

Some Notes on the Transmission of *Auraicept na nÉces*

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In the near century that has passed since the publication of George Calder's 1917 edition of the medieval Irish grammatical treatise *Auraicept na nÉces*, one of the most pressing questions to have emerged in relation to the text is the nature of the numerous complete and fragmentary manuscript witnesses which were unknown to Calder when he published his work.¹ Alongside his 1983 edition of the treatise's so-called "canonical core," Anders Ahlqvist compiled an updated list of extant *Auraicept*-witnesses based on the manuscript catalogues available to him at the time of publication, and further material can now be added to this collection.² Ahlqvist's study demonstrated the extent to which Calder's edition, though unquestionably a valuable contribution to the field, falls far short of presenting a definitive account of the *Auraicept*'s textual history, and it is clear that further study of the unedited versions of the treatise will provide much insight into its use and transmission in the medieval and early modern periods. The present discussion seeks to address only one small aspect of this desideratum, albeit by returning to one of the witnesses of the *Auraicept* which was used by Calder: namely that found in Trinity College Dublin MS 1363 (H 4. 22). Even in comparison to the relatively sparse contextual details that have been established regarding other copies of the *Auraicept*, the origin and features of that which now forms part of H 4. 22 have been subject to limited scrutiny, a fact reflected in the ambiguity and

¹ George Calder, ed. and trans., *Auraicept na nÉces. The Scholars' Primer* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1917; repr. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1995).

² Anders Ahlqvist, ed. and trans., *The Early Irish Linguist. An Edition of the Canonical Part of Auraicept na nÉces, with Introduction, Commentary and Indices*, *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum*, vol. 73 (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1983), 22-24. Not included in Ahlqvist's list are the fragments in University College Dublin, OFM A10, fols. 1-2, tentatively assigned to the fifteenth century.

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occasional inconsistency of descriptions of the witness published to date. This contribution aims to clarify some of these details, while also setting out additional evidence in an attempt to shed further light on the place of the H 4. 22 witness within the manuscript transmission of the treatise as a whole.

I.

Calder edited two separate versions of *Auraicept na nÉces*, which he referred to as the “Short Text” and “Long Text” respectively. The first he based mainly on the copies in the Book of Ballymote, the Book of Lecan and National Library of Scotland, Advocates 72. 1. 1 (“Gaelic I,” in the portion also known as “John Beaton’s ‘Broad Book’”); for the latter his principal witnesses were the copies found in the Yellow Book of Lecan and British Library, Egerton 88.³ In his prefatory summary of the manuscripts used in his edition, Calder classified H 4. 22 as also belonging to the “Long Text” group, offering only a vague caveat that this manuscript is “intermediate between the first and second family.”⁴ He accordingly included some significant variants from H 4. 22 in both of his editions, but did not otherwise attempt to clarify his assertion regarding its relationship to the other witnesses, save for his observation that the manuscript did not contain a series of poems on verse faults and correctives that follow the *Auraicept* in the “Short Text.”⁵ Ahlqvist, on the other hand, placed H 4. 22 firmly within the group representing the longest witnesses of the *Auraicept* in his expanded list of manuscripts, which he divided into three main classes. The first of these (“A”) consists of two copies unknown to

³ “The Book of Ballymote”=Dublin, Royal Irish Academy 536 (23 P 12), 170va-179rb3 (s. xiv-xv); “The Book of Lecan”=Dublin, Royal Irish Academy 535 (23 P 2), 151ra-161vb27 (s. xv); “Gaelic I”=Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. 72. 1. 1, 20rb14-25rb32 (s. xv); “The Yellow Book of Lecan” (YBL)=Dublin, Trinity College Library, 1318 (H 2. 16), cols. 504.23-549.13 (s. xiv-xv); “Egerton 88”=London, British Library, Egerton 88, 63ra26-76rb15 (s. xvi).

⁴ Calder, *Auraicept*, xiii.

⁵ *Ibid.*

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Calder which are substantially shorter than all others, while “Group B” corresponds in the main to Calder’s “Short Text,” and “Group C” corresponds to his “Long Text,” with the inclusion of additional witnesses in each. Ahlqvist noted that the Group C manuscripts could be characterized by the presence of Latin quotations corresponding to those found in the Group A witnesses, but not found in Group B, as well as by commentary not present in either of the other groups. Of this latter material, he noted in particular a passage written as main text with interlinear glosses, which will be a focal point of the discussion of the H 4. 22 witness in the third section of this paper.⁶

In contrast to the other manuscripts described in the preface to his work, Calder did not attempt to date the section of H 4. 22 that contains the *Auraicept*. Ahlqvist assigned it to the fifteenth century, in accordance with the statement by Abbott and Gwynn in their catalogue of TCD manuscripts that the section was “written by two scribes, probably of the fifteenth century, working alternately.”⁷ This would set the H 4. 22 copy of the *Auraicept* chronologically prior to most of the Group C manuscripts in Ahlqvist’s list, all of which can be dated from the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries. Among the earliest of these are the two copies that formed the basis for Calder’s “Long Text,” which bear a close relationship to each other in terms of their date and scribal milieu. Marginalia suggest that the portion of the Yellow Book of Lecan containing a copy of the *Auraicept* was produced at the Mac Aodhagáin law school in Park, County Galway in 1568, and that it was dedicated to a certain “Fierfesa.”⁸ Egerton 88, a manuscript compiled for (and partly by) Domhnall Ó Duibhdábhoireann, was mostly written at the Mac Aodhagáin law school in Park, but a note by one of the scribes suggests that the section containing the *Auraicept* may have been undertaken in 1569 at the Uí Mhaoil Chonaire school at Ardkeyle

⁶ Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, 27.

⁷ T. K. Abbott and E. J. Gwynn, *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, & Co., 1921), 209.

⁸ Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, 346-47. See Appendix One for further discussion of this dedication.

