeuil in Burgundy; there is also a fragment from a ninth-century copy from Salzburg, where there were Irish religious in the previous century.⁹¹ In each case it is possible that we have local copies of three separate exempla, all of them from Ireland, but students of the texts have not sought to elucidate the routes of its dissemination.

Quarrels over the Irish origin of various grammatical texts were fought in the 1970s and 1980s, those over exegetical texts have gone on intermittently for decades.

Bede, in several contexts, provides clear enough evidence for the biblical interests of Irish schools, and there is strong manuscript evidence to support the fact that from our earliest evidence, through the seventh and eighth centuries the bible was carefully studied in Ireland. Thomas Charles-Edwards has plausibly suggested that this derived from the Augustinian custom of reading christian poets in grammatical education and then going on to study the bible instead of training in classical forensic rhetoric.⁹² The influence of Old Testament law on

Veterum epistolarum Hibernicarum sylloge (Dublin 1632) 24–35; re-edited with commentary by Walsh & Ó Cróinín, *Cummean's Letter De controversia paschali*, 56–97.

89. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'The Irish provenance of Bede's computus', *Peritia* 2 (1983) 229–47.

90. V. A. Law, *The Insular Latin grammarians* (Woodbridge 1982); reviews by D. Ó Cróinín in *Studia Hibernica* 22–23 (1982–83) 149–56; R. Sharpe in *Rev Engl Stud* new ser. 36 (1985) 390–93.

91. G. Polara & L. Caruso (ed), *Virgilio Marone Grammatico. Epitomi ed epistole* (Naples 1979); B. Löfstedt (ed), *Virgilius Maro Grammaticus. Opera omnia* (Munich 2003); Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'The date, provenance, and earliest use of the works of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus', in *Tradition und Wertung: Festschrift für Franz Brunhölzl zum 65. Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen 1989) 13–22.

92. T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The *Corpus iuris hibernici*', *Studia Hibernica* 20 (1980) 141–62.

Irish custom is well-known and bespeaks a contemporary appropriation of biblical thinking more conspicuous than anything found on the Continent before the reception of such ideas from Ireland. Even the language of scholarship was influenced by the bible: *scriba* was adopted from biblical usage as the appropriate Latin word for a man of learning.⁹³

Some of these exegetical texts have been recognised for many years. The mystical interpretation of the genealogy of Jesus by Ailerán Sapiens, who died in 665, was known to Patrick Fleming in the 1620s from a ninth-century copy at St Gallen; Ailerán's other work, on the canon of the gospels was recognised only in 1912.⁹⁴ Laidcenn mac Baíth Bannaig, who died in 661, was recognised as the compiler of an abbreviation of Gregory the Great's *Moralia* just a century ago.⁹⁵

Between 1907 and 1935 important work was accomplished by the Irish-Italian Mario Esposito, which widened awareness of how much Latin learning might have come from Ireland, anonymous and pseudonymous as well as the work of authors whose names are known, and, almost more importantly, how widely it was known.⁹⁶ Where Kuno Meyer criticised him for undermining the Irish myth, he should rather have praised him for showing the substance of Ireland's contribution without any resort to far-fetched explanations.⁹⁷

93. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 264–71.

94. P. Fleming [†1631], *Collectanea sacra* (Louvain 1667) 182–92, printed the text from St Gallen, MS 433 (saec. ix), pp 694–706; there is a new edition by A. Breen, *Ailerani Interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi* (Dublin 1995) 17–35, based on the same witness collated with Karlsruhe, MS Aug. CCXLIX (s. ix/x, Reichenau), ff 80^v–95^r. The widely-known rhythmic *Kanon euangeliorum* was attributed to Ailerán by D. De Bruyne, 'Une poésie inconnue d'Aileran le sage', *Revue Bénédictine* 29 (1912) 339–40; see now D. R. Howlett, 'Further manuscripts of Ailerán's *Kanon euangeliorum*', *Peritia* 15 (2001) 22–26.

95. Mario Esposito, 'The Latin writers of mediaeval Ireland', *Hermathena* 14 (1907) 519–29; 521; and in more detail Louis Gougaud, 'Le témoignage des manuscrits sur l'oeuvre littéraire du moine Lathcen', *Revue Celtique* 30 (1909) 37–46.

96. 'Notes on Latin learning and literature in mediaeval Ireland' is the title of a series of five important articles published in *Hermathena* between 1929 and 1937, but this represents only a small part of his contribution; three volumes of papers by Esposito have been reprinted: *Latin learning in mediaeval Ireland* (London 1988); *Irish books and learning in mediaeval Europe* (London, 1990); and *Studies in Hiberno-Latin literature* (London 2006). For an investigation of his biography, see M. M. Gorman, 'Mario Esposito (1887–1975) and the study of the Latin literature of medieval Ireland', *Filologia mediolatina* 5 (1998) 299–323.

97. S. Ó Lúing, *Kuno Meyer, 1858–1919: a biography* (Dublin 1991) 125–26, 128, quotes a letter from Meyer to R. I. Best, dated 9 January 1913, attacking Esposito's position, and a letter from Meyer to Esposito, dated 10 January 1913, denying the force of his response to the lecture, Mario Esposito, 'The knowledge of Greek in Ireland', *Studies* 1 (1912), 665–83. In another letter

In 1954, Bernhard Bischoff published an argument to recover awareness of an Irish school of exegesis in the early middle ages, one which he argued had been overshadowed by the commentaries of Bede and Alcuin, and therefore largely forgotten.⁹⁸ He added a catalogue of ‘Hiberno-Latin and of Irish-influenced Latin exegetical literature’. Some of the texts were already well known to students of Ireland, and some are unequivocally Irish in origin, so that even if Bischoff had never written his article we should have evidence of Irish exegesis. His list, however, was longer than anyone had anticipated, and it inspired others to think along similar lines. More than half of his catalogue was made up of obscure works from ninth- and tenth-century continental manuscripts not hitherto associated with Ireland. His argument that a chain of Irish ‘symptoms’ links these texts was widely, though not universally, accepted. There is much of interest in his catalogue of thirty-nine texts. He had not himself studied them all, and he knew that he was putting forward some speculative connexions. In the 1960s and 1970s there were rounds of criticism, and in 1997 Michael Gorman put up a strong case against the Irish character of a set of notes on Genesis in a ninth-century manuscript from Freising.⁹⁹ The example is not exactly a prime specimen of what has been accepted as Irish or Irish-influenced exegesis, but it is in the nature of Bischoff’s catalogue to deploy certain criteria to extend the list rather than to test the actual origin of each work included. Gorman criticised Bischoff’s reasoning and has gone on to assault the entire edifice, questioning the inclusion of texts that were already recognised as Irish long before Bischoff.¹⁰⁰ Both the particular and the general have brought forward responses, defending Ireland’s claim to so many unstudied texts and the coherence of Bischoff’s catalogue.¹⁰¹ I cannot see that there is any reason to treat the catalogue as a slate to Best, dated 8 February 1913 (Ó Lúing, 130–31), Meyer objected also to a paper by F. J. Haverfield, ‘Ancient Rome and Ireland’, *Engl Hist Rev* 28 (1913) 1–12, a reaction to a paper of Zimmer’s from 1909.

98. B. Bischoff, ‘Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter’, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 189–281, and in his *Mittelalterliche Studien* (Stuttgart 1966–81), i 205–73.

99. Coccia, ‘La cultura irlandese precarolingia’, 328–49 (‘una schiera di esegeti fantasmi’); C. E. Stancliffe, ‘Early “Irish” biblical exegesis’, *Studia Patristica* 12, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 115 (1975) 361–70; M. M. Gorman, ‘A critique of Bischoff’s theory of Irish exegesis: the commentary on Genesis in Munich clm 6302 (Wendepunkte 2)’, *J Mediev Lat* 7 (1997) 178–233.

100. M. M. Gorman, ‘The myth of Hiberno-Latin exegesis’, *Revue Bénédictine* 110 (2000) 42–85.

101. C. D. Wright, ‘Bischoff’s theory of Irish exegesis and the Genesis commentary in Munich clm 6302: a critique of a critique’, *J Mediev Lat* 10 (2000) 115–75; Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ‘Bischoff’s Wendepunkte fifty years on’, *Revue Bénédictine* 110 (2000) 204–37; Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ‘A new

of candidates, who are either all adopted as Irish or all rejected as pseudo-Irish. There is so much evidence for the study of the bible by Irish scholars of the seventh and eighth centuries that the rejection of some, even many, of these texts does not detract from the fact; one should accept only those that meet the test on their own. It would take a considerable effort, and a great leap of imagination, to identify and draw together what is interesting in the work of Irish students of the bible, and it will not be accomplished without a sympathetic awareness of other traditions of biblical study in the early middle ages.¹⁰²

The gravitational pull of a theory such as Bischoff's may only make matters worse. The pseudo-Hieronymian *Breuiarium in Psalmos* (Clavis §629), which draws on Jerome, might be a work of the late fifth century, unlocalisable, and produced at a time when many texts were put into circulation under the names of the leading Fathers of the church. Jerome's eighteenth-century editor, Domenico Vallarsi (1702–1771), had suggested that it might be identified as Columbanus's long-lost notes on the Psalms, mentioned by Jonas.¹⁰³ In denying this attribution, the most recent editor of Columbanus, G. S. M. Walker, assigned it to Faustus of Riez, a British monk in south-east France, whose name had come up in the debate over the authenticity of Columbanus's sermons.¹⁰⁴ After Bischoff's work appeared, H. J. Frede conjectured that the *Breuiarium* was the work of an anonymous seventh- or eighth-century Irishman.¹⁰⁵ In neither case is the

seventh-century Irish Commentary on Genesis', *Sacris Erudiri* 40 (2001) 231–65.

