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Of Saxons, a Viking and Normans: Colmán, Gerald and the Monastery of Mayo

MÁIRE NÍ MHAONAIGH

SOMETIME DURING THE LAST YEARS of the eighth century or the early years of the ninth, as the impact of the first Viking raids was being felt in Britain and Ireland, Alcuin of York, and later counsellor to Charlemagne and abbot of Tours, wrote to kinsmen, *peregrini* of the monastery of Mayo, placing especial emphasis on their great learning and urging them to educate the most barbarous people amongst whom they served.¹ As Charles Plummer remarked, this represents a marked contrast to the cultural climate depicted by Bede more than fifty years earlier, in which learned Irishmen imparted knowledge to their English counterparts at home and in Northumbria in particular.² Indeed, according to Aidan's alleged predecessor as bishop of Lindisfarne, an Irishman *austerioris animi* ('of a more austere disposition'), it was in fact the English who were *homines indomabiles et durae ac barbarae mentis* ('an ungovernable people, of obstinate and barbarous temperament').³ And while neither Alcuin nor Bede was a disinterested observer, and their accounts can scarcely be taken at face value, they provide evidence nonetheless for lively and varied intercourse in both directions across the Irish Sea.

Not least because of Bede's relatively detailed description of the part played by Irish clerics in the Christianisation of England, the possibility of hibernicising influences on Anglo-Saxon intellectual endeavours has received

¹ Ernst Dümmler (ed.), *Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH), 4 vols. (Berlin 1895) II, 445–6 (no. 287). For discussion of this and other early sources pertaining to the Mayo monastery, see Nora K. Chadwick, 'Bede, St Colmán and the Irish abbey of Mayo', in Kenneth Jackson and Nora K. Chadwick (eds.), *Celt and Saxon: studies in the early British border* (Cambridge 1963) 186–205, and Vera Orschel, 'Mag nEó na Sacsan: an English colony in Ireland in the seventh and eighth centuries', *Peritia* 15 (2001), 81–107.

² Charles Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historia Ecclesiastica*, 2 vols. (Oxford 1896) II, 210, hereafter *HE*; see also Chadwick, 'Bede', 194.

³ *HE* 3.5.

considerable scholarly attention.⁴ Notwithstanding the difficulties involved in isolating what Charles Wright has termed the Irish strand in the English cultural weave,⁵ plausible connections between the two traditions have been identified in certain cases. Kathleen Hughes has demonstrated the extent to which early English private prayers are indebted to their Irish counterparts,⁶ while Wright himself has highlighted ways in which Old English homiletic literature drew on Irish sources.⁷ In the same way, J. E. Cross and Pádraig Ó Riain have shown how the martyrologies of the two countries were intertwined.⁸ Latin texts were undoubtedly the means by which such traditions were disseminated; establishing direct links between the vernacular literatures is a far more difficult task. Howard Meroney identified specific Irish words and phrases in Old English charms,⁹ presumably transferred to the Anglo-Saxons in a learned, Latinate milieu. The same scholarly environment may well underlie what has been perceived to be an Irish tone in some Old English elegies, the *Seafarer* in particular.¹⁰ Yet other correspondences are best explained with reference to universal poetic features.¹¹ Similarly, occasional

⁴ See, for example, Kathleen Hughes, 'Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English from the synod of Whitby to the Viking Age', in Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (eds.), *England before the Conquest: studies in primary sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock* (Cambridge 1971) 49–67; David N. Dumville, "'Beowulf" and the Celtic world: the uses of evidence', *Traditio: studies in ancient and medieval history, thought and religion* 37 (1981), 109–60: 109–21; Charles D. Wright, *The Irish tradition in Old English literature*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 6 (Cambridge 1993).

⁵ Wright, *The Irish tradition*, 3; for Wright's analysis of the difficulties, see pp. 3–5, 10–11, 15–20, 30–1, 34–5 in particular.

⁶ Kathleen Hughes, 'Some aspects of Irish influence on early English private prayer', *Studia Celtica* 5 (1970), 48–61.

⁷ Wright, *The Irish tradition*; see also his earlier works 'Docet Deus, Docet Diabolus: a Hiberno-Latin theme in an Old English body-and-soul homily', *Notes and Queries* 232 (1987), 451–3; 'Apocrypha Priscillianistica', in F. M. Biggs, T. D. Hill and P. Szarmach (eds.), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon literary culture: a trial version* (Binghampton NY 1990) 69–70; 'The pledge of the soul: a judgment theme in Old English homiletic literature and Cynewulf's *Elene*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 91 (1990), 23–30.

⁸ J. E. Cross, 'The influence of Irish texts and traditions on the *Old English Martyrology*', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 81 (1981), 173–92; Pádraig Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland: the evidence of the Martyrology of Tallaght*, H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 3 (Cambridge 1993). See also earlier work by John Hennig, 'The place of Irish saints in medieval English calendars', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5th ser. 82:2 (1954), 93–106, and 'Britain's place in the early Irish martyrologies', *Medium Ævum* 26 (1957), 17–24.

⁹ H. Meroney, 'Irish in the Old English charms', *Speculum* 20 (1945), 172–82.

¹⁰ Colin Ireland, 'Some analogues of the OE *Seafarer* from Hiberno-Latin sources', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 91 (1991), 1–14.