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(Ard Choill) in the parish of Feenagh, Co. Clare.⁹ However, a close relationship between the two schools is indicated by scribal overlap between the two manuscripts. Of the seven scribes responsible, in varying degrees, for the composition of the *Auraicept*-witness in Egerton 88, those whom William O'Sullivan identified as "Dáibhidh I" and "Aodh Ó Duibhdábhoireann" were both involved in producing the section of the Yellow Book of Lecan containing the *Auraicept* for "Fierfesa" at Park the year before;¹⁰ however O'Sullivan also argued, albeit with little explanation, that the scribes were drawing upon different exemplars in each case.¹¹

The H 4. 22 manuscript as a whole consists of material collected by Edward Lhuyd during his tour of Ireland and Scotland between August of 1699 and July of 1700; like many of the manuscripts in Lhuyd's possession, it was not purchased as a single volume, but rather comprises a collection of pieces of different dates, sizes and

⁹ On the Uí MhaoilChonaire, see Brian Ó Dálaigh, "The Uí MhaoilChonaire of Thomond," *Studia Hibernica* 35 (2008/9): 45-68. In the margin of fol. 75b in Egerton 88, the scribe "Dáibhi" writes that he is at Rossmanagher: see Standish H. O'Grady, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library [formerly British Museum]*, vol. 1 (London: British Museum, 1926; repr. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1992), 131. The castle at Rossmanagher was occupied in 1570 by Seán Ó MaoilChonaire, who had earlier established the school in Ardkyle (Ó Dálaigh, "Uí MhaoilChonaire," 48; see also Martin Breen, "A 1570 List of Castles in County Clare," *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* 36 (1995): 130-38, at 132). On fol. 71 of the same manuscript, beside the Greek alphabet given as part of the *Auraicept*, Domhnall Ó Duibhdábhoireann curses Seán's son Iollann Ó MaoilChonaire for being of little help to him (O'Grady, *Catalogue*, 1:129-30).

¹⁰ William O'Sullivan, "The Book of Domhnall Ó Duibhdábhoireann, Provenance and Codicology," *Celtica* 23 (1999): 276-99, at 285 and 291. One of the scribes of the YBL *Auraicept* also mentions a "Magnus"; it is perhaps noteworthy that two scribes of this name worked on other sections of Egerton 88 that were written at Park (*ibid.*, 285).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 290.

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hands that were subsequently bound together.¹² It was rebound as five volumes shortly before 1921. Abbott and Gwynn argued that it is “probable, judging by the script, that the legal sections (pp. 1-37 and 54-79 and 85-8), and also pp. 40-52 and the sections containing the *Auraicept*, &c. (pp. 159-210), are the work of the same school, which may have been kept by a branch of the McEgan (Mac Aodhagáin) family.”¹³ The fourth of the five volumes, or pages 157-212 of the manuscript, comprises three sections: 13 (pp. 157-58), 14 (pp. 159-210) and 15 (pp. 211-12), the first and third of which serve as a cover, while the second consists of two sections of twelve and fourteen leaves respectively, plus an unnumbered slip in each;¹⁴ both of these slips contain grammatical notes in Irish. Alongside the copy of *Auraicept na nÉces* that is of interest to the present discussion, section 14 includes a miscellany of short texts, mainly of a religious nature. The *Auraicept* occupies the entirety of pp. 167-210, with the exception of a poem on the Tower of Babel inserted on pages 199 and 200,¹⁵ and thus accounts for the bulk of the material in the volume. The outer cover (pp. 211-12) contains an excerpt from a law-book written in two columns, the fragmentary text of which has been transcribed by Anne and William O’Sullivan, who stated that it “would have been available as an unwanted scrap, part of a discarded

¹² Anne O’Sullivan and William O’Sullivan, “Edward Lhuyd’s Collection of Irish Manuscripts,” *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1962): 57-76, at 57.

¹³ Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, 212; also cited in the description by Liam Breatnach, *A Companion to the Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, Early Irish Law Series, vol. 5 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2005), 6-7.

¹⁴ Breatnach, *Companion*, 6, and Anne O’Sullivan and William O’Sullivan, “A Legal Fragment,” *Celtica* 8 (1968): 140-43, at 140. The whole of the fourth volume of H 4. 22 is described by Abbott and Gwynn under the heading “Section XV”: see their *Catalogue*, 209-11 (texts) and 212-16 (scribal notes and marginalia).

¹⁵ The poem is written on the conjugate of a small bifolium (pp. 197-200), the first leaf of which contains part of the *Auraicept*; according to O’Sullivan and O’Sullivan, “A Legal Fragment,” 140, this bifolium should have been the first leaf of the second gathering of fourteen leaves, but may have already been misplaced to the middle of the second section by the original owner.

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older manuscript.”¹⁶ The whole of the fourth volume of H 4. 22 was bought by Lhuyd in Sligo from Cornán Ó Cuirnín, whose family had been hereditary poets to the O’Donnells until the fourteenth century, and had since continued to work in the learned professions.¹⁷ The purchase was made in 1700, and Lhuyd noted the source of his acquisition in a memorandum written in Welsh at the top of page 159.¹⁸

Beyond these details, the fourth volume of H 4. 22 contains few clues as to its provenance before it arrived in Ó Cuirnín’s hands. In a brief description of Lhuyd’s purchase, William O’Sullivan summarized the evidence for the manuscript’s origins as follows:

From Cornán too [Lhuyd] acquired MS 1363, pp. 157-212, dated 1595, that had belonged to Tomás Mac Fhlannchadha (p. 200) of Grennan (p. 169), Co. Limerick. Tomás is probably the scribe but he was helped by Saerbhreathach (pp. 167, 169) and Aodh (pp. 168-77).¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., 141. D. A. Binchy, ed., “Mellbretha,” *Celtica* 8 (1968): 144-54, at 144, identified this legal fragment as belonging to a copy of *Mellbretha*, a tract “concerned with liability for injuries incurred in the course of play.” He completed his edition with the aid of the only other known copy of the text, also incomplete, which occurs in Egerton 88: see O’Grady, *Catalogue*, 96, and Breatnach, *Companion*, 263-64, as well as D. A. Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 6 vols. (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978): IV.1338.5-1341.7 (henceforth *CIH*).

¹⁷ On the Ó Cuirnín family see Paul Walsh, *Irish Men of Learning* (Dublin: Sign of the Three Candles, 1947), 119-32.

¹⁸ O’Sullivan and O’Sullivan, “Edward Lhuyd’s Collection,” 64. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1813, fol. 343, preserves a letter addressed to Lhuyd from “Cornan Cornyne” on 12 April 1700, noting that he could meet him on the sixteenth of that month, and that he was in possession of some books and manuscripts which might be of use to Lhuyd for his work.

¹⁹ William O’Sullivan, “The Manuscript Collection of Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh,” in *Seanchas: Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology, History and Literature in Honour of Francis J. Byrne*, ed. Alfred P. Smyth (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 439-47, at 444.