102. P. P. Ó Néill, *Biblical study and mediaeval Gaelic history*, Quiggin Pamphlets 6 (Cambridge 2003).

103. D. Vallarsi, *S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis opera* (Verona 1734–42), reprinted from the second edition (Venice 1766–72) in PL 22–26 (1845–6); the work is found at vol. vii, Appendix, col. v–xxxii (introduction), 1–426 (text) (repr. in PL 26. 821–1270).

104. G. S. M. Walker observed that the mention of Eucherius of Lyon (PL 26.862B) excludes Jerome's authorship; Eucherius is the latest source identified in the work, and on that basis Walker made a case of attributing it to another late-fifth-century writer, Faustus, bishop of Riez (fl. 455–480) (Walker, *Sancti Columbani opera*, lxiv, citing a paper presented to the first Patristic Congress in 1951), who figured in discussions over the authenticity or otherwise of the *Instructiones* transmitted under the name of Columbanus.

105. The suggestion that the writer was an Irishman in the seventh century was made by H. J. Frede, that this *Breuiarium* 'dürfte aufgrund bibeltextlicher wie stilistischer Indizien ein irisches Produkt des 7.–8. Jahrhunderts sein' (*Pelagius, der irische Paulustexte, Sedulius Scottus* (Freiburg im Breisgau 1961) 76 n 4). From here the idea entered the 1985 Celtic–Latin bibliography (L/S 343). Frede suggests, without supporting quotation, that the textual form of the Pauline epistles known to the writer was close to that of the Book of Armagh (D) and Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 10. 5, in other words, an Irish text-type. How much the compiler of this *catena* on the Psalms had direct recourse to the epistles is not apparent.

conjecture a reasoned choice from a review of what is possible—rather Walker and Frede made a connexion with another text which recent accident had brought within their range of sight. The Irish attribution has been taken up.¹⁰⁶ It derives *prima facie* support from the manuscript evidence of its reception.¹⁰⁷

The most extraordinary of exegetical texts from Ireland is the highly inventive *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae* (Clavis §1123), addressed by the writer Augustine to his friends the Carthaginians, recalling the command of his father Eusebius.¹⁰⁸ This extraordinary work seeks to offer a rational explanation for the miracles of the bible: the Red Sea did not part for the children of Israel, but it was frozen by a sudden icy blast—credible perhaps in winter in Vermont, but not in Suez. Since the prologue names the writer as Augustine, this work came to travel with the writings of the bishop of Hippo. There are more than one hundred medieval copies, and it has been printed many times. Its Irish origin was discovered by William Reeves in 1861; Bartholomew Mac Carthy worked out the dating to AD 655, in part from its paschal cycles, in part from the reference to the death of Manichaeus (†652), which provides a further tie-in with Ireland and even with the Irish annals. Esposito attempted a list of manuscripts, more than a hundred, and Père Grosjean speculated that the Carthaginians might be the community of St Carthach, founder of Lismore, who died in 637.¹⁰⁹ The dating clause of *De mirabilibus* was quoted by the Irish author of the ‘Munich Computus’ (datable to 718, and surviving in an early ninth-century copy from Regensburg).¹¹⁰ When was the text exported? Bischoff identified an abbreviation

106. J. F. Kelly, ‘A catalogue of early medieval Hiberno-Latin biblical commentaries’, *Traditio* 44 (1988) 537–71, and 45 (1990) 393–434 (no 44); M. McNamara, ‘Psalter text and psalter study in the early Irish church (A.D. 600–1200)’, *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 73 (1973) 201–98: 225.

107. B. Lambert, *Bibliotheca Hieronymiana manuscripta* (Steenbrugge 1969–72), 3B, 314–20 (no 427), lists manuscripts. The oldest listed there are from Bobbio, Tegernsee, Reichenau, and St Gallen, though of these only Karlsruhe, MS Aug. XXV (saec. ixth, Reichenau), and St Gallen, MS 117 (saec. ix), have the complete work.

108. Edited by the Maurists, *S. Augustini opera* (Paris 1679–1700), iii/2, app. 1–32, and repr. in PL 35.2149–2200; also edited by Dom Gerard McGinty, ‘The treatise *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*: critical edition, with introduction, English translation of the long recension, and some notes’, PhD diss. (NUI Dublin 1971), a thesis supervised by Ludwig Bieler.

109. W. Reeves, ‘On Augustin, an Irish writer of the seventh century’, *Proc Roy Ir Acad* 7 (1861) 514–22; B. Mac Carthy, *The Codex Palatino-Vaticanus 830* (Dublin 1892) 365–68, with the Latin text at 393–94; M. Esposito, ‘On the pseudo-Augustinian treatise *De mirabilibus sanctae scripturae*, written in Ireland in the year 655’, *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 35 (1919) 189–207; P. Grosjean, ‘Quelques exégètes irlandais du VII^e siècle’, *Sacris erudiri* 7 (1955) 67–98.

110. Munich, clm 14456 (saec. ixth, St Emmeram, Regensburg); B. Mac Carthy, *The Annals of Ulster* iv (Dublin 1901) pp lxx–lxxi; Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ‘An Old Irish gloss in the Munich com-

in a Reichenau manuscript of the ninth century.¹¹¹ No one has attempted to trace its influence, and its transmission passes through a dark tunnel. Apart from the Reichenau abbreviation, the earliest surviving copies date from the twelfth century, and they proliferate only when later-medieval efforts to find ‘all’ the works of St Augustine begin to disregard the guidance provided by his own lists of works.

A prototype of many later medieval morality texts, *De XII abusiuis* (Clavis §1106), has been persuasively traced back to Ireland—it is first attested in the *Hibernensis*, where two quotations are attributed to ‘Patricius’.¹¹² The work survives in as many as 300 copies from all over Europe, the most successful book composed in early medieval Ireland, though by the ninth century it was travelling under the names of both Cyprian and Augustine.¹¹³ It was later translated into several languages, including, most unexpectedly, Greek.¹¹⁴

Examples from a much later date reflect a similar pattern. A pseudo-Patrician work known to Archbishop Ussher in 1631 is a short tract on heaven, earth, and hell, known as *De tribus habitaculis animae*, composed in Ireland; more than one hundred copies survive but none in Ireland. Its author, Patrick, bishop of Dublin from 1074 to 1084, sent a copy to his friends at Worcester cathedral

putus’, *Éigse* 18 (1981) 289–90. The full text is now available in Immo Warntjes, *The Munich computus: text and translation. Irish computistics between Isidore and the Venerable Bede and its reception in Carolingian times*, Sudhoffs Archiv, Beiheft 59 (Stuttgart 2010).

111. Karlsruhe, MS Aug. CXCI (saec. ix¹), ff 132^r–149^v; Bischoff, ‘Wendepunkte’, no 38b.

112. *Hib.* 25.3–4 (F. W. H. Wasserschleben, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* (2nd ed. Leipzig 1885) 77–78), quoting *De XII abusiuis*, c. 9 (ed. S. Hellmann, *Pseudo-Cyprianus de XII abusiuis saeculi*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 34/1 (Leipzig 1909) 51–53); H. H. Anton, ‘Pseudo-Cyprian. *De duodecim abusiuis saeculi* und sein Einfluss auf den Kontinent insbesondere auf die karolingischen Fürstenspiegel’, in *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. H. Löwe (Stuttgart 1982) 568–617: 583–84); A. Breen, ‘*De XII abusiuis*: text and transmission’, in *Ireland and Europe in the early middle ages: texts and transmission*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin & M. Richter (Dublin 2002) 78–94. Breen drops from the title as an early alteration the final word ‘saeculi’, which is absent from copies ascribed to Augustine but usual in those ascribed to Cyprian.

113. Esposito offered a list of more than two hundred copies in 1933 (‘Notes on Latin learning and literature in mediaeval Ireland 3’, *Hermathena* 23 (1933) 221–49: 221–27).

114. Among various other translations from Latin, Maximus Planudes (c.1260–1330) translated Augustine’s *De trinitate* and *De XII abusiuis*; the former is edited by M. Papatomopoulos, I. Tsavare, & G. Rigotti (Athens 1995), with a wide-ranging introductory survey of Maximus’s translations; the latter is edited by W. O. Schmidt, *Studia Byzantina* 2 (Berlin 1973) 13–36, and by G. N. Giannakes, *Dodone* 3 (1974) 219–56. Known also from the survey by M. Rackl, ‘Die griechischen Augustinus-Übersetzungen’, in *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle*, Studi e testi 37 (Rome 1924) 1–38: 18.

priory, addressing them in a prefatory poem, *Perge carina per mare longum* ‘Speed, bonnie boat, over the sea ...’. He had himself lived as a Benedictine monk at Worcester, an abbey whose library contained some older works of Irish origin. From here Patrick’s work was distributed; as it was recopied, however, its ascription grew from Bishop Patrick to Archbishop Patrick to St Patrick. Before long, however, it was circulating also as a work of St Augustine, which explains the proliferation of copies.¹¹⁵ Two hundred years later, an Irish Franciscan, once a candidate for the archbishopric of Tuam, published a work on sin as the poison of the soul, an elaborate conceit that made much use of the names of exotic serpents. Its title was *Malachias de ueneno* or *Venenum Malachie*, and five copies are attested under these titles, though only two survive. The name Malachy, current in Ireland but not elsewhere, was often not recognised as the author’s. In the fourteenth century, however, it circulated far and wide, anonymously or ascribed to Robert Grosseteste, or Thomas Aquinas, or John of Wales, or even St Augustine. Out of more than one hundred known copies, only one was ever owned in Ireland.¹¹⁶

Where it can be done, it is not without interest to detect dates for when copies of certain texts left Ireland or when they first became available on the Continent.