¹¹ Karl Reichl, 'Zur Frage des irischen Einflusses auf die altenglische weltliche Dichtung', in Heinz Löwe (ed.), *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart 1982) I, 138–68: 159–60. By contrast, P. L. Henry has argued that Irish and Welsh lyric poetry has exerted a formative influence on its English counterpart: *The early English and Celtic lyric* (London 1966).

parallels between particular passages in *Beowulf* and a variety of Irish narratives notwithstanding, the author of the poem is scarcely likely to have been immersed in Irish literary tradition.¹²

Nevertheless, opportunities for becoming familiar with the imaginative endeavours of the neighbouring island were manifold, as the testimony of Bede and of his contemporary, Aldhelm, suggests. These were afforded to those not merely in Irish-dominated Northumbria but in such far-flung places as Canterbury, East Anglia and Sussex as well, in each of which Irish ecclesiastics served.¹³ In addition, many Englishmen went to Ireland to study, including Willibrord, Tuda, Wihtberht and the two Hewalds, according to Bede.¹⁴ The Irish undoubtedly learned from their English contemporaries, yet Anglo-Saxon influence on Irish literary material appears far from dominant. Such traces as there are, however, indicate that the twin centres of Iona and Lindisfarne frequently played a key part in the process of transmission.¹⁵ Also significant in this regard were English ecclesiastical centres in Ireland, as Ó Riain's elucidation of the possible role of Egberht of Rathmelsigi in the transfer of the breviary edition of the Hieronymian Martyrology to Ireland indicates.¹⁶

The Monastery of Mayo

Rathmelsigi, which has been identified by Kenneth Nicholls as Cluain Melsige (Clonmelsh, Co. Carlow),¹⁷ is one of two English communities in Ireland mentioned by Bede.¹⁸ Important primarily for the close connections between its inmates and the English mission in Frisia, its chief member was the aforementioned Egberht who was prevented from going to preach abroad himself and who sent first the ineffectual Wihtberht and then the more successful Willibrord in his stead.¹⁹ It has been speculated that Bishop

¹² Andy Orchard, *A critical companion to 'Beowulf'* (Cambridge 2003) 123–4; Reichl, 'Zur Frage', 139–54.

¹³ Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (trs.), *Aldhelm: the prose works* (Cambridge and Totowa NJ 1979) 144, 163; *HE* 3.19 and 4.13; see Dumville, "'Beowulf'", 115.

¹⁴ *HE* 3.13, 3.26–7, 5.9, 5.10; for others, see Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the earliest Echternach manuscripts', *Peritia* 3 (1984), 17–49: 22 and n 36, and Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 83 n 7.

¹⁵ See Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi', 23; a destroyed rath on the site lends support to the identification: see Thomas Fanning, 'Appendix: some field monuments in the townlands of Clonmelsh and Garryhundun, Co. Carlow', *Peritia* 3 (1984), 43–9.

¹⁸ *HE* 3.27.

¹⁹ *HE* 3.27, 5.9, 5.22. See Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi', and Ó Cróinín, 'Is the Augsburg gospel codex a Northumbrian manuscript?', in Gerald Bonner, David Rollason and Clare Stancliffe

Ecgberht may also have had an association with Mayo, the other English foundation in Ireland known to Bede.²⁰ Founded by Colmán, bishop of Lindisfarne, if Bede's testimony is to be believed it was still occupied by English monks in his own time: *iamdudum . . . egregium examen continet monachorum, qui de provincia anglorum ibidem collecti . . . uiuant* ('it now contains a remarkable body of monks so that they, gathered from English provinces, should live there').²¹ Alcuin's letter *ad patres Mugensis ecclesiae* ('to the monks of Mayo'), mentioned above, as well as his earlier correspondence *ad Leutfredum episcopum coenobii Mugensis in Hibernia* ('with Leodfrith, bishop of the monastery of Mayo in Ireland'),²² bears witness to continued Anglo-Saxon involvement there as Viking raiding on Ireland began.

Bede evidently judged Mayo to be of some significance—*grande de modico effectum* ('from small beginnings it has now become very large')²³—since he provided a relatively detailed account of its foundation. As what may be the earliest attested source pertaining to the monastery, his narrative will be considered briefly here. After the synod of Whitby in 664, when the Roman way of calculating the date of Easter was adopted, Colmán, a proponent of the Irish method of observance, went to Ireland, via Iona: *tulit secum omnes quos in Lindisfarnensium insula congregauerat Scottos, sed et de gente Anglorum uiros circiter xxx, qui utriusque monachicae conuersationis erant studiis imbuti* ('he took with him all the Irish he had brought together at the island of Lindisfarne, together with about thirty English, both groups having been instructed in the duties of monastic life').²⁴ Having established an island monastery at Inis Bó Finne (Inishboffin), off the coast of Mayo, he set up a separate community specifically for the English at Mayo, since relations between them and their fellow Irish clerics had broken down.²⁵ The land for the new foundation was acquired from a *comes* who, specifying that the monks who settled there *pro ipso etiam . . . preces offerrent* ('should also offer prayers for him'), assisted in the building of the monastery, along with

(eds.), *St Cuthbert, his cult and his community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge and Wolfeboro NH 1989) 189–201: 193–5.

²⁰ Hermann Moisl, 'Das Kloster Iona und seine Verbindungen mit dem Kontinent im siebten und achten Jahrhundert', in Heinz Dopsch and Roswitha Juffinger (eds.), *Virgil von Salzburg: Missionar und Gelehrter* (Salzburg 1985) 27–37. See also Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 93–5.

²¹ *HE* 4.4.

²² Dümmler, *Epistoli* II, 19 (no. 2) and 445–6 (no. 287); Stephen Allott (ed. and tr.), *Alcuin of York: his life and letters* (York 1974) 43–5; for discussion of the letters, see Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 98–100.

²³ *HE* 4.4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; his retreat to Iona is also described in *HE* 3.26.