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The identity of Tomás Mac Fhlannchadha is uncertain. The dedication to him on page 200 of the manuscript, which reads *donguidbe (?) uait a Tómais meg Flannchadha ar son gurab misi (i. Aod superscript) dochuir in finet ⁊ tabair do binedixio (=benedictionem) dam da chind*, "(?) from you, Thomas MacClancy, because it was I (i.e. Aodh) who finished [this], and give your blessing to me on account of it," occurs at the end of the poem on the Tower of Babel written on the misplaced bifolium in the middle of the *Auraicept*-text.²⁰ Another signature by Aodh on page 177 is only partially legible, but also apparently refers to a "Tomás." The location mentioned on the bottom of page 169 was given by the scribe Saerbhreachach, who signed his work with the words *is olc in dub misi Sairbrethach lis in grianain [...]*, "the ink is bad, I am Sairbrethach, Lis in Gríanáin [...]" On this basis, Anne and William O'Sullivan tentatively located the manuscript's dedicatee at the "Clancy house at Grenan near Caherconlish (Cathair Chinn Lis), Co. Limerick."²¹ They adduced in support of their suggestion the record of a "Thomas Fitz Donele Fitz Glaughie of the Grenan, Co. Limerick" as recipient of a grant of English liberty in 1557/8;²² the same individual was also listed as one of the freeholders of Co. Limerick in 1569,²³ and may have been the father of the "Flahry mcThomas of Grenan" whose death was recorded in 1611.²⁴

The O'Sullivans' suggestion merits further investigation. Their reference related to the Limerick townland now given on the

²⁰ The beginning of this note is not very legible, though it could contain some form of the verb *do-guid* 'entreats earnestly, asks pardon'; it is also unclear whether there is any text preceding what has been transcribed here. See Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, 214, my translation

²¹ O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan, "A Legal Fragment," 141.

²² *Ibid.*, 141 n. 2, citing Éamonn de Búrca, ed., *The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns 1543-1603*, 4 vols. (Dublin: Edmund Burke, 1994), 1: 315 (no. 190).

²³ *Ibid.*, citing London, Lambeth Palace Library, Carew MS 635, fol. 73.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, citing P.R.O.I. Repertory of Exchequer Inquisitions, Co. Limerick, no. 64. This record can be supplemented by a pardon granted to a "Flaherus McTho. Clanekey, of Grenande, gent." recorded under the year 1577: de Búrca, *Irish Fiants*, 2: 429 (no. 3149).

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Ordnance Survey Map of Ireland as Greenane, located approximately seven miles south-east of Limerick city on the border of Caherconlish parish. Caherconlish forms part of the barony of Clanwilliam, which was under the control of the Burkes of Clanwilliam in the sixteenth century.²⁵ A rental record of this sept, which Westropp has argued to pertain to “persons living about 1540,”²⁶ states that Seán Burke gave *an dá grianán* to a member of the Mac Fhlannchadha family from *an Urlann*:

*Fer cnuic in tsenchais báin ann so .i. Seaán .m.
Risterd .m. Tibóid .m. Uilliam .m. Risterd .m. Uaitéir
.m. Risterd .m. Emoinn [m. Uaitéir .m. Risterd .m.
Emoinn] .m. Risterd risa ráidter in tiarla ruad; is é
tuc leth-seisrech in dá grianán amach, ina bfuilid sé
hacra dég ar fichit, do Murchad .m. Taidg .m.
Raighne Meic Flannchada ó in urlainn.²⁷*

²⁵ Thomas Johnson Westropp, “The Ancient Castles of the County of Limerick (North-Eastern Baronies),” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 26 (1906/7): 55-108, at 94. For the location of Greenane on the Ordnance Survey Map, see <http://www.osi.ie; 1:25000, XY 56.64> (accessed December 11, 2012).

²⁶ Westropp, “Ancient Castles,” 84 n. 1. The rental forms part of Dublin, Trinity College MS 1292 (H 1. 18), fols. 13b-14b.

²⁷ John Rory Magrath, ed., *Cathréim Thoiridhealbhaigh: The Triumphs of Turlough, Volume 1*, Irish Texts Society, vol. 26 (London: Irish Texts Society, 1929), 159-61, at 160. Westropp notes (“Ancient Castles,” 84 n. 1) that the rental “was made and possibly recast about 1617, as alluding to Tibot, son of Tibot, and Baron of Caislean, an I chonaing, i.e. to the first Baron of Brittas. It seems to have been compiled by David O’Bruadar from ‘Maoilchonaire’s sons’ Book’.” The genealogy cited here traces Seán Burke back to his ancestor Richard Óg de Burgh, second Earl of Ulster, or ‘the Red Earl’ (d. 1326). Immediately preceding it is an account of the partition of lands made ca. 1400-1410 by the Red Earl’s great-grandson Walter (d. 1432), whose eldest son Richard received lands in Tipperary, along with Castleconnell and Caherconlish (Westropp, “Ancient Castles,” 84; cf. TCD H 1. 18, fol. 14a, ll. 16-23), while Richard’s brothers Edmund and Tibbott received lands in close proximity to this (fol. 14a, ll. 23-28). According to the genealogy, the Seán who granted the

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Here is the Man of Knockatanachasbane: John f. (son of) Richard f. Theobald f. William f. Richard f. Walter f. Richard f. Edmund f. Richard, who is called “The Red Earl”; he it was that to Murrough .m. Teigue .m. Rayny MacClancy from Urlin alienated the half ploughland of the two Grenanes, in which are thirty-six acres.²⁸

The reference to *an dá gríanan* in this rental could refer to the two castles recorded as in use by the inhabitants of Greenane during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, referred to elsewhere as “Grenan Oughteragh” and “Grenan Ieghtragh,” since in 1583 “W. Burke” was listed as holding Grenane “duo castell.”²⁹ There are no

land of Greenane to a member of the Mac Fhlannchadha family *ó in Urlainn* (fol. 14b, ll. 1-5) was a great-grandson of Risterd mac Uaitéir’s son William, by William’s son Theobald. This would make him a nephew of the William created first Baron of Castleconnell by Elizabeth I in May 1580, as the baron’s father Edmund was a brother of this Theobald.

²⁸ I have modified the translation by Standish H. O’Grady, trans., *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh: The Triumphs of Turlough, Volume 2*, Irish Texts Society, vol. 27 (London: Irish Texts Society, 1929), 169-71, at 171. The second *mic* [*Uaitéir mic Risteird mic Emoimn*] is probably a dittography, and I therefore follow O’Grady in omitting it.