115. Three poems, ‘ascribed to a Patricius who was commonly identified with St Patrick’, were included by Kenney, *Sources*, 733–34, as being ‘of Irish origin but uncertain date’. He made no connexion with bishop Patrick of Dublin, who was known to him from Canterbury sources (ibid. 759, 762). From London, BL MS Cotton Titus D. xxiv (saec. xii^{4/4} Rufford abbey), Esposito made the connexion with the prose work, *De tribus habitaculis*, variously attributed to St Patrick the bishop, to Caesarius the bishop or his *alter ego* Eusebius Emesenus, and to St Augustine (‘Notes on Latin learning and literature in mediaeval Ireland, 2: Pseudopatriciana’, *Hermathena* 22 (1932) 253–71: 263–71. This had been printed for the first time among the works of St Augustine at Venice in May 1483 (*GW* 2863, *Bod-Inc* A505). The Irish origin of the work had been recognised already by one R. S., variously identified, who translated *De tribus habitaculis* into English in 1585 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D. 1349, ff 308–320). This translation is printed facing the Latin text, edited by A. O. Gwynn, *The writings of bishop Patrick 1074–1084*, SLH 1 (Dublin 1954) 102–25.

116. The work was printed by Henri Estienne at Paris in 1518, but copies of the edition are very scarce. Long known to the bibliographical tradition, it was first brought to wider attention by Mario Esposito, ‘Friar Malachy of Ireland’, *Eng Hist Rev* 33 (1918) 359–66; E. B. FitzMaurice & A. G. Little, *Materials for the history of the Franciscan province of Ireland, AD 1230–1450* (Manchester 1920) 46, 54–58. Its European dissemination and the diversification of its title and attribution are discussed by R. Sharpe, *Titulus: identifying medieval Latin texts* (Turnhout 2003) 218–45. The one Irish copy, now London, Lambeth Palace, MS 523 (s. xiv/xv), ff 88^r–113^r, has an extract from Jocelin’s *Vita S. Patricii* relating to Dublin (f 117^{r-v}) and notes (s. xv/xvi) by someone associated with St Michan’s church in Dublin (f 129^r–130^v).

The extant works of Columbanus were composed at a time when he had already been long settled on the Continent.¹¹⁷ Adomnán gave a copy of his treatise *De locis sanctis* to king Aldfrith of Northumbria, certainly no later than 704 and presumably during one of his two visits in 686 and 688.¹¹⁸ The near contemporary copy of his *Vita S. Columbae* may have been already a hundred years old when it was carried to Reichenau in the late eighth or early ninth century; it has left visible progeny in Lorraine.¹¹⁹ There was also a copy in Northumbria, though here dating can only be a matter of speculation: a copy was made at Durham in the twelfth century, but it is probably easier to accept that it was received at Lindisfarne in the eighth century than that it travelled from Ireland or Scotland at any later date.¹²⁰

Another probably early export is Muirchú's *Vita S. Patricii*, of which we have a fragment from a late-eighth-century copy in Anglo-Saxon minuscule, annotated on the Continent in the tenth or eleventh century, as well as two apparently unrelated continental copies, one of the eleventh century, now in Brussels, the other of the thirteenth, now in Novara.¹²¹ By the twelfth century, and probably earlier, the circulation of this *uita* was superseded by *Vita III S. Patricii*, pre-

117. The letters are datable to the later years of Columbanus's life between 600 and 615. Their transmission is focused on manuscripts from Bobbio, in particular a lost manuscript with six letters, copied at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Dom Jodoc Metzler (1574–1639), St Gallen, MS 1346, 'ex manuscripto codice monasterii Bobbiensis litteris Hibernicis confectio', and used by Fr Patrick Fleming for the *editio princeps*, 'ex peruetusto sed mendoso satis bibliothecae Bobbiensis codice' (*Collectanea sacra*, 108). The *Instructiones* or sermons are thought to have been composed in Lombardy towards the end of that period, 612–615 (C. E. Stancliffe, 'The thirteen sermons attributed to Columbanus', in *Columbanus: studies on the Latin writings*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Woodbridge 1997) 93–202: 134–35, 175, 199). Again the manuscript transmission is centred on Bobbio, though sermon 5 had some wider circulation, including the earliest extant witness, Paris, BN, MS lat. 13440 (saec. viii², Corbie), ff 97^r–100^r, CLA 5.662, and ninth- and tenth-century copies from Reichenau and St Gallen.

118. This appears to be the implication of Bede, HE v 15 (Plummer, 317) (quoted in n 17 above).

119. J.-M. Picard, 'Schaffhausen Generalia 1 and the textual transmission of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* on the Continent', in *Ireland and Europe in the early middle ages: texts and transmission*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin & M. Richter (Dublin 2002) 95–102.

120. Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, 237.

121. L. Bieler, 'Studies on the text of Muirchú 1', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 52 (1948–50) 179–220 (on Novara, Biblioteca capitolare, MS 77), and 'Studies on the text of Muirchú 2', *Proc Roy Ir Acad* 59 C (1959) 181–95, on the early fragments, now removed from the cover of a sixteenth-century printed book and kept as Vienna, ÖNB MS new ser. 3642, (saec. viii/ix), CLA 10.1514.

sumably composed in Ireland, which had a widespread continental circulation (though it was never a hugely popular *uita*).¹²²

The collection of canons known as *Hibernensis* was available at Corbie (again) certainly before 749, when it was used by the compilers of the collection *Vetus Gallica*, and during the third quarter of the century a copy was made for bishop Alberic of Cambrai (directly from an Irish exemplar to judge from the inclusion of a couple of pages of Old Irish).¹²³ Other eighth-century copies include a fragment in Irish script now at Trier, excerpts in an Anglo-Saxon hand now in Würzburg, a late eighth-century copy from Cologne and another from Freising, with an early ninth-century copy at Reichenau and a little later a copy at St Gallen.¹²⁴ One wonders just how many copies arrived from Ireland to spread the text: the destinations with the strongest Irish links are the furthest from the point of entry to the Continent, and textual variety makes it certain that all do not descend from one copy. Corbie later acquired two more copies, this time from Brittany, one made in the ninth century and apparently already at Corbie in the time of Paschasius Radbertus, another made in the tenth century that may have travelled with the Breton diaspora.¹²⁵ The text was already known in Brittany in the ninth century—who knows how much earlier?—along with a range of other canonical texts composed in Ireland. Three out of six Carolingian manuscripts signed by Breton scribes contain a copy of the *Hibernensis*.¹²⁶ One can hardly

122. L. Bieler, who edited the text, found no basis for a more precise date than between the ninth century, when the Patrick legend was developing rapidly, and c.1130, when it was evidently used by William of Malmesbury (*Four Latin Lives of St Patrick*, SLH 8 (Dublin 1971) 25).

123. H. Mordek, *Kirchenrecht und Reform im Frankenreich: die Collectio Vetus Gallica, die älteste systematische Kanonensammlung des fränkischen Gallien: Studien und Edition* (Berlin 1975) 86, 91–94, 287–88, 665–66. On the Old Irish fragment from Cambrai, see below, n 185.

124. The oldest fragment is now Trier, Stadtbibliothek, MS 137, ff 48–61, lower script (saec. viii), CLA 9.1368 (overwritten in saec. xi²). Early witnesses from Germany are now Cologne, Dombibliothek, MS 210 (saec. viii²), CLA 8.1161; Munich, Staatsbibliothek, MS clm 6434 (saec. viii², Freising), CLA 9.1285; Würzburg, MS M. p. th. q. 31 (saec. viii/ix), CLA 9.1439; Karlsruhe, MS Aug. XVIII (s. ixth); St Gallen, MS 243 (saec. ix).

125. Roy Flechner, 'Paschasius Radbertus and Bodleian Library MS Hatton 42', *Bodleian Library Rec* 18 (2003–05) 411–21.

126. Flechner (*73 and note 277) cites J.-L. Deuffic, 'La production manuscrite des scriptoria bretons (VIII^e–XI^e siècle)', in *Landévennec et le monachisme breton dans le haut moyen âge* (Landévennec 1986) 289–321, who catalogues eighty-eight manuscripts from Brittany over this period; only six of these have the names of Breton scribes, among them Orléans, MS 221 (193) (saec. viii/ix), p 212 (Iunobrus); Paris, BN, MS lat. 3182 (saec. x/xi), p 356 (Maeloc); and Paris, BN, MS lat. 12021 (saec. ix), f 139^r, from their shared parent (Arbedoc); three witnesses to the text of *Hibernensis* descending from the same hyparchetype.

avoid conjecturing behind this visible circulation an extensive and enduring currency in eighth- and ninth-century Ireland.

The *Nauigatio S. Brendani*, probably composed in the late eighth century, travelled to the Continent soon afterwards, where it was widely disseminated.¹²⁷ It is probable that the early Lives of St Brigit also crossed into Francia at the beginning of the ninth century, though an earlier date cannot be ruled out.

When did it leave Ireland for the Continent? This is an important question that can be asked in relation to many such texts but can rarely be answered with much accuracy. Most of these texts from Ireland predate the main surviving Irish works on the Continent from the second and third quarters of the ninth century.