²⁵ The Irish are depicted as scroungers, not assisting at harvest time, yet partaking in winter of what the English monks had gathered: *HE* 4.4.

his neighbours.²⁶ The nobleman in question is unnamed but a gloss in the St Petersburg—formerly Leningrad—manuscript (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, Q. v. I. 18) claims that he was Éndae (where the Latin form 'Endeus' might be expected), descendant of another Éndae: *.i. Endae de progenie prioris Endi*.²⁷ Who this Éndae was is unclear. One might speculate on the significance of the fact that an earlier Éndae, son of Amolngaid who gave his name to Tír nAmolngada, the area west of the River Moy in Mayo, is hailed in Tírechán's late seventh-century *Collectanea* for bestowing *filium meum et partem hereditatis meae . . . Deo Patricii et Patricio* ('my son and part of my inheritance . . . to the God of Patrick and to Patrick').²⁸ Might a later writer familiar with the Patrician text have wished to suggest a link with this earlier act of generosity by claiming that it was an otherwise unknown descendant of Éndae mac Amolngada who donated land for the Mayo church? Another Éndae, son of Níall Noígíallach, while not named, features in an ambiguous tale elsewhere in the *Collectanea*.²⁹ Associated with the territory of Crích Éndai Chonnacht to the north-east of Mayo, he is afforded a fuller role in the elaboration of the story in Patrick's vernacular Life, the *Vita Tripartita* based perhaps on an eighth-century Latin Life, offering to the northern saint his newborn son, as well as the child's inheritance.³⁰ As a result, it was with Patrick's Armagh that specific churches of the territory associated with Éndae's name were affiliated *conda forslaic Nuada, ab Aird Macha* ('until Núadu, abbot of Armagh, released them').³¹ As Thomas Charles-Edwards has noted, the context of this story may be a visit that Núadu made to Connacht in 811.³² It may be, therefore, that the region's rulers had already begun to forge new links with establishments closer to home and that it is in this context that the specific reference to a donor named Éndae, descendant of an earlier Éndae, might be tentatively read. Writing sometime in the second half of the eighth century probably at Wearmouth-Jarrow, as Michael Lapidge has shown,³³ the scribe of the St Petersburg

²⁶ *HE* 4.4.

²⁷ I owe this information to the generosity of Professor Michael Lapidge to whom I am grateful for much discussion on the topic.

²⁸ Ludwig Bieler (ed.), *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 10 (Dublin 1979) 134, ll. 29–34; for discussion, see Catherine Swift, 'Tírechán's motives in compiling the *Collectanea*', *Ériu* 45 (1994), 53–82: 72–3, and Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge 2000) 47–8.

²⁹ Bieler, *The Patrician texts*, §16(4); Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 28.

³⁰ Kathleen Mulchrone (ed.), *Bethu Phátraic: the Tripartite Life of Patrick* (Dublin 1939) 50–1, ll. 867–92; see Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 30–1.

³¹ Mulchrone, *Bethu Phátraic*, 51, l. 888.

³² Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 30, n 81.

³³ He considers the St Petersburg manuscript (L) and Tiberius A. xiv (B) to be independent copies of a lost hyparchetype which cannot be earlier than 748 (pers. comm.). See also André

(Leningrad) Bede may conceivably have drawn on some Irish source reflecting this development,³⁴ although all this must remain highly speculative. In any event, the identification of the *comes* cannot be shown to date from Bede's own time. To whomsoever the venerable monk attributed the donation of land for the foundation, he deemed the way of life practised at Mayo to be a great success: *ad exemplum uenerabilium patrum sub regula et abbate canonico in magna continentia et sinceritate proprio labore manuum uiuant* ('they live after the example of the venerable fathers under a Rule, having an abbot elected canonically, in great devotion and austerity and supporting themselves by the labour of their own hands').³⁵

If the identity of Mayo's endower is uncertain, who precisely its founder, Colmán, may have been is also unclear. His association with Inis Bó Finne is corroborated in annalistic sources which begin to be contemporary about the time the monastery came into being. In 668 there took place, according to the Annals of Ulster, *naugatio Columbani episcopi [cum] reliquis sanctorum ad Insulam Uacce Albae, in qua fundauit aeclesiam* ('the voyage of Columbanus with the relics of the saints, to Inis Bó Finne, where he founded a church').³⁶ The unknown relics have been replaced by 'other saints' in the seventeenth-century chronicle, the Annals of the Four Masters,³⁷ echoing more closely Bede's account. Similarly, on his death eight years later, he is described as *episcopus Insole Uacce Albe* in his annalistic obits.³⁸ It is with Inis Bó Finne that he is also linked in the early ninth-century martyrology, *Féilire Oengusso*, as well as in the perhaps eleventh-century collection of saints' genealogies.³⁹

Preceding him in the genealogical list is *Colman Maige Eo* ('Colmán of Mayo'), evidently a separate saint in the view of the compiler.⁴⁰ However, Colmán is not connected with Mayo in other Irish sources. The Anglo-Saxon

Crépin, 'Introduction', I, 51, in André Crépin, Michael Lapidge, Pierre Monat and Philippe Robin, *Bède le Vénérable: Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, 3 vols., Sources Chrétiennes 489–91 (Paris 2005), for which reference I am grateful to my colleague, Dr Rosalind Love.

³⁴ This was, of course, the period in which Alcuin was writing not only to the bishop of Mayo, but also to Irishmen, the *magister*, Colcu, and the latter's pupil, Joseph (Dümmmler, *Epistolae* II, 31–3 (no. 7), 33–4 (no. 8)), indicating close co-operation between ecclesiastics on both sides of the Irish Sea.

³⁵ HE 4.4. For Bede's account, see Chadwick, 'Bede', 188–91, and Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 86–8.

³⁶ AU². See also CS, 100–1, and Whitley Stokes (ed. and tr.), 'The Annals of Tigernach: third fragment, AD 489–766', *Revue celtique* 17 (1896) 119–263 (hereafter ATig), 200, where the correct form of the name, Colmán, is found.

³⁷ *Go naomhaibh oile inmaile fris* ('together with other saints'): Annals of the Four Masters (hereafter AFM) 667.

³⁸ AU² 676. See also CS, 104–5, and ATig, 203, where he is called 'Columba' and 'Columban' respectively.

³⁹ MartO 8 August; Pádraig Ó Riain (ed.), *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin 1985) 707.307.