²⁹ Westropp, “Ancient Castles,” 94. Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum locorum et tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae: an Index, with Identifications, to the Gaelic Names of Places and Tribes* (Dublin: Hodges, Figges & Co., 1910; repr. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993), 451, s.v. Grianán, argued on the evidence of this rental that the placename referred to Greenaun, Co. Leitrim, which is located next to Loch Gill and divided into Greenaun North and Greenaun South (<http://www.osi.ie>; 1:25000; XY 57.83; accessed December 12, 2012). This seems unlikely, given that the rental is concerned with the genealogy and lands belonging to the Burkes of Clanwilliam, as is shown by the heading bunchíos barúin Caisléin uí Chonaing (Castleconnell, Co. Limerick) on fol. 13b, l. 9, and from the fact that the Seán Burke who granted Greenane to Murchad Mac Fhlannchadha is described as fear cnuic an tsechais báin (as per Magrath’s edition, translated by O’Grady as “Knockatanachasbane”; the original manuscript, which is unclear at this point, may also read fear cnuic an tseanchaisleáin, an interpretation supported by the seventeenth-century

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remaining traces of these castles, and consequently neither can be assigned a precise location within the townland; the only other sites of note recorded for Greenane by the National Monument Service are two ringforts located on the northern-eastern boundary of the townland.³⁰ However, there is other evidence, subsequent to the records of 1557/8 and 1569 relating to “Thomas Fitz Donele Fitz Glaughie,” confirming that a branch of the Mac Fhlannchadha family continued to occupy the Burkes’ land of Greenane well into the mid-seventeenth century. For example, in 1604 it was recorded that “Theo. Baron Bourgh of Castleconnell was granted half the castle of Grenan Ieghtragh, estate of Don. Mac Clanchie,” while in 1624 “Sir W. Parsons was granted Grenan Oughteragh, estate of Owen and Don. Clancy.”³¹ Livery was granted to a Thomas Clancy in the same year, along with “pardon for alienation of castle, and bawn of last.”³² In 1655, both castles of “Grenane Ightragh and Huaghtragh” were in the possession of Lord Brittas, but “Owen, John, Charles and Simon Clanchy joined him in conveying same to A. Ingram.”³³ The prevalence of the Mac Fhlannchadha name in the vicinity of Caherconlish was noted as late as 1748, when it was observed that “there was not a gentleman living from Ballynaguard to O’Brien’s-

recording of the name as “Cnocketenechisllane”: see Robert C. Simington, ed., *The Civil Survey A. D. 1654-1656*, vol. iv: County of Limerick (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1938), 64). In any case, this placename can be identified with the present townland of Knockatancashlane, located within the parish of Caherconlish just a few miles north-west of Greenane (<http://www.osi.ie>; 1:25000, XY 56.65; accessed December 12, 2012). Hogan’s identification of the lands bordering Lough Gill in Co. Leitrim may have stemmed from an association with the distinct sept of MacClancys of Dartraighe in this area.

³⁰ Sites and Monuments Record Nos. 14:84 and 14:85 (Co. Limerick).

³¹ Westropp, “Ancient Castles,” 94.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

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bridge, but a Bourke, except Hynes of Cahirelly castle and Clanchy of Ballyvorreen.”³⁴

One further possibility might be raised in relation to the location of the *lis in grianain* noted in the scribal dedication of the H 4. 22 *Auraicept*. Westropp argued that a place referred to as “Grenanbegg” in early records relating to Caherconlish parish could be identified with the aforementioned castle “Grenan Ightragh.”³⁵ However, in the seventeenth century a “Grenanebeg” was also listed as part of the adjacent Clanwilliam parish of Inch St Lawrence, where “Grenanebeg, Inssinlawrence and Ballinabolly” comprised “three plowlands and a qr with a smale Castle in reperation and a marbell quarrie thereunto belonging,” all of which was under the proprietorship of Theobald Lord Borke, Baron of Brittas.³⁶ This Grenanebeg was apparently the site of a castle, which Burke bestowed upon his mother in 1641 along with some of the land surrounding it.³⁷ John O’Donovan described the area as it appeared in the mid-nineteenth century:

Situating in the N.W. extremity of the T(ownlan)d. of Inch St. Laurence North, at the E. boundary of the same, and to the East of the road from Limerick to Caherconlish. Greenan Castle, of which there is nothing to be seen at present, stood on a small hill, about 5 chains in diameter, and about 50 feet high

³⁴ Patrick Fitzgerald and John McGregor, *The History, Topography and Antiquities of the County and City of Limerick, with a Preliminary View of the History and Antiquities of Ireland*, 2 vols. (Dublin: George McKern, 1826-1827), 1:284; cited by Westropp, “Ancient Castles,” 91. Ballyvorreen is located a few miles south of Greenane (<http://www.osi.ie>; 1:25000, XY 56.64; accessed December 12, 2012); in 1655 it was held by a “Conor Clancie” (Westropp, “Ancient Castles,” 95).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Simington, *Civil Survey*, 78.

³⁷ Westropp, “Ancient Castles,” 92.

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from the level of the road. It is now cultivated.³⁸

Fitzgerald and McGregor likewise noted that “on a hill adjoining the Church yard (half a mile from it) stands the ruined Castle of Grenane, which belonged formerly to the family of Nunans.”³⁹ The structure has more recently been included in a list of “demolished/severely damaged castles of known location,”⁴⁰ and its ruins are recorded on the Historic 6-inch Ordnance Survey map under the designation “(Site of) Greenan Castle,” but on the 2013 map as “Greman Castle.”⁴¹ On the basis of the note relating to Murchad Mac Fhlannchadha given in the Burke rental record, as well as the more abundant evidence that members of the Mac Fhlannchadha family occupied the Caherconlish townland of Greenane during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, it seems more probable that the latter area is the one in which Tomás Mac Fhlannchadha lived; however the locations are geographically close, and as will be shown below, there is also evidence for scribal activity associated with the Mac Fhlannchadha family in the nearby parish of Inch St Lawrence.

The problem of identifying the scribes and location in which the fourth volume of H 4. 22 was compiled naturally begs the question of what association the Limerick barony of Clanwilliam might have had with the production of a learned text such as the *Auraicept* in the sixteenth century. William O’Sullivan described the volume in

³⁸ *Field Name Books of the County and City of Limerick with the Place-Names, English and Irish as explained and fixed by John O’Donovan* (Ordnance Survey of Ireland, 1839-40), Parish of Inch St Lawrence (no. 64), p. 814; published online at:

<http://www.limerickcity.ie/Library/LocalStudies/FieldNameBooksofLimerick> (accessed January 28, 2012).

³⁹ Fitzgerald and McGregor, *History, Topography and Antiquities*, 288.

⁴⁰ Colm Donnelly, “A Typological Study of the Tower Houses of County Limerick,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 129 (1999): 19-39, at 38.

⁴¹ <http://www.osi.ie>; 1:5000, XY 56.64 (accessed January 12, 2012).