We have now looked at Irish men, Irish manuscripts, and Latin works from Ireland that all made their way abroad, but there was also a less visible category of books: there are certain works not composed in Ireland that were copied there and whose texts were then transmitted elsewhere. Bede's extensive knowledge of computistical texts, for example, included texts favoured in Ireland, and in some cases long thought to have been composed in Ireland. While Bede's views were orthodox and Roman, and opposed to the divisions caused by those who held to any other, Irish view, his computistical reading appears largely to have come from Ireland, including his own, orthodox, computus. C. W. Jones made a wider claim: 'Bede's works show that Northumbrian education owed comparatively little to Rome and the Augustinian mission'; apart from information gathered for the Ecclesiastical History, he found 'no indication of a stream of literature from the south which in any way equals the obvious stream from Ireland'.¹²⁸ This is overstated. If one takes him to mean that Bede's computistical works show that computistical studies in Northumbria owed little to the Gregorian mission, as Dáibhí Ó Cróinín expresses it, then this is uncontentious.¹²⁹ Indeed, it might probably be widened to include other technical subjects.¹³⁰

It is difficult to test such assertions. What is needed is, first, evidence that a particular work was known to Bede, sufficient to allow one to form an impression of its textual affinities; second, evidence that it was known in Ireland, again

127. D. N. Dumville, 'Two approaches to the dating of *Nauigatio S. Brendani*', *Studi medievali* 3rd ser. 29 (1988) 87–102.

128. C. W. Jones, *Beda's Opera de temporibus* (Cambridge MA 1943) 112.

129. Ó Cróinín, 'Irish provenance of Bede's computus', 233, and again in 'Bede's Irish computus', in his *Early Irish history and chronology* (Dublin 2003) 201–12: 203.

130. J.-M. Picard, 'Bede and Irish scholarship: scientific treatises and grammars', *Ériu* 54 (2004) 139–47.

sufficient to show its textual affinities; third, the text under examination must be one whose textual history is sufficiently well understood to establish something about its textual affinities from what may be no more than a few quotations. There are not many texts of the patristic age for which editors have sought to explore the textual tradition in such historical detail. And there are very few texts where sufficient words are quoted to establish anything like a clear comparison that would allow one to detect whether Bede was using a book with Irish affinities or a book without such textual traces but with other tell-tale signs to suggest that his copy was one of Benedict Biscop's Italian purchases for Wearmouth–Jarrow.

One text that does allow comparisons of this kind to be made is Isidore of Seville's widely known treatise *De officiis ecclesiasticis* (Clavis §1207). Michael Lawson's edition established that a text with two significant lacunae was shared by the numerous quotations in the *Hibernensis*, by two passages in the early Lindisfarne Life of St Cuthbert, and by the earliest English copy of *De officiis*, dating from the late eighth century, later at Corbie, and now (along with a number of other Corbie manuscripts) in St Petersburg. In other words, it appears that this CJ-type among manuscripts of *De officiis* is attested in both Ireland and England around the beginning of the eighth century.¹³¹ Its use in Ireland can be confirmed from the letter of one Colmán to his friend Feradach, two Irishmen, their locations and date unknown, but their letter preserved in north-east Francia as textual notes on another work, Caelius Sedulius's *Carmen paschale*: Colmán alerts Feradach to the fact that their familiar text of *De officiis* has gaps in two places, amounting to three pages, when compared with a new text he has obtained *a Romanis* 'from the Romans'.¹³² This phrase may well mean from those in mid- and late-seventh-century Ireland who called themselves *Romani*, a usage that turns up in canonical contexts and in an exegetical source.¹³³ Whether

131. C. M. Lawson, *Sancti Isidori episcopi Hispalensis De ecclesiasticis officiis*, CCSL 113 (1989) 58*–64* (readings to establish the group CJ, comprising some fourteen witnesses), 126*–129* (argument), and, especially 150*–51* (Irish and English testimonia). Here he notes examples from *Hibernensis* to identify its source with a text of CJ-type, as also from the anonymous *Vita S. Cuthberti*. He was aware of the evidence of Colmán's letter. The earliest manuscript of English origin, St Petersburg, MS Q. v. I. 15 (saec. viii², Corbie, cited as C), CLA 11.1618, is of this type. While Lawson infers from his survey that copies of this family 'were often in the hands of the Irish', the family was sufficiently widely distributed on the Continent that he could not determine its origin.

132. R. Sharpe, 'An Irish textual critic and the *Carmen paschale* of Sedulius: Colmán's letter to Feradach', *J Mediev Lat* 2 (1992) 44–54.

133. Attributions to 'Romani' (comparable with 'Synodus Romana') occur frequently in the

it means that Feradach's new text of Isidore has come from the south of Ireland or from the Continent, we cannot be sure. But hitherto he has used a worse text, and that one was also known in England. It would be plausible to infer that it entered England from Ireland. Hard-won though these observations may be, they do not take us very far. We cannot be sure that there were not sound texts of the work elsewhere in England or Ireland. There is only one passage derived from Isidore's *De officiis* in Bede, and it bears no clear witness to the text-type he was using.¹³⁴

Colmán's letter provides much more detailed evidence on his old, bad text of the *Carmen paschale* and his new, improved text. This again points towards an affinity between his bad text and two ninth-century manuscript copies from Reichenau and St Gallen, houses with Irish connexions (though such connexions need not extend to every book in the libraries), and a slightly earlier Anglo-Saxon copy in Basel, thought to have been written perhaps at Fulda.¹³⁵ The good text, however, relied on by the nineteenth-century editor, is provided by two manuscripts of the seventh century from Bobbio, which just might hint at the contacts that had brought improved texts into Colmán's hands.¹³⁶ Following such evidence in all directions may not lead to any intelligible conclusion. But I am convinced that this method may bring some significant discoveries—though the labour of identifying passages that provide meaningful comparisons would be prodigious.

There is a long history in textual criticism of positing an 'Insular intermediary' to explain certain textual errors, typically the confusion of the letters *r*, *n*, and *p*, and the misprision of Insular abbreviations. The approach may be traced back to Louis Duvau, who posited an intermediary in minuscule script to explain certain *Hibernensis*, e.g. *Hib.* 12.15c, 47.8d, 52.2–3, 52.6; M. McNamara, *Glossa in Psalmos: the Hiberno-Latin gloss on the Psalms of Codex Palatinus Latinus 68*, *Studi e testi* 310 (Rome 1986) 108, 114, 116 (in the headings).

134. Bede's Commentary on Revelation 33.55–60, ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A (2001) 488–89.

135. The copies in question are St Gallen, MS 877 (saec. ix), and Karlsruhe, MS Aug. CCXVII (s. ix^{ex}); Lowe comments on the earlier witness, Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS O. iv. 17 (saec. viii), CLA 7.853, 'Anglo-Saxon minuscule', 'written in a German centre under Anglo-Saxon influence', 'the text of Sedulius in this manuscript is in the Irish tradition'.

136. One of the Bobbio copies is written over a fifth-century copy of some speeches of Cicero, now Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS R. 57 sup. (saec. vii), CLA 3. 362, 'uncial', 'written no doubt at Bobbio', where it remained. The other, in uncials with headings in rustic capitals, is now Turin, Biblioteca nazionale, MS E. iv. 42 (saec. vii), CLA 4.447, 'written probably at Bobbio', and certainly from the library there. The two are not textually close, but neither resembles Colmán's bad text. They were the fundamental sources for the edition by J. Huemer, *Sedulii opera omnia* (Vienna 1885).

errors in the text of Lucretius.¹³⁷ The Insular connexion was popularised by Traube through several specific applications of the approach.¹³⁸ It appeared to provide a solid evidential basis for suggesting that a good many classical texts passed at crucial stages through an important Insular copy. Those proposing such a stage were not always committed to an Irish or Anglo-Saxon route—and those concerned to prop up Meyer's theory have not generally discovered these proposals from studies of textual histories of classical texts. Where there is good reason to invoke an Insular intermediary, it can in some cases be shown to be a ninth-century copy on the Continent, made somewhere such as Fulda, where we find English-trained scribes copying from exemplars that may have come from Italy. It could lead to large claims.¹³⁹ Julian Brown and David Dumville, among others, have generally demolished the relevance of this approach to book-culture in a seventh- or eighth-century Insular setting.¹⁴⁰ Traube's positing a manuscript

137. L. Duvau, 'Lucretiana', *Revue de philologie, de littérature, et d'histoire anciennes*, new ser. 12 (1888) 30–37: 36–37). Duvau asked whether the confusions r/s and r/n 'autoriseraient-elles à croire qu'un des intermédiaires perdus était en écriture anglo-saxonne, comme le sont un grand nombre de corrections importantes dans l'Oblongus'. In respect of the text of Lucretius, the oft-repeated Insular intermediary is no longer accepted: F. Brunhölzl, 'Zur Überlieferung des Lukrez', *Hermes* 90 (1962) 99–102; V. Brown, 'The "insular intermediary" in the text of Lucretius', *Harv Stud Class Philol* 72 (1968) 301–08.

138. Ludwig Traube conjectured an Insular stage in the transmission of Ammianus Marcellinus, proposing that two ninth-century copies, V from Fulda and M from Hersfeld, both centres with Anglo-Saxon links, derived from an exemplar γ in Insular minuscule ('Die Überlieferung des Ammianus Marcellinus', *Mélanges Boissier* (Paris 1903) 443–48. repr. in his *Vorlesungen und Abhandlungen* iii (Munich 1920) 33–38. He also deduced that a manuscript containing the fourth decade of Livy from Mainz, lost but used by a sixteenth-century editor, was written in the ninth century in Insular script like that practised at Fulda ('Paläographische Forschungen 4. Bamberger Fragmente der vierten Dekade des Livius', *Abh Bay Akad Wiss*, hist. Kl. 24/1 (1904) 21–26). C. H. Beeson and his student Blanche B. Boyer became particular promoters of such thinking.