⁴⁰ Ó Riain, *Corpus*, 707.207.

character of that ecclesiastical community is confirmed by the names of a number of its eighth-century bishops, one of whom, Leodfrith, with whom Alcuin corresponded, we have already encountered. He succeeded to the episcopacy in 773, according to an annalistic text attributed to Symeon of Durham.⁴¹ His predecessor, Hadwinus (Eadwune), ordained in 768 according to the same source, and Leodfrith's probable successor, Ealdwulf, who is mentioned under 786, are also likely to have been Saxon by birth.⁴² That they remained in contact with their homeland is indicated by Alcuin's letters which form part of the close interaction between Mayo and York. Ealdwulf was actually consecrated bishop by Eanbald, archbishop of York, in Corbridge.⁴³ Furthermore, in the same year, 786, he was present at a synod pertaining to York organised by the papal legate, subscribing to its decrees, along with the Northumbrian bishops.⁴⁴ An association with Iona, however, has also been demonstrated with reference to sculptural parallels in the two areas.⁴⁵ Notwithstanding this, it is with the Saxons that it is primarily associated, as a description of it as *Mag nÉo na Sacsan* ('Mayo of the Saxons'), on its burning in 783, indicates.⁴⁶ Moreover, in the Annals of the Four Masters, the longer form of the name is occasionally used down to the fifteenth century,⁴⁷ and the seventeenth-century annalist, Conell McGeoghegan, refers to 'the towne of Mayo in Conaught w^{ch} to this day is called Mayo of the english'.⁴⁸

The first usage of the extended place-name occurs in an entry in the Annals of Ulster for the year 732, recording the death of 'Garaalt', *pontifex*

⁴¹ Thomas Arnold (ed.), *Symeoni Monachi Opera Omnia*, Rolls Series 75, 2 vols. (London 1882–5) II, 3–283: 44–5; see Cyril Hart, 'Byrhtferth's Northumbrian chronicle', *Engl Hist Rev* 97 (1982), 558–82, and Michael Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the early sections of the *Historia Regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham', *Anglo-Saxon Eng* 10 (1982), 97–122.

⁴² Arnold, *Symeoni* II, 44–5, 50–1. Eadwune appears in the Annals of Ulster as Aedán in his death notice at 773: AU².

⁴³ Arnold, *Symeoni* II, 50–1; Dorothy Whitelock, *English historical documents c.500–1042* (2nd edn, London 1979) 243, 245.

⁴⁴ Arnold, *Symeoni* II, 51; Whitelock, *English historical documents*, 245–6; A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (eds.), *Councils and ecclesiastical documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1869–71) III, 460; Dümmmler, *Epistolae* II, 28. Cf. Hughes, 'Evidence for contacts', 51; Ó Cróinín, 'The Augsburg gospel codes', 200; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 320 and n 195; and Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 105–6.

⁴⁵ Dorothy Kelly, 'Some remains of high crosses in the west of Ireland', *J Roy Soc Antiq Ire* 123 (1993), 152–4, 162; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 320.

⁴⁶ AU².

⁴⁷ AFM 1169, 1176, 1209 and 1478.

⁴⁸ Denis Murphy (ed.), *The Annals of Clonmacnoise being Annals of Ireland from the earliest period to AD 1408 translated into English AD 1627 by Conell Mageoghagan* (Dublin 1896) (henceforth AClon), 9.

Maighe Heu Saxonum ('bishop of Mayo of the Saxons').⁴⁹ Gerald of Mayo similarly figures in a number of Irish martyrologies of which the Martyrology of Tallaght is the earliest.⁵⁰ He is also attested in a litany of Irish saints which Kathleen Hughes has suggested may be ninth-century in date.⁵¹ In the words of this source, *ccc. ar trib milib im Garald n-epsco pocus im .l. nóeb Luigni Connacht congabat Mag Eo na Saxan* ('3,300 including Bishop Gerald and fifty saints of Luigne in Connacht; they occupied Mayo of the Saxons').⁵² In addition, Garald *monachus* forms part of a list of correspondences between Irish and foreign saints preserved in the collection of saints' genealogies.⁵³

The existence of an eighth-century obit for Gerald in a number of annalistic compilations indicates that the entry may well be genuine and that his association with Mayo does in fact go back to this period. The entry in the Martyrology of Tallaght is supportive of this view, although this work underwent considerable revision as part of its incorporation into the late twelfth-century manuscript, the Book of Leinster,⁵⁴ and hence 'Garalt' could conceivably have been inserted at this point. Despite its Norman appearance, however, the name is attested earlier in the mid-ninth-century core of the Durham *Liber Vitae* as 'Garuald' and 'Geruald', of which 'Garalt' would be a suitable Irish rendering.⁵⁵ That its hibernisation had occurred by the third decade of the eighth century is surprising, but not impossible, and it is certainly what the annalistic obit appears to suggest. Be that as it may, it was in the Norman period that Gerald became popular, the production of his late

⁴⁹ AU². See also ATig, 236, and AFM 726 (CS is lacunous at this point). *Pontifex* is elsewhere used as the equivalent of *episcopus*: see Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 91, n 64.

⁵⁰ *Garalt Maigi Eo cum suis*: R. I. Best and H. J. Lawlor (eds. and trs.), *The martyrology of Tallaght from the Book of Leinster and MS 5100-4 in the Royal Library, Brussels*, Henry Bradshaw Society Series 67 (London 1931) (hereafter MartT) 12 March. See also John O'Donovan, James Henthorn Todd and William Reeves (eds. and trs.), *The martyrology of Donegal, a calendar of the saints of Ireland* (Dublin 1864) (hereafter MartD) and Whitley Stokes (ed. and tr.), *Féilire hui Gormáin: the martyrology of Gorman, edited from a manuscript in the Royal Library, Brussels*, Henry Bradshaw Society Publications 9 (London 1895) (hereafter MartG) 13 March.

⁵¹ K. Hughes, 'On an Irish litany of pilgrim saints compiled c.800', *Analecta Bollandiana* 77 (1959), 305-31.

⁵² O. J. Bergin, R. I. Best, M. A. O'Brien and Anne O'Sullivan (eds.), *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Níachongbála*, 6 vols. (1954-83) VI, 1699, ll. 52198-9; Charles Plummer (ed. and tr.), *Irish litanies: text and translation*, Henry Bradshaw Society 62 (London 1925) 56-7.

⁵³ Ó Riain, *Corpus*, 712.32, where he is linked with *Paucomius monachus*.