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question as “a lawyer’s book, but not a law-book,”⁴² implying that Tomás Mac Fhlannchadha, dedicatee and possible scribe of the manuscript, may have been a brehon. This is certainly a possibility, given the evidence from other manuscript copies of the treatise, such as the YBL and Egerton 88 versions, for the preponderant role of the sixteenth-century law schools in the *Auraicept*’s later transmission. Indeed, it has long been noted that the composition of the *Auraicept* itself shares many features characteristic of law-texts, such as a predominantly question-and-answer format, shared technical terminology and a differentiation between so-called “canonical” text and surrounding commentary, reflecting an interest in the text by legal scholars.⁴³ A compilation of commentary on grammar, prosody and historical lore would have been useful to members of the legal profession even in the sixteenth century, for as Katherine Simms has observed, “law students needed to familiarize themselves with both the Old and the Classical literary standards—the Old Irish in order to decipher the ancient texts of customary law written down between the seventh and the ninth centuries, and the Classical Early Modern standard because this was the literary Irish they used when pleading the case in the courts, as can be seen from the few fragments of written pleadings we still have preserved from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.”⁴⁴

In the case of the H 4. 22 witness of the *Auraicept*, it is no doubt also relevant that the Mic Fhlannchadha were one of the most prominent legal families next to the Mic Aodhagáins, having served the O’Briens of Thomond, the Butlers of Ormond, the Powers of Waterford and the Fitzgeralds of Desmond, although Kelly notes that “judging by the surviving legal manuscripts [...] it would seem that

⁴² O’Sullivan, “Manuscript Collection,” 444.

⁴³ Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, 11-14; for a more specific treatment of this subject in relation to one of the “Group A” copies of the *Auraicept* see also Deborah Hayden, “Poetic Law and the Medieval Irish Linguist: Contextualising the Vices and Virtues of Verse Composition in *Auraicept na nÉces*,” *Language and History* 54.1 (May 2011): 1-34, at 23-31.

⁴⁴ Katharine Simms, “The Poetic Brehon Lawyers of Early Sixteenth-Century Ireland,” *Ériu* 57 (2007): 121-32, at 123.

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the MacClancies did not play a large part in the transcription of the Old Irish law-texts and associated material. The extant documents associated with the MacClancies are mostly English-style deeds relating to various Clare families.”⁴⁵ Similar evidence testifies to the activities of Mac Fhlannchadha brehons in Tipperary during the first half of the sixteenth century, with one of the earliest such references relating to the White Earl of Ormond’s grant of Tipperary lands to a Donnell Mac Clancy, “learned in the law,” provided that “his good service and faithful counsel in his faculty [...] be given to the said earl and his heirs in the future.”⁴⁶ The grant, which was issued sometime around 1432, was to pass to Donnell’s heirs provided that they pursued the same profession.⁴⁷ It is clear that the legal tradition was carried on, as in 1531 a “Thomas McKlanygi” witnessed a deed for some members of the Tobin family concerning “the Bryanyre,” possibly a townland or estate in Slieveardagh, East Tipperary, and another deed relating to the same property was witnessed by “Donnchadh Mac Clanchaidh” and “Muirheartach McClanncaidh” in 1545.⁴⁸ In 1537, Thomas Butler of Co. Tipperary was said to have had as judges “Rery McClaneghy,” “Oyne McClaneghe” and “Thomas McClaneghe,”⁴⁹ and in 1551 “Cosnygh McClanighy”

⁴⁵ Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Early Irish Law Series, vol. 3 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1988), 254-56. For a detailed account of evidence relating to the MacClancies in Clare, see Luke McNerney, “A Mac Fhlannchadha Fosterage Document, c. 1580: Notes on the Síol Fhlannchadha of Tradraigh,” *The Irish Genealogist* 13.2 (2011): 93-128.

⁴⁶ K. W. Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages*, The Gill History of Ireland, vol. 4 (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1972; repr. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2003), 54-55. The Tipperary lands granted to Donnell MacClancy in this deed included “Le Greggy (Cregg), Leghbally (Laghbally), Sucheston and Mayneston,” the first and last of which may be the parishes located around Carrick-on-Suir: see Edmund Curtis, ed., *Calendar of Ormond Deeds*, 6 vols. (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1932-43), 3:49-50.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Curtis, *Calendar*, 4:282-84 (no. 347).

⁴⁹ Thomas O’Rahilly, “Irish Poets, Historians and Judges in English Documents, 1538-1615,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C:*

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witnessed a deed in Newtown, a few miles north of Carrick-on-Suir.⁵⁰ The involvement of Mac Fhlannchadha scribes in manuscripts associated with both the Butlers of Ormond and the Fitzgeralds of Desmond is also well known: in 1561 “An Cosnamhach Mac Flannchadha,” working at Cathair Dúine Iascaigh (Cahir, County Tipperary), inserted several articles into London, British Library MS Additional 30512 for Pierce, son of Edmund Butler, who was lord of Trian Chluana Meala (barony of Iffa and Offa East, County Tipperary) in the mid-sixteenth century;⁵¹ it was possibly this same individual who worked as a scribe for the Egerton 88 copy of the *Auraicept* and other parts of the same manuscript at the Mac Aodhagáin school in Park, although the identification is not certain.⁵² Flower has speculated on the identity of BL Add. 30512 and the mysterious “Leabur na Carraigi” taken in ransom for Edmund Butler by Thomas Fitzgerald, eighth Earl of Desmond in the fifteenth century, along with Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud 610, which contains the signatures of a “Seán Mac Fhlannchadha” (fol. 94) and a “Donnchad Mac Flannchadha” (fol. 129).⁵³ The Laud 610 manuscript was known to have been in the possession of the Desmonds until at least the first half of the sixteenth century, as it was re-touched by Ó MaoilChonaire scribes for the tenth Earl of Desmond at Askeaton, County Limerick; by 1591 it had found its

Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature 36 (1921-1924): 86-120, at 114.

⁵⁰ Curtis, *Calendar*, 5:60-62 (no. 34).

⁵¹ Robin Flower, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library [formerly British Museum]*, vol. 2 (London: British Museum, 1926; repr. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1992), 470.

⁵² O’Sullivan, “The Book of Domhnall Ó Duibhdábhoireann,” 285 and 291; the author admits that “the hands are not very alike.”

⁵³ Flower, *Catalogue*, 471, and Brian Ó Cuív, *Catalogue of Irish Language Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Oxford College Libraries*, 2 vols. (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2001), 1:74 and 76.