139. In a paper on medieval texts, B. B. Boyer, 'Insular contribution to medieval literary tradition on the Continent', *Classical Philology* 42 (1947) 209–22; 43 (1943) 31–39, starts from the notion that 'the activity of Irish and Anglo-Saxon scribes in the middle ages is known to have been prodigious, both at home and abroad'. Her research, she says, had brought to light '550 Latin manuscripts of the eighth to tenth centuries, of which 400 are wholly Insular, the other 150 divide into three classes, of approximately 50 each, Insular in part and in decreasing degree' (209).

140. B. Bischoff, 'Paläographie und frühmittelalterliche Klassikerüberlieferung', in *La cultura antica nell'occidente latino dal VII al XI secolo*, Settimane di studi del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 22 (1975) 59–85; T. J. Brown, 'An historical introduction to the use of Classical Latin authors in the British Isles from the fifth to the eleventh century', *ibid.* 237–99; D. N. Dumville, 'The early mediaeval Insular churches and the preservation of Roman literature: towards a historical and palaeographical reevaluation', in *Formative stages of classical traditions: Latin texts from antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. O. Pecere & M. D. Reeve (Spoleto 1995) 197–

in Insular script for the only extant witness to part of book XL of Livy of the ninth century does not imply that the lost books were available in Anglo-Saxon England or in Ireland.¹⁴¹ It is only a story that the lost books of Livy were available in Iona, though it enjoyed some vogue in the sixteenth century.¹⁴²

Patrologists, for the most part, remained immune to the lessons that students of classical and medieval texts learnt from Traube, and the editing of patristic texts is rarely concerned to do more than establish an eclectic text. For this reason we have been spared a comparable crop of works by Latin Fathers transmitted through vital Insular stages.

I am concerned that we should be better able to read the textual fingerprints of widely-distributed texts, so that we could better follow the movement of books that equates with the dissemination and reception of a work. Works with no particular Irish connexion but whose textual history significantly passed through an Irish stage will always be hard to identify, and a precondition for the search must be textual evidence that a work was known in Ireland with some distinctive textual traits. For this our first need is a reliable catalogue of books known in Ireland.¹⁴³ It would have to exhibit very clearly the evidence on which it is founded.

Aidan Breen has identified at least forty works, whose influence he detects in the brief commentary on the genealogy of Jesus composed by Ailerán, but I have not found any of them persuasive.¹⁴⁴ The list of works whose influence he

237.

141. Traube deduced that a manuscript containing the fourth decade of Livy from Mainz, lost but used by a sixteenth-century editor, was written in the ninth century in Insular script like that practised at Fulda (see n 138 above). Traube also demolished a supposed quotation from one of the lost books in Jonas' *Vita S. Columbani*, 1 3, an editorial figment in Krusch's text (emending 'utulius' to 'ut Liuius' rather than 'ut Tullius') (L. Traube, 'Das angebliche Fragment des Livius bei Jonas', repr. in his *Vorlesungen und Abhandlungen* iii (Munich 1920) 42–45; Ó Cróinín, 'The Irish as mediators of antique culture', 42–43).

142. Hector Boece, *Historia Scotorum* (Paris 1526), book VI, f 118^{r-v}, would have king Fergus equip a choice library in Iona in the fifth century, so choice that, when Enea Silvio Piccolomini visited Scotland in the time of king James I, he planned to go to Iona in search of the lost books of Livy. From there the story passed to Paolo Giovio, *Descriptio Britanniae, Scotiae, Hyberniae, et Orchadum* (Venice 1548), f 39^r.

143. A catalogue of books known to Irish writers would have a different scope, but it would only confuse the picture of what might have circulated in Ireland to include, for example, works cited only by Iohannes Scotus Eriugena or other Irishmen in Carolingian circles.

144. Ailerán, *Interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi*, ed. A. Breen (Dublin 1995) 111–61 (discussion), 174–83 (index fontium). My tally seeks to discount those cited only for comparison.

detects in the treatise *De XII abusiuis* is nearer to eighty.¹⁴⁵ Any *apparatus fontium* of this kind must be scrutinised before it is permitted to contribute to the catalogue. In both these cases some extremely rare texts are cited, but throughout I have found nothing to convince me that his ideas about dependency of one text on another are anything more than optimistic speculation.¹⁴⁶ That is not the case with Cummian's Letter to Ségéne, already mentioned, and there are other texts too that might enable us to build up some sense of what texts were available somewhere in Ireland in the seventh century. A striking example is Sulpicius Severus's *Chronicon*, quoted by Adomnán in Iona, by an Irish computist of the seventh century, and by an Irish commentator on Genesis; arguably known also to Cogitosus at Kildare and to Muirchú at Armagh.¹⁴⁷ The work has survived complete in a single copy from Brittany, perhaps derivable from Tours. It will hardly ever be possible to demonstrate such wide availability in Ireland—it requires the testimony of citations from the same work in diverse sources from different places.

145. A. Breen, 'Towards a critical edition of *De XII abusiuis*: introductory essays with a provisional edition of the text', PhD diss. (University of Dublin 1988).

146. Two examples of improbable parallels: First, lines 112–14 are said to draw on Chromatius of Aquileia, Sermon 27, an anonymous sermon known only from three Austrian manuscripts of the twelfth century, attributed to Chromatius by house-of-cards reasoning in 1963, but is there anything in these lines that Ailerán could not have found in the gospels? Second, lines 492–95 are sourced to the sixth-century African bishop Verecundus of Junca, *Commentarii super cantica ecclesiastica*, surviving in one copy, Leiden, MS Voss. lat. F. 58 (saec. ix), but what need of this to justify two quotations from the Psalms?

147. Ten lines are quoted from *Chronica* II 33 by Adomnán, *De locis sanctis* I 23 (ed. Bieler & Meehan, 64), which presupposes he had access to a copy of the work; the Sirmond computus quotes a single line with attribution from *Chronica* II 27 (ed. Halm, 82; de Senneville-Grave, 286–8), as noted by Ó Cróinín, 'Irish provenance of Bede's computus', 243–44, and 'Bede's Irish computus', *Early Irish history and chronology*, 210; a supposedly Hiberno-Latin commentary on the Pentateuch explicitly refers to the work, 'Sulpicius uero dicit quia non de Cain', *Pauca problesmata* Gn 4:23–24, ed. MacGinty, CCCM 173 (2000) 99; the reference is apparently to a few words in *Chronica*, I 1 (ed. Halm. 4. 16–18; ed. De Senneville-Grave, 92. 14). Passages in the prefaces of Cogitosus, *Vita S. Brigitae*, 'memoriae literisque tradere aggrediar', and Muirchú, *Vita S. Patricii*, 'carptim grauatimque explicare aggrediar', are compared with Sulpicius's preface, 'usque ad nostram memoriam carptim dicere aggressus sum', by D. A. Bullough, 'Columba, Adomnan, and the achievement of Iona', *Scott Hist Rev* 43 (1964) 111–30, and 44 (1965), 17–33: 19. This amounts to five Irish *testimonia*, yet, as Bischoff noted, 'Wendepunkte', 225, the work survives uniquely in Rome, BAV MS Pal. lat. 825 (saec. x, Brittany), a manuscript of 28 leaves. The text was printed from there by Flacius Illyricus (Basel 1556). The standard edition is Karl Halm, *Sulpicii Seueri libri qui supersunt*, CSEL 1 (1866) 1–105, and now Ghislaine de Senneville-Grave, *Source chrétiennes* 441 (1999), who both refer to the manuscript incorrectly as MS Pal. lat. 824 (saec. xi).

One especially useful text for this purpose is the early-eighth-century canon-collection known as *Hibernensis*. This comprises many hundreds of extracts from the bible, the Fathers and other late antique sources, church councils, and Irish synodal decisions. Its first editor Herrmann Wasserschleben (1812–1893) worked heroically to source these extracts, but he was no more than partially successful. Of course, he did not have the searchable electronic texts that we now have for so much of patristic literature, and he was also handicapped by textual difficulties. His edition relied on a manuscript from St Gallen, but he cited many variants from other copies. These illustrate a point made by Henry Bradshaw at the time of publication: the textual tradition is divided into two branches, A and B, and there are copies that show comparison and contamination of these two branches.¹⁴⁸ There was a serious problem as to which of the two forms should be compared with the source-text, and indeed with what reading in the source-text, that of a critical editor or that of a manuscript close to the type known in Ireland.¹⁴⁹ Roy Flechner has shown that St Gallen did not well represent the A-text, and his own edition will soon lead to much firmer ground in distinguishing what was assembled in Ireland from copies of source-texts available to the original compilers and what resulted from subsequent modification.

The list of books known to the compilers of this work is impressive—quotations from most books of the bible, a great deal of canonical legislation, general and local, and ample quotation from patristic sources. There is much Gregory and Isidore, not as much Augustine (and some of what is there is pseudonymous), a good deal of Jerome and Rufinus and Cassian, some Ambrose—but there is much that remains to be identified, and many surprises.¹⁵⁰ Not only are there texts cited by unusual titles—though in some cases titles that can be matched elsewhere in Ireland, such as ‘Augustinus de urbe’ for ‘Augustinus de ciuitate Dei’¹⁵¹—but there are also a considerable number of apparently late

148. Henry Bradshaw was the first to articulate that ‘two clearly marked recensions of the *Hibernensis* are traceable, the A-text, arranged under 65 *tituli* ...; and the B-text, arranged under 68 *tituli*’ (letter to Hermann Wasserschleben, printed in Wasserschleben, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* (2nd ed. Leipzig 1885) lxiii–lxv: p lxx), and he inferred that the B-text was a revision of the A-text; S. Hellmann, *Sedulius Scottus* (Munich 1906) 141–43, argued that the B-text was the older on the basis that it offered readings closer to a true reading for some of the sources used.