⁵⁴ Hennig, 'Britain's place', 23.

⁵⁵ 'Garuald' and 'Geruald' are attested in sections dated to c.800 × c.840: 'Garuald' 18v1, 38v1, 'Geruald' 22v1, 27r1, 28r1, 29v1, 34v1, 38r1, 39r1; see www.dlv.org.uk; I am grateful to my colleague, Dr Paul Russell, for providing me with access to an electronic version of some of the names of the Durham *Liber Vitae*. For earlier discussion, see Hughes, 'Evidence', 51, and Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 90.

Latin *vita* bearing eloquent testimony to this fact.⁵⁶ Preserved in the Oxford collection of saints' Lives in a pair of interlinked fourteenth-century manuscripts, one of which at least has a connection with Saints' Island on Lough Ree,⁵⁷ *vita sancti Geraldii abbatis de Magh Eo* presents a comprehensive, though in Richard Sharpe's words 'extremely fabulous', version of Gerald's Life.⁵⁸

Life of St Gerald

Summary

Both Colmán and Gerald in fact feature in his Life since the Lindisfarne bishop is depicted as instructor to Gerald and his three brothers. On Colmán's expulsion in the wake of the Easter controversy, out of love for their master and in recognition of the probity of his moral stance, Gerald and his siblings *cum tribus milibus bone uoluntatis uirorum* ('with 3,000 men of good will') journeyed with him to Ireland.⁵⁹ Two contributory factors in their decision to go into exile are also given—avoidance of their criminal father, Cusperius, as well as a desire to fulfil the mandate of the Lord in the most perfect way by resorting to the conventional step of abandoning one's country.⁶⁰ Colmán's role is therefore modified and he plays no further part in the Life.

Entrusting themselves entirely to God while at sea, as was hagiographical custom, *ad hostium fluminis Muady in terra Conactie applicuerunt* ('they came to the mouth of the River Moy in Connacht'), where *crudelis regulus* ('a cruel ruler') named Ailill was king.⁶¹ Having captured Gerald and his men, Ailill attempted to trick the saint into resurrecting a son in place of his dead daughter. Seeing through him, Gerald responded: *licet sit natus uel nata, Deus qui est condonator uite, et cui omnia possibilia sunt, masculum tibi resuscitare*

⁵⁶ Richard Sharpe has postulated a thirteenth-century date for its composition: *Medieval Irish saints' lives: an introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford 1991) 7; see also Chadwick, 'Bede', 196-7.

⁵⁷ Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' Lives*, 247-73.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 7. The Life has been edited by Charles Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 2 vols. (Oxford 1909) II, 107-15.

⁵⁹ Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 108 §ii.

⁶⁰ Here expressed as a dictum: *exi de terra tua, et de cognatione tua, et de domo patris tua* ('leave your own land and all that is familiar to you and the home of your father'): *ibid.* 108 §iii. For this so-called 'white martyrdom', see Clare Stancliffe, 'Red, white and blue martyrdom', in Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick and David Dumville (eds.), *Ireland in early mediaeval Europe: studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes* (Cambridge 1982) 21-46.

⁶¹ Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* II, 108 §iv.

dignetur ('whether son or daughter, God who is the giver of life and for whom everything is possible, may deem it worthy to bring back a male'). A young man was indeed resurrected who was baptised and given the name Cathal.⁶² Amplifying the land grant made by his father, he it was who bestowed upon Gerald *locum monasterii* ('a place for a monastery'), which came to be known as Elitheria.⁶³ This is associated at a later point in the Life with the saint's sister, Sigresie, who, along with a hundred saints and fifty of Gerald's disciples, dies of the plague.⁶⁴

It was at least one miracle later that the monastery of Mayo was established on land donated by *rex famosus Conactensium, Ragallus nomine* ('a famous king of Connacht whose name was Ragall[ach]').⁶⁵ The name of the foundation, Maguncia, may have prompted the telling of Gerald's first miracle in the place involving a druid (*magus*) whose attempts to extinguish the saint's fire have much in common with a broadly similar episode in Muirchú's Life of Patrick.⁶⁶ After countless such miracles (*post innumera miracula*), Gerald is said to have died in Mayo on 3 March.⁶⁷ His miraculous power is deemed to have endured, however, and he is portrayed as assisting both a man and a poor widow when a Viking, *Turgetius Noruagiensis, tyrannus ualde crudelis* ('Tuirgéis of Norway, a terrible tyrant') destroyed the church of Mayo in the Viking period.⁶⁸

Commentary

There is much in Gerald's Life that is standard hagiographical fare; nonetheless the less conventional passages shed some light on the circumstances of its composition and on some of the sources upon which its author drew. Of the saint's postulated father, Cusperius, nothing is known. His mother's name, Benicia, on the other hand, as Nora Chadwick has claimed, may deliberately seek to echo 'Bernicia' from which kingdom Gerald, together with his master, Colmán, set forth.⁶⁹ His brothers also bear Saxon names, Balanus, Berikertus and Hucbritannus.⁷⁰ Moreover, two of them have been linked to other

⁶² Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* II, 109–10 §v.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 110 §vi.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 114 §xiv.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 111 §viii.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 111–12 §ix; Bieler, *The Patrician texts*, 85–9.

⁶⁷ Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* II, 114–15 §xiv.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 115 §xvi.

⁶⁹ See Chadwick, 'Bede', 198.

⁷⁰ He has been identified with 'Uildbrit' and 'Huiltbrith' of the martyrologies: MartT 36 and MartG 82. See William Reeves, 'St Beretchert of Tullylease', *Ulster J Archaeol* 6 (1858), 267–85: 268, and Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 91–2 and n 69.