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way to the house of (probably a different) Cosnamach Mac Fhlannchadha at “Lios an Metha.”⁵⁴

None of this evidence points unequivocally to a relationship between the Mac Fhlannchadha lawyers of Clare and Tipperary and the inhabitants of nearby Greenane, County Limerick. However, it is perhaps noteworthy that the “Murchad mac Taidg mic Raighne meic Flannchadha” who was granted the land of Greenane by Seán Burke ca. 1540 hailed from “an Urlainn,” a location that might be identified with Urlanmore (*An Urlann Mhór*), Co. Clare.⁵⁵ Luke McNerney has observed that Urlanmore was “the principal seat of Síol Fhlannchadha in Tradraighe and possible site of a Mac Fhlannchadha law school and fosterage residence,”⁵⁶ and has detailed the involvement of Mac Fhlannchadha lawyers in local jurisprudence of this area from as early as the mid-fifteenth century.⁵⁷ For example, deeds relating to lands acquired by Seán Ó MaoilChonaire, head of the school at Ardkyle, County Clare in the sixteenth century, were drawn up by members of the Tradraighe branch of the Síol Fhlannchadha and signed at Rossmanagher.⁵⁸ Of course, the association of a law school in Urlanmore with the presence of Mac Fhlannchadha brehons in Greenane, Co. Limerick during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries rests on the assumption that the otherwise unidentified Murchad Mac Fhlannchadha cited in the Burke rental was both a brehon and a relative of the “Thomas Fitz Donele Fitz Glaughie of the Grenan” pardoned in 1557/8.

However, a marginal gloss in the sixteenth-century copy of the *Senchas Már* law-text contained in London, British Library, Harley MS 432 may provide some additional clues regarding the nature of scholarly activity in the Limerick barony of Clanwilliam. The scribe of this manuscript laments as “momentous news” (*is oll in ris sin*)

⁵⁴ Flower, *Catalogue*, 470-71, and Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, 1:73. McNerney, “A Mac Fhlannchadha Fosterage Document,” 100, identifies ‘Lios in Metha’ as Lissavaddy, County Longford.

⁵⁵ See above, p. 141.

⁵⁶ McNerney, “A Mac Fhlannchadha Fosterage Document,” 103-4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

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the death of a certain Seán Mac Fhlannchadha, and implores that his sons will inherit his good qualities:

*A dia is oll in ris sin táinig cuginn [ms. qginn] .i.
Seadhan Mac Fhlannchadha [ms. maclannca] ar
faghbáil báis agus ní fuair bás riam dá slicht scél
nach commór é agus sirim féin trócaire [ms. trodh
caire] ar dia dam féin agus do Sheadhan agus co
ngab[a]id clan Seadh[a]in a feighrecht ar maith.*

O God this is momentous news [i.e. a great calamity] that reaches us viz. that Shane M'Clancy is dead: of whose race none hath ever died but Shane's loss is as great as was his; and I for my part implore mercy of God on myself and on Shane, and that Shane's sons may inherit his good qualities.⁵⁹

Patterson identified the scribe of this lament, who signs himself only with the initial 'F,' as Flann (mac Cairbre) Ó Deoragáin, on the basis that the Harleian manuscript also contains a marginal ogam with the name "Gilla na Naem Ó Deorainand," and that both of these names also occur in a manuscript of the 1560s or 1570s associated with the O'Doran law school located at Tír Briúin ar or Sinna in County Roscommon.⁶⁰ There is evidence, however, that work produced by O'Doran scribes found its way to the Mac Aodhagáin law school at Park during this period: for example, one of their manuscripts may have provided the exemplar for the glossed copy of *Mellbretha* in Egerton 88, since a marginal note on this tract written by its scribe, Maghnus O'Davoren, remarked that *is ait nach aithnighit mir [leg. muir (?)] deoráin (?) in bonn tar in pingin ná in pingin tarsin mbonn* "it is comical that the O'Dorans cannot

⁵⁹ Edited and translated by O'Grady, *Catalogue*, 146-47, at 147, who notes that *scél* 'story, news' is used here in the sense of 'the man of whom the news is told.'

⁶⁰ Nerys Patterson, "The O'Doran Legal Family and the Sixteenth-Century Recensions of the Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the 'Senchas Már,'" *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 6 (1986): 131-49, at 133.

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distinguish a groat from a penny nor a penny from a groat.”⁶¹ Patterson’s dating of the Harley 432 manuscript to the last quarter of the sixteenth century is supported by O’Donovan’s identification of the “Seadhan Mac Fhlannchadha” addressed in Flann Ó Deoragáin’s lament with the brehon of this name whose death is recorded in the *Annals of the Four Masters* under the year 1578.⁶²

*Sean mac Domhnaill, mic Tomais, mic Taidhcc mécc
Flannchadha ollamh iarla desmumhan lé
breithemhnus décc. Ní bhaoí dna mac breitheman
tuaithe i nErinn an tan sin rob ferr treabhaire 7
tighedas inás.*

John, son of Donnell, son of Thomas, son of Teige Mac Clancy, Chief Brehon to the Earl of Desmond, died. There was no son of a lay brehon in Ireland in his time who had better tillage or a better house than he.⁶³

The identity of the Mac Fhlannchadha brehon in *AFM* and the figure of this name whose death is lamented in the Harley 432 manuscript is not certain, and there are other records for a brehon of this name active in the first half of the sixteenth century;⁶⁴

⁶¹ O’Grady, *Catalogue*, 119 (with a note on the word *mir*), and Patterson, “The O’Doran Family,” 139-40.

⁶² John O’Donovan, ed. and trans., *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, 6 vols., vol. 1, ed. and trans. W. Nielson Hancock (Dublin: Alexander Thom; Hodges, Smith, & Co., 1865), xxxii.

⁶³ John O’Donovan, ed. and trans., *Annala Rioghachta Eireann. Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, from the Earliest Times to the Year 1616*, 7 vols. (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1848-1851; repr. Dublin: De Búrca Rare Books, 1990), 5:1710-11; henceforth *AFM*.

⁶⁴ In addition to the Seán Mac Fhlannchadha who signed fol. 94 of Bodleian Library MS Laud 610 at an unknown date (see above, p. 148), it is recorded that in 1537 the widow of Lord Power, Lady Katherine Butler, employed an Irish judge called “Shane McClanaghe,” who practiced brehon law: O’Rahilly, “Irish Poets, Historians and Judges,” 114-15; see also Patterson, “The O’Doran Legal Family,” 132.

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nevertheless, Patterson no doubt has a point in observing that “the original identification by O’Donovan is strongly supported by the similarity between the wordings of the praise accorded Desmond’s brehon by the scribe of Harley 432 and by the Four Masters. According to both sources, Shane McClancy was an important legal scholar, who supported his family and professional colleagues.”⁶⁵ Of particular interest to the present discussion, however, is the fact that the O’Doran scribe of Harley 432 also noted that he was copying the manuscript in Inch St Lawrence (*Disert Labráin*), the aforementioned parish in the barony of Clanwilliam, located just a few miles away from the townland of Greenane on the western border of Caherconlish.⁶⁶

A dia tabair trócaire dom anmain misi .f. agus ná tabhradh [ms. tabrach] f[er] in bairc masán orum agus olcas mo cairti agus nár mebraighes [ms. mebruis] in senabarc agus i ndísert labhráis [ms. anis art labadrais] mo log agus is olc linn réd égin cidh bé é.