149. Sharpe, ‘Gildas as a father of the church’, 195–96 and especially n 12.

150. What is needed is an *index fontium* that brings together all the citations as given in the text of *Hibernensis*, adding the known source in those cases where it can be identified.

151. *Hib.* 20.2a, ‘Augustinus in libris de urbe’; compare the so-called Bibelwerk, *Praefatio et*

antique texts that are now untraceable. It forces our perceptions of book-culture to accommodate the possibility of the very early transmission of patristic texts to Ireland at a period before we have clear circumstantial evidence.¹⁵² The possibility has to be allowed that texts of greater complexity than synodal canons were composed in Ireland between the time of St Patrick and the seventh century.¹⁵³

The beginnings of book-culture in Ireland are a subject of wide interest and importance, but here we are forced into speculation. From what date were books entering Ireland? Surely from the time of the first conversion in the fifth century, though the initial inflow may have been small. From where? Gaul, Spain, western Britain, perhaps further afield. And over how long a period? There must have been more than two hundred years, between the time of St Patrick and the time of Theodore of Tarsus, archbishop of Canterbury, from which we have scarcely any physical evidence.

The beginnings of Insular script must lie in the period before AD 600, but without well-dated specimens it is impossible to know how much before.¹⁵⁴ The oldest specimens in the opinion of most students include the *Cathach Coluimb Chille* and the writing-tablets from Springmount Bog. Also early is the gospel book known as *Usserianus I* in Trinity College, Dublin, which Lowe originally assigned to Bobbio, though he subsequently changed his mind and allowed that it was written in Ireland.¹⁵⁵ He had seen signs of cursive script as evidence

libri de Pentateucho Moysis, §§235 ('de libro de ciuitate Dei'), 404 ('in libris de urbe caelesti'), ed. G. MacGinty CCCM 173 (2000) 102, 177; Iohannes Scotus Eriugena, *Peri Physeon* I, ed. I. P. Sheldon-Williams, SLH 7 (Dublin 1968) 56 ('in uicesimo secundo de urbe dei', added by Eriugena in MS R, though referred to as 'de ciuitate dei', *ibid.* 48).

152. Early Irish acquaintance with biblical apocrypha has been much canvassed over a long period of time. The possibility that such texts were reaching Ireland from Spain is explored by D. N. Dumville, 'Biblical apocrypha and the early Irish: a preliminary investigation', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 73 (1973) 299–338. He focuses on the seventh century rather than earlier, though that may be for simple want of evidence.

153. A speculative argument for the recovery from seventh-century sources of some content from a sixth-century theological treatise is put forward by A. Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis in Pseudo-Cyprian, *De duodecim abusiuis saeculi*', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 87 (1987) 71–101.

154. T. J. Brown, 'The oldest Irish manuscripts and their late antique background', in *Irland und Europa: die Kirche im Frühmittelalter*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin & M. Richter (Stuttgart 1984) 311–27, surveys the fifth- and sixth-century background to the emergence of Insular script in western Britain and Ireland.

155. TCD MS 55, CLA 2.271, quoted above, p 25.

against an Irish origin, but the use of cursive in Ireland may hark back to a period before half-uncial and minuscule achieved their Insular dominance. Other very early books are still associated, and not simply by their route of preservation, with Bobbio, founded a year or so before Columbanus's death in 615. I wonder whether that date has influenced the chronology of Insular books more than it should: Insular palaeography has no secure starting-point for relative chronologies. William O'Sullivan has been bold enough to date the earliest extant Irish books to the sixth century.¹⁵⁶

The existence of *exempla* of early date in Ireland is almost assured, and one should avoid falling into an error that snared Heinrich Zimmer in his study *Pelagius in Irland*: he made the assumption that Ireland lost contact with the Continent in the 450s, when (he supposed) the Irish failed to be kept in touch with developments in the calculation of Easter, and he therefore supposed that no texts entered Ireland during the following 150 years.¹⁵⁷ Even as regards the Continent, both evidence and inference are misinterpreted, and he ignored the evidence for the important contacts between Ireland and Britain during this period. Pelagius was an author not widely studied after his condemnation in the early fifth century, but he continued to be copied in Wales.¹⁵⁸ His commentary on the Pauline Epistles was meat and drink to the seventh- and eighth-century glossators whose work we see in the Würzburg Epistles; it is by far the most frequently cited authority in the notes on the Epistles in the early-eighth-century Irish copy mentioned earlier, now Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B. 10. 5, and it was still a favourite source for Sedulius Scottus in the middle of the ninth century. Also Pelagian in interest is the commentary on the psalms adapted from the Greek of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Latinised by Julian of Eclanum, both of them supporters of Pelagius: the copy with copious Irish glosses, preserved at Bobbio since the mid-ninth century, was certainly the work of Irish scribes, but David Dumville has inferred from cursive features in the script that the exemplar should be dated 'as early as possible': he hazards a date in the first half of the

156. W. O'Sullivan, 'The palaeographical background to the Book of Kells', in *The Book of Kells: proceedings of a conference, 1992*, ed. F. O'Mahony (Aldershot 1994) 175–82, dates *Usserianus I* and the Springmount tablets to the sixth century; he continued to date the Cathach Coluimb Chille 'probably from the seventh' ('Manuscripts and palaeography', *New history of Ireland*, i 515).

157. H. Zimmer, *Pelagius in Irland: Texte und Untersuchungen zur patristischen Litteratur* (Berlin 1901) 3.

158. D. N. Dumville, 'Late-seventh- or eighth-century evidence for the British transmission of Pelagius', *Camb Mediev Celt Stud* 10 (Winter 1985) 39–52.

fifth century as ‘the earliest period permitted by the text’.¹⁵⁹ The possibility of tracing other texts that were transmitted in Britain or Ireland through the fifth and sixth centuries into the seventh must not be forgotten, though equally one must recognise that books continued to reach Ireland in the seventh century and, surely, beyond. Clear examples are provided by Gregory and Isidore, well-known in Ireland, but these works could only have arrived in the seventh century.

Another phenomenon conspicuous in the evidence from Ireland is the circulation of pseudonymous texts. I have already mentioned the Irish Augustine and his teacher Eusebius in AD 655. It has been treated as an affectation, and other famous names from christian antiquity appear in texts composed in Ireland. Among the many untraced citations in the *Hibernensis* with apparently patristic attributions, one must wonder whether there are extracts from lost or exceedingly rare works by authentic Late Antique writers under inherited pseudonyms. Or was there a habit in seventh-century Ireland of adopting such *noms-de-plumes* that was itself a survival of the widespread tendency, strongest from the later fifth to the later sixth century, to propagate christian texts under borrowed famous names?

Now Mostert proposed that with only seventy-seven ‘Irish’ items in *Codices latini antiquiores*, and with no contemporary copies of seventh-century exegetical works, the book-culture of early medieval Ireland does not live up to its billing in Bede. If anyone else is inclined to treat this reasoning as more potent than the statements of Bede, I hope the literary evidence in favour of a rich Latin book-culture in seventh-century Ireland is sufficient to show how ill-founded this proposition is. That the approach was flawed from the start seems to me obvious, but it prompts me to make some comparisons.

There is no question that during the thirty-odd years when Augustine was bishop of Hippo, his literary activity flourished in the context of an intense local and international book-market. Now, the number of manuscripts surviving from Latin Africa before AD 800 is only fifteen to nineteen, some of them merely fragments, and I need hardly add that none actually survives in Africa.¹⁶⁰ Two cer-

159. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS C. 301 inf. (saec. viii/ix), CLA 3.326. The principal scribe is named Diarmait. Quotations from Dumville, *Three men in a boat*, 21–23.

160. These manuscripts are listed by Lowe in the introduction to CLA Supplement, p vii–ix. He records fifteen confidently and a further four with less certainty. Three Latin fragments from Egypt are listed in CLA 2.227, 11.1569–70, all of them from late antique rolls of Virgil’s Aeneid

tainly, and a third probably, found a home at Bobbio.¹⁶¹ The number of texts written in Africa and circulated elsewhere after Augustine's time runs to about forty on a quick count from *Clavis patrum latinorum*, without attempting to include any early pseudo-Augustinian works that may have come from Africa. The surviving early-fifth-century volume of *De ciuitate Dei*, written in uncials—more distinguished for its calligraphy than its text—was at first assigned by Lowe to a workshop in Italy, not in Africa, but by 1971 he had changed his mind; it was in Verona at least by the eighth century.¹⁶² An early copy of Augustine's *De diuersis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* (Clavis §290), written in Africa, was later at Corbie and is now in St Petersburg.¹⁶³ No other work of Augustine nor any later African author survives in an African copy. There is a hole in the evidence of surviving manuscripts, but no one would for that reason doubt that Augustine wrote and published in Africa in the late fourth and early fifth century nor that there was a vigorous book-market in Africa at that date.

To come closer in date to the centre of gravity of the Irish evidence, Spain in the seventh and eighth centuries has left us rather more texts than manuscripts; only thirty surviving manuscripts from before AD 800 were judged by Lowe to have originated in Spain.¹⁶⁴ The only local author represented among them is Isidore.

When we look at Italy, where the manuscript evidence is abundant, the bald figures from *Codices latini antiquiores* would disguise important complexities. The number of eighth-century books exceeds that of seventh-century books, which in turn exceeds that of sixth-century books. Yet the book-supply in Italy at the time of Boethius's death or Cassiodorus's retirement from public life was surely much greater than it was in AD 700 or AD 750.

And from areas of relatively abundant manuscript survival from the seventh

made for school use.