English ecclesiastical sites. Ballon is associated with Tech Saxan (Templegal, Co. Galway) in the twelfth-century Martyrology of Gorman,⁷¹ while Berchert is frequently found in conjunction with Tulach Léis na Saxan (Tullylease, Co. Cork).⁷²

His sister, Segretia/Sigresie, is not attested elsewhere. However, the plague of which she dies is termed *yctericia* ('jaundice'), in *Hibernico dicitur Budi Conayll* ('in Irish it is called "Buide Conaill"').⁷³ Also recorded in annalistic sources, ('Conall's yellow plague') is dated to the time of the co-rulership of two kings of Tara, Blathmacc and Diarmait mac Cerbaill, both of whom died thereof.⁷⁴ The account of the event in Gerald's Life is more detailed than any found elsewhere; it bears closest resemblance to the description of the event found in the preface to the hymn *Sén Dé* ('God's blessing'), in *Liber Hymnorum*. Ascribed to Colmán moccu Clusaig, a scholar at Cork, the work portrays Colmán fleeing with his followers to an island monastery, since the plague cannot go beyond nine waves.⁷⁵ It is tempting to suggest that the text was originally associated with another Colmán, bishop of Lindisfarne, creator of the insular community of Inis Bó Finne, as we have seen. If this is so, in grooming Gerald as founder of Mayo in place of Colmán in the Life, the author may well have adapted material which once formed part of the tradition of the better-known saint.

This material may also account for anachronistic references to Adomnán in Gerald's Life. Shortly before the Englishman's death, the Iona saint visited him in Mayo *ut fraternam cum eo contraheret societatem* ('so that he might establish a brotherhood with him'). Commending his church to Adomnán, Gerald elicited from the Columban saint a promise that the latter would defend Mayo on his demise.⁷⁶ This Adomnán is claimed to have duly done: *post eius uero obitum sanctus Adamnannus Maionensem ecclesiam per septem annos indefesse rexit* ('after his death holy Adomnán ruled the church of Mayo indefatigably for seven years'), linking it with Iona (*ad Ionensem perrexit abbatiam*) before his own death⁷⁷—if annalistic sources can be believed almost thirty years before that of Gerald.⁷⁸ The Columban connections of

⁷¹ MartG 168–8, 3 September.

⁷² P. Ó Lionaird, 'Early Irish grave slabs', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 61 (1961), 95–169: 154–5; Isabel Henderson and Elizabeth Okasha, 'Early Christian inscribed and carved stones of Tullylease, Co. Cork', *Cambrian Mediev Celt Stud* 24 (1992), 1–36.

⁷³ Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* II, 113 §xii.

⁷⁴ AU² 665.

⁷⁵ Whitley Stokes and John Strachan (eds. and trs.), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, 2 vols. (Cambridge 1901–3) II, 299.1–16.

⁷⁶ Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* II, 114 §xiv.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* II, 114–15 §xv.

⁷⁸ AU² 704 (Adomnán); AU² 732 (Gerald).

the Mayo saint's putative alter ego, Colmán, were strong. His sojourn at Iona on his return to Ireland is noted by Bede, as we have seen. Moreover, his first foundation of Inis Bó Finne may be that referred to in the margin of Columba's elegy, *Amra Coluim Chille*, as the westernmost point over which the influence of the first abbot of Iona extended.⁷⁹

Traditions originally associated with Colmán's monastery of Inis Bó Finne ('the island of the white cow') may also underlie the incident in the Life explaining the etymology of Gerald's earliest establishment, Elitheria. Deriving the name from *elitt* ('deer'), recalling a deer which spent its days in the monastery, the author's main focus is actually a cow donated along with its calf for the use of the monks. Milk production dried up, however, when the calf was killed by a wolf which was then ordered by Gerald to behave like the young animal it had killed. Unable to fool the cow in this way, the wolf stole a fawn and placed it under her udder. It was from the young deer's mother who came to the monastery seeking its offspring that the ecclesiastical establishment got its name.⁸⁰ Elitheria was identified by John Colgan as Roslee, six miles south-east of Castlebar, Co. Mayo, the original name of which he posited to be Ros Oilthrih.⁸¹ According to Vera Orschel, Nollaig Ó Muraile has derived Roslee more plausibly from *ros lao* ('wooded height of [the] calf'),⁸² and it may be that the story in Gerald's Life explains this name. Also attested as a place-name is Cell an Ailithir ('the pilgrim's church'), on the island of Garumna in western Connacht,⁸³ for which Elitheria might be an attempted latinisation and which would certainly be a suitable appellation for a monastery set up by one from overseas. While the onomastic history is elusive, therefore, various strands appear to be encapsulated in the tale, the cow of which may conceivably be the etymon of 'white cow island', Inis Bó Finne.

The story also serves to provide a solid Irish etymology for Elitheria (*cerua enim in Hibernico sonat idem quod elitt*, 'because "deer" in Irish sounds like *elitt*'),⁸⁴ the first community established by the Englishman Gerald. The saint's external origin is in fact exalted in the text, not least through his

portrayal as one who has abandoned his homeland for love of God,⁸⁵ as well as in the name of his first foundation, if it contains an echo of *ailithir* ('pilgrim'). The tyrant, Ailill, may react adversely on hearing *de adventu tante multitudinis alienigenarum ad provinciam* ('about the coming of such a foreigner into his territory').⁸⁶ However, Gerald's power and that of his companions was quickly revealed by a prudent emissary of God: *uidi quoque quosdam ex uobis specula in eos mittentes; set in nullo pertingunt, immo potius in litore maris cadunt, Deo eosdem protegente* ('I have also seen some of you throwing arrows at them but they did not touch anyone but rather fell on the shore of the sea because God was protecting them').⁸⁷ Moreover, the holy man is portrayed as maintaining contact with his homeland, sending one of three units of his brethren to England to obtain provisions.⁸⁸ Yet it is as defender of the Irish in the face of foreign attackers that he is depicted in his sole posthumous miracle, using his power to outwit the Viking tyrant, Tuirgéis.⁸⁹