O God, have mercy on my soul! I am F., and let not the man of the book [i.e. the owner of this MS.] reproach me [for any shortcomings], considering the badness of the copy that I had before me; and sure I had not even studied the old codex. Dysartlawrence is my place of writing; and I am sorry for a certain thing, be that what it may.⁶⁷

One could hardly be certain that the “Domhnall Mac Fhlannchadha” recorded as the father of the Earl of Desmond’s chief brehon, “Sean Mac Domhnaill Mécc Fhlannchadha,” who died in 1578, can be identified with the individual of the same name

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ <http://www.osi.ie>; 1:25000, XY 56.65 and 56.64 (accessed December 14, 2012). Hogan, *Onomasticon*, 346–47, s.v. *disert labráin*, stated only that this area “belonged to the Burke family”; it is mentioned in the TCD H 1. 18 rental at fol. 14a, l. 24.

⁶⁷ O’Grady, *Catalogue*, 147.

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associated with “Thomas fitz Donele” Mac Fhlannchadha from Greenane in Caherconlish parish, dedicatee of the H 4. 22 *Auraicept* and recipient of a grant of liberty in 1557/8; the evidence presented here is too fragmentary to allow for anything more than speculation.⁶⁸ However, a relationship between the two individuals might be conjectured on the basis that the O’Doran scribe of the Harley 432 law manuscript was writing at nearby Inch St Lawrence in 1578, and apparently knew Seán Mac Fhlannchadha and his family. Whatever the precise relationship between these various pieces of circumstantial evidence might prove to be, they at least point to the existence of scholarly, and in particular legal, activity in the vicinity of Caherconlish during the middle to second half of the sixteenth century, by scribes possessing a copy of *Auraicept na nÉces* which bears significant textual similarities to the versions found in the Egerton 88 and YBL codices produced at Ardkyle and Park respectively. This setting supports O’Sullivan’s hypothesis that the H 4. 22 *Auraicept* was composed around the same time as the Egerton 88 and YBL versions, and thus at a date considerably later than the fifteenth-century estimate proposed for the H 4. 22 version by Abbott and Gwynn and followed by Ahlqvist.⁶⁹ If Westropp’s dating of the Burke rental record in TCD H 1. 18 to ca. 1540 is correct, it could also indicate the involvement in this scholarly activity of a branch of the Mac Fhlannchadha lineage that occupied the land of Greenane as recently as the mid-sixteenth century, and may have had connections with the law school at Urlanmore in Clare.

II.

One further point regarding the relative dating of the *Auraicept* witness in H 4. 22 also merits discussion. In a more recent

⁶⁸ Yet in the spirit of speculation, while one can only guess the age of Tomás Mac Fhlannchadha at the time of his pardon in 1557/8, the records indicating that he may have had a son (Flaherus/Flahry) who was pardoned 20 years later and died 34 years after that, in 1611 (see above, p. 140) suggests that Tomás could have been young enough in 1557 to have had a brother who died in 1578.

⁶⁹ O’Sullivan and O’Sullivan, “A Legal Fragment,” 141, and see above, p. 136.

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description of the manuscript purchased by Lhuyd in 1700, William O'Sullivan stated in passing that the fourth volume of H 4. 22 was "dated 1595."⁷⁰ If one accepts O'Sullivan's earlier identification of the manuscript's dedicatee with a *fiant* issued some forty years prior to this, it is not impossible that the composition of at least some parts of the manuscript itself might be assigned so late a period. However, closer scrutiny of the date in question urges caution. It derives from a marginal gloss written over the top and down the right-hand side of page 173, and thus on the seventh page of the *Auraicept*-text. Abbott and Gwynn described this gloss only as "a faint note in a hand of the seventeenth century," and transcribed it as follows:

*Anno...an tan adh- Uaiter Riabac macmuiris mic
uaiter mic iarla cill dara. 1595 d April (?) an 25...
isan uamaigh talman anaici cnuic luaidi fuair
caiptintun é 7 e arna mairnedh
do...refia...l7an...cl-a...*⁷¹

Mainly on account of the poor state of the manuscript margins, it is difficult to decipher a great deal more than what Abbott and Gwynn have already proposed. However, the name "Uaiter Riabac mac Muiris mic Uaiter mic Iarla Cill Dara" preserved in the most legible portion of the gloss can no doubt be identified with the figure of the same name and lineage who appears in the *Annals of Loch Cé* under the year 1587. This entry recounts the attempt by the rebel Walter "Reagh" Fitzgerald to capture and kill the Constable of Leighlin, County Carlow, as retribution for his mistreatment and murder of the local Kavanagh tenants:

*Baiter Riabach mac Muiris mic Baiter mic an Iarla,
ocus clann Briain mic Cathaoir mic Airt mic
Diarmada laimderg, do dol ar creich ar bord
Lethlinne in Droichid, ocus crech do denamh doib;
ocus toir do breith orra .i. mac maruscail an Ibhair
ocus armail maraon ris. Baiter Riabach ocus a*

⁷⁰ See above, p.139.

⁷¹ Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, 214-15.

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*muintir d'fille orra, ocus mac an maruscail ocus
cetrar ar xx.it da muintir do marbad ar in lathair
sin; ocus fa mor in t-echt do toeb in mic sin an
maruscail. Cathal mac Toirrdelbaigh mic Diarmada
do gabail, ocus a breith do Ros Comain fa
daoirsi.*⁷²

Walter Riabhach, the son of Maurice, son of Walter, son of the Earl, and the sons of Brian, son of Cathair, son of Art, son of Diarmaid Laimhderg, went on a predatory expedition on the borders of Leithglinn-in-droichid, and committed a depredation; and a pursuing band overtook them, viz., the son of the Marshal of the Ibhar, accompanied by an armament. Walter Riabhach and his people turned upon them; and the Marshal's son, and twenty-four of his people, were slain on that field; and great was the woe on account of that son of the Marshal. Cathal, the son of Toirdhelbhach Mac Diarmada, was apprehended, and taken to Ros-Comain in bondage.

The career of Walter Reagh, who was the son of Maurice fitz Walter Fitzgerald of Glassealy, Kildare and a great-grandson of Gerald Fitzgerald, Eighth Earl of Kildare (d. 1513), was a subject of some note in written sources of the late sixteenth century.⁷³ His attack on Dudley Bagenall, the Constable of Leighlin, was not the first instance of troublemaking to have been recorded in contemporary sources: in 1583 he was listed as wanted by the Castle

⁷² William M. Hennessy, ed. and trans., *Annals of Loch Cé: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs from A.D. 1014 to A. D. 1590*, Rolls Series, vol. 54, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1871), 2:478-79, s.a. 1587 (no. 6).