161. Turin, MS F. iv. 27 (saec. iv/v), CLA 4.458, and MS G. v. 37 (saec. v), CLA 4.464, both uncial copies of works by the African author Cyprian, were seen at Bobbio by Mabillon in 1686; Turin, MS G. vii. 15 (saec. iv/v), CLA 4.465, 'Codex Bobiensis' (*k*), is a gospel book with a marked textual affinity to that used by Cyprian, 'probably at Bobbio from earliest times'.

162. Verona, Biblioteca capitolare, MS XXVIII (26), CLA 4.491, 'written doubtless in Italy', but no 7 on his list of African books. He would date the copy saec. v^{2/4}; *De ciuitate Dei* was begun after AD 413 and was completed by AD 426.

163. St Petersburg, MS Q. v. I. 3, CLA 11.1613. The work was composed in AD 395, and Lowe noted W. M. Green's hypothesis for dating the manuscript to the first years of Augustine's episcopacy after AD 396.

164. These manuscripts are listed by Lowe in the introduction to CLA 11, p viii–ix. Authentic works of Isidore are found in four of the thirty books, two more have works attributed to Isidore.

and eighth centuries—Francia and Italy—there are fewer known authors of Latin than from Ireland. The only familiar name from either area between Gregory the Great and Paul the Deacon is Jonas of Bobbio, biographer of St Columbanus.

The paucity of manuscript evidence is not a peculiarity of the Celtic-language areas of these islands, but it is a problem that has made some scholars in this field look for explanations, among them Kathleen Hughes on Scotland, Sims-Williams on Wales.¹⁶⁵

The problem continues after the early middle ages. Where, we may well ask, are the Latin books of tenth-, eleventh-, twelfth-century Ireland? Here again little has survived within Ireland, and such books abroad have had far less attention than manuscripts of the ninth century and earlier. Six leaves from a large-format psalter have remained in Ireland.¹⁶⁶ Several other psalters and gospel books have travelled no further than England.¹⁶⁷ Two leaves from school texts survive in a nineteenth-century miscellany of fragments, now London, BL MS Egerton 3323, ff 16, 18, with a scribal note that allows the writing to be located at Glendalough and dated with some probability to the year 1106.¹⁶⁸ A composite volume of school texts, now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. 3. 15 (saec. xii 2/4) bears no evidence of provenance, but tenuous connexions with Glendalough have been proposed.¹⁶⁹ Again, a teacher's modest copy of Boethius,

165. K. W. Hughes, 'Where are the writings of early Scotland?', in her *Celtic Britain in the early middle ages* (Woodbridge 1980) 1–21; P. Sims-Williams, 'The uses of writing in early medieval Wales', in *Literacy in medieval Celtic societies*, ed. A. H. Pryce (Cambridge 1998) 15–38.

166. Now in Dublin, University College, OFM, MS A 1, the Psalter of St Caimín, saec. xi/xii, with some glosses in Irish; M. Esposito, 'On the so-called Psalter of St Caimin', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 32 (1915) 78–88 and plate. Textual collation suggests that its readings belong to a continuous Irish tradition shared with the early medieval psalters from Ireland (M. McNamara, 'Five Irish psalter texts', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 109 (2009) 37–104: 92.

167. Kenney, *Sources*, 644–48. The three gospel books are now London, BL MS Harley 1802 (AD 1138, Armagh), BL, MS Harley 1023 (saec. xii), and Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 122 (saec. xii). All of them may have remained in Ireland through the middle ages.

168. L. Bieler & B. Bischoff, 'Fragmente zweier frühmittelalterlicher Schulbücher aus Glendalough', *Celtica* 3 (1956) 211–20 and plate. The leaves are fragments from copies of Clemens Scottus, *Ars grammatica*, and Gerbert of Aurillac, *De abaco*, and were probably parts of the same book. A marginal note on f 18^r was written at Glendalough at Whitsuntide when one Tuathal was sick and died in the night, leading irresistibly to identification with Tuathal, abbot of Glendalough (†1106).

169. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Na mainistreacha agus an léann', in *An léann eaglasta 1000–1200*, ed. M. McNamara (Dublin 1982) 19–30: 27; Pádraig P. Ó Néill, 'An Irishman at Chartres in the twelfth century—the evidence of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. III. 15', *Ériu* 48 (1997)

De consolatione philosophiae, in an Irish hand of the twelfth century, now in Florence, has been assigned to Glendalough, though on what evidence is not apparent; nor is it clear when it left Ireland.¹⁷⁰ The later twelfth-century Drummond Missal, now in New York, has also been assigned to Glendalough on insecure evidence.¹⁷¹ It would be good to have an inventory of such items, and at least the hand is at this date so distinctive that there can be no uncertainty whether a scribe is Irish.¹⁷² The incomplete twelfth-century Armagh copy of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob* is what most has the character of a full-size library book from Ireland, and it would be interesting to know whether it belongs to an Irish textual tradition or whether it was copied from a recent exemplar from Anglo-Norman England. It is thought to have left Ireland in the middle ages but in what circumstances is not known.¹⁷³

The same factors as in previous centuries may be at work against survival, but there was perhaps also rather less export of books. Irishmen continued to travel to the Continent after the mid 9th century, but the cultural gap in the tenth and eleventh centuries was surely much greater than it had been in the seventh and eighth centuries? Books taken abroad by Irish émigrés at this date were probably less well received in post-Carolingian Europe than their pre-Carolingian antecedents had been, so that the external route to survival was closed off to books from Ireland. The earlier pattern is in part reversed, however, in the case of the Life of St Mochuille, a text composed in the twelfth-century by an Irishman who had resided in Germany, was copied in Germany in the twelfth century, but is known also from an Irish copy of the fourteenth century.¹⁷⁴

1–35: 30.

170. Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Plut. 78.19 pt 1 (saec. xii) (H. P. A. Oskamp, 'A schoolteacher's hand in a Florentine manuscript', *Scriptorium* 31 (1977) 191–97, and plate 11).

171. New York, NY, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M 627 (saec. xii^{3/4}) (H. P. A. Oskamp, 'The Irish quatrains and salutations in the Drummond Missal', *Ériu* 28 (1977) 82–91 and plates). The provenance is questionably inferred from Irish verses in which St Cómgen greets St Ciarán of Saigir, as if this could not be copied outside St Cómgen's own church.

172. Hans Oskamp refers in the first footnotes of both these papers to his own book, *The Irish manuscript tradition 1000–1300*, at that date forthcoming from the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, which never came forth.

173. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 460 (saec. xii); B. Ó Cuív, *Catalogue of Irish language manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford* (Dublin 2001) 312–14. The manuscript appears to have been in France in the fifteenth century and came from there to England in the seventeenth.

174. The Life of St Mochuille is preserved complete in several copies of the Austrian Great Legendary, ed. K. Pertz, MGH SS 20, 512–14, complemented by A. Poncelet, 'Vita Mochullei episcopi', *Analecta Bollandiana* 17 (1898) 135–54; there is also a fragment from the text surviving

In the case of Ireland, there is some problem about perspective. Some of us are surprised by how much literary evidence we have, others appear to be surprised by how little. But wherever one perceives ‘little’, one has to ask what factors have conditioned survival before drawing inferences from what are no more than arbitrary figures. The better one understands the hazards of survival, the more that the negative acquires an interest of its own.

Literary history and information inferred from the history of texts have provided a wealth of challenging but unquestionably observable phenomena. If we reject palaeographical positivism, we are not simply cut adrift on a sea of speculation. Extant books of course teach us an enormous amount about the *realia* of how texts were copied and read, but Latin book-culture can be preserved even without our having still the physical evidence of contemporary books. I hope, therefore, that we shall not pursue the notion of counting them and drawing conclusions from numbers.

Hitherto I have spoken only of Latin books. But Ireland has preserved the richest tradition of vernacular writing from all early medieval Europe. It used to be customary to treat the three principal glossed books as the earliest monuments of the Irish language, preserving the uncontaminated linguistic purity of Old Irish in the interstices of Latin books: first, the Pauline Epistles now in Würzburg;¹⁷⁵ second, the heavily-glossed Psalter commentary taken from Ireland to Bobbio around the beginning of the ninth century;¹⁷⁶ and third, the glossed copy of Priscian’s *Instructiones grammaticae* from St Gallen,¹⁷⁷ which contains among its

as a single leaf from a twelfth-century copy, now Göttingen, Stiftsb., XII. 1, Nr. 33. The so-called Codex Salmanticensis, made in Ireland in the late fourteenth century, included the same Life, now imperfect, ed. W. W. Heist, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae e codice Salmanticensi* (Brussels 1965) 410–13. The origin of the text is discussed by D. Ó Corráin, ‘Foreign connections and domestic politics: Killaloe and the Uí Briain in twelfth-century hagiography’, *Ireland in early mediaeval Europe: studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes* (Cambridge 1982) 213–231.

175. Würzburg, MS M. p. th. f. 12 (saec. viii^{ca}), CLA 9.1403. The standard edition remains TP i 499–712; the samples printed by R. Thurneysen, *Old Irish reader*, ed. D. A. Binchy & O. J. Bergin (Dublin 1949) 2–11 (Eph 1–6), 11–13 (Hb 5–6), and 42–4 (Rm 14), give a fuller sense of the comments in Latin and Irish; a facsimile edition was produced a century ago by L. C. Stern, *Epistolae beati Pauli glosatae glosa interlineali: irisch-lateinischer Codex der Würzburger Universitätsbibliothek in Lichtdruck herausgegeben* (Halle 1910).

176. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS C. 301 inf. (saec. viii/ix), CLA 3.326. Printed by Stokes & Strachan, TP i 7–483; also published in facsimile, ed. R. I. Best, *The commentary on the psalms in Old Irish preserved in the Ambrosian Library (MS C. 301 inf.)* (Dublin 1936).