Composed as Anglo-Normans were settling in Connacht, the Life's emphasis on an Englishman's adventures in Mayo is likely to have resonated with a contemporary audience. As the positive references to Gerald's foreign nature indicate, the author appears to display some sympathy with the settlers. Corann (Co. Sligo), one of the few places specifically mentioned in the Life, remained dominated by Irish for much of the thirteenth century. Portrayed in the text as disease-ridden, the territory's ruler, 'Etranus', a Latin rendering perhaps of an otherwise unidentified Odrán, was also struck down by plague. Newly arrived in the region, Gerald is believed to have power over illness and this is vividly displayed. Ordering all to shelter under his miraculous hood, the saint cured all who obeyed. In thanksgiving for having been saved, those healed offered their descendants to the *pastor pius* ('pious shepherd').⁹⁰

Gerald de Prendergast, from whom the Fitzgeralds were descended, held Corann for a period in the mid-thirteenth century and it may be that this state of affairs is being gently applauded by the hagiographer. A pair of castles was built by the de Burghs in the region in the 1260s and in 1300, shortly after which the de Cogans appear to have taken control.⁹¹ A member of this

⁷⁹ Whitley Stokes (ed. and tr.), 'The Bodleian *Amra Choluim Chille*', *Revue celtique* 20 (1899), 30–54, 132–83, 248–89, 400–37: *Cotrolass Oriens .i. comtromma ropo leis. Nó ro las Oriens ocus Occidens amal rogab Inis Bó Finne forsind fairce* ('Together Oriens blazed, i.e. equally was it his. Or Oriens blazed and also Occidens, as Inis Bó Finne is in the sea'): 170–1. Stokes, however, takes it as Inisboffin off the coast of Donegal (ibid. 171, n 1), as opposed to Chadwick who prefers the Connacht location: 'Bede', 193. See also Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 86–7.

⁸⁰ Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* II, 110 §vi.

⁸¹ John Colgan (ed.), *Actae sanctorum veteris et majoris Scotiae seu Hiberniae* (Louvain 1645; repr. Dublin 1948) 603; see Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 103, n 146.

⁸² Orschel, 'Mag nEó', 104.

⁸³ MartT 112. I am grateful to Dr Kevin Murray for this information.

⁸⁴ Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* II, 110 §vi.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 108 §iii.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 108 §iv. Ailill is also made to emphasise the monks' foreignness in the incident concerning his dead child, asking his counsellors and friends not to tell *hiis extraneis sanctis* ('these foreign saints') that it was his daughter who had died: ibid. 109 §v.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 109 §v.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 112 §x.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 115 §xvi.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 114 §xiv.

⁹¹ ACLon 244, 279.

family, John de Cogan, had been granted Cinéal Fechín, a territory in southern Connacht, by Richard de Burgh some years previously⁹² where, close to Duniry, he founded Ireland's only Charterhouse sometime between the years 1250 and 1256. Significantly, the Carthusians were granted fishing rights in the otherwise unidentified Lough Cullenan and in part of Lough Derg.⁹³ It may be that a reference to this event is preserved in the text and that the church of Mayo is attempting to assert control. In this connection we may note that Gerald is shown to be wiser than Fechín in their pronouncements concerning the plague of which the latter died. With regard to the Mayo saint, an angel is made to proclaim: *quia uero sanctur Geraldus abbas quod rectum est in oculis Domini iudicauit, diuina pietas ei pare* ('since the holy abbot, Gerald, judged what in the eyes of God is right, he will be spared').⁹⁴ In addition, the holy man succeeded in breaking a large rock which had been obstructing fishermen trying to fish in the River Moy. As a result *decimacionem piscature illius fluminis sancto Geraldo ac suis successoribus usque in speculum optulerunt* ('the tithe of fishery was given to Gerald and his successors forever').⁹⁵

This of course remains speculative, as does the significance of Gerald's dealings in the Life with a variety of Irish rulers. The first king the saint encounters, Ayllellus (Ailill) is hostile to him, as we have seen. His son, Catholus (Cathal), however, whom Gerald, as agent of God, brings into being, was baptised by the saint and blessed with strong rulers as descendants: *ex illo enim propter benedictionem uiri Dei multi ualentes proceres ac potentes in terra illa processerunt* ('from him, because of the benediction of the man of God, many strong chiefs and men came forth in that land').⁹⁶ A common family name among Uí Chonchobhair, the pre-eminent ruling dynasty in Connacht in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and beyond, 'Cathal' is likely to have brought that particular group to mind. Curiously, it is attested as the name of the son of the second Irish ruler mentioned in the text, Ragallus (Ragallach/Rogellach), if the man in question can be identified with Ragallach mac Uatach who was slain as king of Connacht in 649.⁹⁷ His

⁹² *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1226–1516*, 6 vols. (repr. London 1972) I, 289.

⁹³ Dom. A. Gray, 'Kinaleghin: a forgotten Irish Charterhouse of the thirteenth century', *J Roy Soc Antiq Ire* 89 (1959), 35–58: 40–1, 51–3, 55.

⁹⁴ Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* II, 113 §xii.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 111 §vii.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 110 §v.

⁹⁷ AU²; his death is also recorded in an additional entry AU² 656. His son, Cathal, died in 680: Francis J. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings* (London 1973) 300; his more famous son, Cellach, fought the battle of Corand as king of Connacht in 703 and died two years later: AU². See also Paul Walsh, *Irish leaders and learning through the ages*, (ed.) Nollaig Ó Muraíle (Dublin 2003) 183.

early death means that he cannot in fact have donated the land for the monastery of Mayo, as the text claims. Nonetheless, he is contemporary with Blathmacc and Diarmait, sons of Áed Sláine, who also feature in the Life, as we have seen.⁹⁸ As a direct ancestor of Uí Chonchobhair,⁹⁹ his positive portrayal echoes that of the miraculous Cathal, underlining the fact that the author wished to imply that Mayo was supported by powerful Irish protectors from the start.