177. St Gallen, MS 904 (saec. ix 2/4). Printed by Stokes & Strachan, TP ii 49–224; ed. R. Hofman, *The Sankt Gallen Priscian commentary* (Münster 1996).

glosses archaisms suggesting that some of these glosses had been added in the seventh century to the exemplar from which this manuscript was copied.¹⁷⁸ The glosses provided the linguistic control for understanding the age of continuous texts transmitted in Ireland only in manuscripts of a much later date. How extensive this rich literature is, no one precisely knows, for we have no catalogue of Old and Middle Irish texts, and such a catalogue, well-founded on an understanding of the manuscripts, is much to be desired.

One may contrast Neil Ker's *Catalogue of manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon*, first published in 1957, which could serve as foundation for a catalogue of Old English texts.¹⁷⁹ Old English texts travel almost entirely in manuscripts written before the language changed into Middle English, and there is a clear boundary, both linguistically and in the manuscript evidence, between Old and Middle English literature. The periodisation of Old and Middle Irish—seventh to twelfth centuries—runs alongside Old English, and in each case a gulf in manuscript evidence and in language separates them from the language of the later fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. The great majority of early Irish texts, however, are preserved in manuscripts written in the later fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth century, and later—that is manuscripts from the other side of the gulf. The quantity of writing in Middle English is vastly greater than that in late medieval Irish, but from the early period there is hugely more to read in Old and Middle Irish than in Old English—yet almost all of it was transmitted invisibly down the centuries in manuscripts that perished long ago. Only three manuscript collections are earlier than 1200, most are later than 1350, and many old texts survive only in copies made in the sixteenth century.¹⁸⁰

In O'Brien's edition of genealogical texts, for example, one finds (with surprise and relief amid the welter of disarticulated lineages) a few pages of continuous

178. J. Strachan, 'On the language of the St Gall glosses', *Z Celt Philol* 4 (1903) 470–92.

179. N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford 1957; repr. with supplement, Oxford 1990). There is no catalogue of works in Old English. The two would be wholly complementary.

180. The three earliest are Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B. 502 (saec. xii^m–xii¹), ed. K. Meyer, *Rawlinson B. 502: a collection of pieces in prose and verse, compiled during the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Oxford 1909); Dublin, RIA, MS 23 E. 35 (cat. 1229), *Lebor na hUidhre* (saec. xii^m), ed. R. I. Best & O. J. Bergin (Dublin 1929); Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1339 (H. 2. 18), with a detached quire, now Dublin, University College, OFM, MS A 3 (saec. xii², not before 1151×c.1189), 'Book of Leinster', 'Lebar na Núachongbála', ed. R. I. Best, O. J. Bergin, M. A. O'Brien, & A. O'Sullivan, *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála* (6 vols Dublin 1954–83).

prose on the origins of the Airgialla peoples.¹⁸¹ The oldest manuscript has not preserved an Old Irish text, but in O'Brien's apparatus no fewer than four later witnesses agree with remarkable consistency on Old Irish grammatical forms. These were not orally preserved, and one must wonder what stages of copying lie between the late medieval compilations now extant and the lost ninth-century manuscript to which the tradition takes us back. Does the consistently accurate preservation of Old Irish grammatical forms indicate that a ninth-century exemplar was used by several copyists in the fifteenth century? The case of Φ in Latin shows that such a thing is possible.¹⁸² The wealth of Old and Middle Irish literature may be divided between a small fraction preserved in early manuscripts that were taken to the Continent and kept in benign neglect and a great majority whose early transmission lay within Ireland but of which no early manuscript evidence survives.

When did the Irish begin to compose texts in their own language? There are complex arguments relating to the ogam alphabet and the orthographies used in first writing Irish words in the Roman alphabet, but these hardly lead us towards the composing of continuous texts. The earliest glosses need not take us back to the beginnings of Irish, but it is now accepted that there are texts from the first half of the seventh century, perhaps earlier. It is surely an extraordinary testimony to Irish book-culture that works were composed and written in the vernacular, in some cases—as Thomas Charles-Edwards has shown—in lively interaction with Latin school prose.¹⁸³ *Apgitir chrábaid* 'Alphabet of piety' is a short Irish prose work, coeval with our earliest Latin manuscripts from Ireland.¹⁸⁴ What did the earliest copy look like? If only we knew! Were such texts first copied just as a single gathering, or even a leaf or two of parchment, folded and tucked between the leaves of Latin books? We have a well known example in the short text transcribed in a late-eighth-century copy of the *Hibernensis*, made in

181. M. A. O'Brien, *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin 1962) 147–52; partial translation by M. A. O'Brien, 'Irish origin legends', in *Early Irish society*, ed. M. Dillon (Dublin 1954) 36–51: 46–50.

182. Above, 17–18 and n 58.

183. T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The *Corpus iuris hibernici*', *Studia Hibernica* 20 (1980) 141–62.

184. This prose text survives in manuscripts of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries but may be dated to the beginning of the seventh century; ed. V. E. Hull, '*Apgitir chrábaid*: the alphabet of piety', *Celtica* 8 (1968) 44–89; P. P. Ó Néill, 'The date and authorship of *Apgitir chrábaid*: some internal evidence', in *Irland und die Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin & M. Richter (Stuttgart 1987) 203–15. Thurneysen in 1936, Hull in 1968, and David Greene in 1977 have all allowed a date hardly later than AD 600.

Francia, where what is now known as the Cambrai homily was not understood by the copyist.¹⁸⁵ Or were there already whole books of Irish texts even before the making of *Cín Drommo Snechtai*?¹⁸⁶

It would take me too far from my purpose to explore the period, from the beginning of the ninth century, when Irish writing and reading began to encroach on genres where Latin had hitherto dominated. It is a development that may amount to a change of interest sufficient to explain why so little survives of the Latin books studied in Ireland before that period and why so much survives in Irish, even if only in a form copied and recopied down the centuries.

For early copies of texts in either language, and for anything beyond reliquary books in Latin, we must look outside Ireland. The evidence is spatially removed. For vernacular texts that did survive in Ireland, there are no early copies: the evidence is displaced in time.

But books from Ireland that travelled abroad clearly demonstrate that we are not dealing with an absence of early material. We are dealing with a considerable body of material that has survived, if I may say so, in the wrong place. Of all the 'holes' in the surviving manuscript evidence, Ireland alone is represented by a wide and diverse range of export evidence than includes actual manuscripts, texts composed there, and texts transmitted through Ireland.

I do wonder what the result would be if one calculated the ratio of pre-800 Latin books *in* Francia and those exported *from* Francia in the early middle ages: applying that ratio in reverse to books surviving outside Ireland to estimate a

185. The Cambrai homily, as it is usually known, is printed in its manuscript context, Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 679 (619) (AD 763×790), CLA 6.741, ff 37^r–38^r, by Waserschleben, *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, 70–71, where it interrupts *Hib.* 21.24, and edited by W. Stokes & J. Strachan, TP ii 244–47. See also P. P. Ó Néill, 'The background to the Cambrai homily', *Ériu* 32 (1981) 137–48; P. Ní Chatháin, 'A reading in the Cambrai homily', *Celtica* 21 (1990) 417. The Irish prose of the homily has been thought to date from the mid-seventh century, with the inference that 'the practice of writing prose in Old Irish was clearly well established by that date' (Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early medieval Ireland 400–1200* (London 1995) 203).

186. It was Thurneysen who brought together the evidence that a group of Irish prose texts were all said to derive from a manuscript known as *Cín Drommo Snechtai*, 'Zu irischen Handschriften und Litteraturdenkmälern, 1: Cín Dromma Snechta', *Abh K Ges Wiss Göttingen*, phil-hist Kl., NF 14/2 (Berlin 1912) 23–30. Exploration of its contents continues, for example, T. Ó Concheanainn, 'A Connacht medieval literary heritage: texts derived from Cín Drommo Snechtai through Leabhar na hUidhre', *Camb Mediev Celt Stud* 16 (1988) 1–40; John Carey, 'On the inter-relationships of some *Cín Dromma Snechtai* texts', *Ériu* 46 (1995) 71–92.

‘normal’ number of expected survivors in Ireland might produce a surprisingly large figure.¹⁸⁷

The hole is not a black hole out of which even light cannot emerge, but a white hole [*definition*: ‘a celestial object which expands outwards from a space-time singularity emitting energy, in the manner of a time-reversed black hole’], a vivid testimony to a culture that could send out its wandering scholars with their books across much of Europe. If so much was emitted, the centre of production must have burnt bright indeed, and we should devote our efforts to reversing time and following books and textual traditions back towards their points of origin. The early origins of Irish book-culture and its diverse influence—to say nothing of its early vernacular literature—rightly make it a particularly interesting strand within the wider context of the transmission and circulation of books between late antiquity and the Carolingian age.

187. Diagrams in the German wikipedia entry for *Codices latini antiquiores* allow one to see the proportions of manuscripts by origin in five main regions of preservation and to gain some sense of numbers migrating; they take account of date of writing but not date of migration, they combine the figures for Great Britain and Ireland, and they do not allow one to see what proportion of a region’s production survives elsewhere. To make up some figures, *exempli gratia*, therefore, (say) 400 Latin manuscripts of Frankish origin survive from before AD 800, 80% of them still in Francia, 20% of them exported in the early middle ages, then multiplying (say) 60–80, a plausible number of surviving Irish-made books exported from Ireland at an early date, by the ratio 8:2 would predict that, with equivalent chances of survival, there would be 240–320 books still in Ireland.