An association with Mayo would also have benefited the ruling Uí Chonchobhair. Subsumed under the diocese of Tuam in 1202, Mayo was claimed by Armagh about the year 1215 before reverting to the Connacht see a short time later.¹⁰⁰ Its close connection with Tuam is underlined by the appointment as bishop of Mayo of Céle Ua Dubthaig (d.1210),¹⁰¹ a member of the influential ecclesiastical family of Ua Dubthaig whose kinsman, Muiredach, had sixty years earlier been archbishop of Connacht and Tuam.¹⁰² Well known as promoters of the rule of the Canons Regular,¹⁰³ Uí Dubthaig and Céle in particular may have been active in this regard in Mayo also. Yet the church did not become an Augustinian abbey of regular canons until the second half of the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁴ As an important Connacht church, however, Uí Chonchobhair would have been well aware of its significance. It was in Mayo that opposing kinsmen, sons of Muirheartach Muimhneach Ua Conchobhair and of Cathal Mac Uráin Ua Conchobhair, submitted to Aodh, son of Cathal Crobhdhearg Ua Conchobhair in 1225.¹⁰⁵ In the latter instance, peace was secured by the Munster ruler, Donnchadh Cairbreach Ua Briain and *maithi Gall Erem* ('the foreign nobles of Ireland'). One such noble, Mac Uilliam Burke, plundered the church eleven years later in retaliation for a revolt by one particular group of Uí Chonchobhair.

⁹⁸ Diarmait's victory in the battle of Carn Conaill is celebrated in the annalistic entry following that recording Ragallach's death: AU² 649.

⁹⁹ M. A. O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin 1962) 145 e 39.

¹⁰⁰ M. P. Sheehy (ed.), *Pontificia Hibernica: medieval papal chancery documents concerning Ireland, 640–1261*, 2 vols. (Dublin 1962–5) I, 195.

¹⁰¹ AU¹.

¹⁰² AFM 1150. Muiredach had in turn succeeded an earlier kinsman, Domnall. An earlier Bishop Ua Dubthaig acted as one of the guarantors for the re-edification of the church of Mayo in the early twelfth century: George Petrie, 'The ecclesiastical architecture of Ireland, anterior to the Anglo-Norman invasion comprising an essay on the origin and uses of the Round Towers of Ireland', *Trans Roy Ir Acad* 20 (1845), 143–4, and Colmán Etchingham, 'Episcopal hierarchy in Connacht and Tairdelbach Ua Conchobair', *J Galway Archaeol Hist Soc* 52 (2000), 13–29.

¹⁰³ Pádraig Ó Riain, *The making of a saint: Finbarr of Cork, 600–1200*, Irish Texts Society Subsidiary Series 5 (London and Dublin 1997) 56–7.

¹⁰⁴ Aubrey Gwynn and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses: Ireland* (London 1970) 93–4, 186.

¹⁰⁵ A. Martin Freeman (ed. and tr.), *Annála Connacht: the Annals of Connacht, AD 1224–1544* (Dublin 1944) 1225.15 and 1225.26.

Evidently designed to hurt them, the attack was such *nir facbad cruach tsil da raibi i rrelic moir Moigi hEo* ('that not a stack of seed was left in the great church of Mayo').¹⁰⁶ Their connection with the place remained strong: Niall, grandson of Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, along with three members of Uí Shechnasaig, was burned *i n-aentigh i Maig Eo na Saxan* ('in a house in Mag nEó na Saxan') by an ally of the Fitzgeralds in 1242.¹⁰⁷ The nature of the incident suggests that Ua Conchobair and his men had sought sanctuary in the church where they were hunted down by their foreign foe.

Conclusion

Gerald's foreignness would have been embraced by the author of his Life whose inclusive approach may well have been designed to attract both native and Norman support for his church, as we have seen. The main focus of his composition, an English founder of an Irish ecclesiastical establishment, undoubtedly lent itself to adoption by dual audiences. Indeed, it may have been the changed political and cultural circumstances which the arrival of the Cambro-Normans in 1169 engendered, specifically its revitalised mix of new *gail* and *Gaidil*, that turned attention on an 'old' foreigner, Gerald, as a fitting subject for a Life. On his Anglo-Saxon kinsmen or their dealings with their Irish neighbours, however, *Vita Sancti Gerald* can shed no light; nonetheless, it casts some illumination on relations between the Irish and the descendants of those Saxons, the English, at a much later point in time.

¹⁰⁶ A. Martin Freeman (ed. and tr.), *Annála Connacht: the Annals of Connacht, AD 1224–1544* (Dublin 1944) 1236.11.

¹⁰⁷ Séamus Ó hInnse (ed. and tr.), *Miscellaneous Irish Annals (AD 1114–1437)* (Dublin 1947).

Abstracts

PATRICK P. O'NEILL

The Irish Role in the Origins of the Old English Alphabet: a Re-assessment

This study re-appraises previous theories about the origins of the Old English alphabet and, on the evidence of the earliest surviving forms of that alphabet, argues for a formative contribution from the vernacular alphabet of Old Irish.

ROY FLECHNER

An Insular Tradition of Ecclesiastical Law: Fifth to Eighth Century

This chapter discusses some of the earliest specimens of Insular canonical learning, highlights direct influences between canonical texts written in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England, and examines the appropriation of Anglo-Saxon canonical authorities by the Irish and vice versa. Among the texts under discussion are works attributed to Patrick, Cummian's Penitential, the *Libellus Responsionum*, the Canons of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, and the *Hibernensis*. In conclusion, an Insular canonical tradition is adduced.

DIARMUID SCULLY

Bede's *Chronica Maiora*: Early Insular History in a Universal Context

Bede's *Chronica Maiora* (725) outlines key events in universal providential history from creation to the early eighth century. It represents the first extensive Insular attempt to integrate the history of Britain and Ireland with world-history. Bede makes use of classical, late antique and Insular sources, but his work differs in fact and interpretation from earlier accounts of the Atlantic archipelago and, on occasion, from his own later account in the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (c.731). An examination of the *Chronica Maiora* therefore offers significant insights into Bede's objectives and techniques as a historian. This chapter focuses on his treatment of two critical developments in the history of the Atlantic archipelago, viewed in the context of universal history: the Roman conquest of Britain, which Bede connects with vital developments in Jewish and gentile salvation history, and