⁷³ Walter Reagh's family and activities have been described in detail by Lord Walter Fitzgerald, "Walter Reagh Fitzgerald, a Noted Outlaw of the Sixteenth Century," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 8.4 (1898): 299-305, and id., "Glassealy and Its Tenants, with the Career of Walter 'Reagh' Fitzgerald," *Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society* 7, no. 2 (1912-1914): 83-108.

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authorities, prompting his father and brother to post bail for him,⁷⁴ while in 1586 Sir Nicholas White, Master of the Rolls, wrote to Lord Baron Burghley to inform him that Walter Reagh had been causing problems for the tenants of Thomas, the tenth Earl of Ormond, and his brother, Sir Edmund Butler, of Cloghrenann, Co. Carlow.⁷⁵ White states that Walter Reagh was the son-in-law of Feagh McHugh O'Byrne, and that he was hiding in the woods of Leveroke and Shielella in Leinster while an order was taken for his prosecution. The outlaw's association with Feagh O'Byrne extended beyond the familial, as he joined the latter's rebellion against the English government in the year preceding the capture of O'Byrne's castle in Ballinacor, Co. Wicklow in January of 1595.⁷⁶ Having been proclaimed a traitor by the Lord Deputy Sir William Russell, Walter Reagh was eventually captured and executed in April 1595. His dramatic end is recounted in an entry in *AFM*, where he is given an apparently erroneous lineage:

Iar m-beith d'Fiachaidh for a iomghabháil tainic ina cend Uáter Riabhach mac Gearailt mic Tomais do Gearaltachaibh Chille Dara. Dála an iustis baísidhe co cend deich lá i m-Baile na Cuirre iar ná fháccbháil d'Fiachaidh, ⁊ ro fhagaibh banda nó dhó do saighdiuiribh agá iomchoimhét ⁊ ticc fein tar a ais co h-Áth Cliath. Do-chóidh dna Uatér Riabhach ⁊ arail do chloinn Fiachach mic Aodha ar ionnsaighidh oidhche (in ionam codalta) fó cend cóicc lá n-d'écc iar sin co Cruimghlinn i n-doras Atha Cliath. Ro loisceadh ⁊ ro léirsccriosadh an

⁷⁴ Fitzgerald, "A Noted Outlaw," 300.

⁷⁵ Hans Claude Hamilton, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1586-1588 July* (London: Longman & Co., 1877), 139; see also Fitzgerald, "A Noted Outlaw," 300.

⁷⁶ David Edwards, "In Tyrone's Shadow: Feagh McHugh O'Byrne, Forgotten Leader of the Nine Years War," in *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne: The Wicklow Firebrand*, *Journal of the Rathdrum Historical Society*, vol. 1 (Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow: Rathdrum Historical Society, 1998), 212-48, at 229-30.

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*baile sin leó, ⁊ ruccsat ina m-baoi ina c-cumang
d'iomchar don chend luaidhe boi for tempall an
bhaile, ⁊ gér bhó soilléir sofhairccsiona luisne ⁊
lasracha an bhaile agá losccadh do sráidibh Átha
Cliath do-chóidh Uater as gan fhuiiucchadh gan
foirdherccadh fair. A c-cionn mis iar sin tucc Uater
ammas for baile duine uasail dia esccairdibh baí ina
comhfochraibh, ⁊ gidh é an duine uasal baoi-sidhe
co feithmheach fuireachair i f-foichill a iondsaighthe
dia easccairdibh. An tan do-chuaidh Uáter cona
mhuintir fon m-baile ro ionnsaigh an duine uasal co
cródha cailcc neimneach i c-coinne Uatér co ro
thuirccsiot a chele co h-ainmhín esccairdemhail co
ro crechtnaighedh Uater ina chois don chur sin.
Ruccsat a mhuintir leó h-é gusan sliabh bá
coimhnesa dóibh, ⁊ ro chuirsiot dia leighes é hi
f-fotholl talmhan ar nár bheólach aon triur idir. Nír
fháccaibhsíot ina fhochair acht aon bhuaichill
legha dia fhíor thanusibh budhéin nó theigedh-sidhe
gach ré lá do thionéoll luibhend fó na coilltibh bá
coimhnesa dhó. Do-rala iomacallamh ós isiol etir é ⁊
drong d-esccairdibh Uateir go ro naidhmsíot re
roile, ⁊ ro tharraing-sidhe líon cengail Uateir ina
chend. Rugadh Uatér iaramh go h-Ath Cliath, ro
crochadh tra, ⁊ do-ronadh cethramhna dhe.*

While Fiagh was [thus] avoiding [his enemies], Walter Reagh, the son of Gerald, son of Thomas, one of the Geraldines of Kildare, came to join him. As for the Lord Justice, he remained for ten days at Ballinacor, after it had been deserted by Fiagh; and, having left one or two companies of soldiers to defend it, he himself returned to Dublin. Fifteen days after this, Walter Reagh and some of the sons of Fiagh, the son of Hugh, set out upon a nocturnal excursion (in sleeping time) to Cruimghlinn, near the gate of Dublin. They burned and totally plundered that town [bally], and took away as much

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as they were able to carry off the leaden roof of the church of the town; and though the blaze and flames of the burning town were plainly visible in the streets of Dublin, Walter escaped without wound or bloodshed. In a month after this, Walter made an attack on a neighbouring castle, belonging to a gentleman of his enemies. But the gentleman was wary and vigilant, in readiness against any attack of his enemies. When Walter and his people attacked the castle, the gentleman came to a bold and fierce combat with Walter; and they struck at each other furiously and inimically, and Walter was wounded in the leg. His people carried him off to the nearest mountain, and they placed him under cure in a subterranean cave, with the situation of which no three persons were acquainted. They left with him only one young physician of his own faithful people, who was wont to go every second day to the nearest woods to gather herbs. A conversation privately occurred between this man and a party of Walter's enemies; and he, having leagued with them, [betrayed Walter], and led a party to where he was, who bound him. Walter was afterwards taken to Dublin, where he was hanged and quartered.⁷⁷

The *AFM* account focuses on the acts of rebellion that immediately preceded Walter's death, including how he was wounded and carried off to a nearby cave for convalescence, where he was betrayed to his pursuers by a trusted attendant and sentenced to death at Dublin Castle. Many of the details of his execution can be established from contemporary English sources. For example, the Lord Justice William Russell included in his journal entries for the year 1595 a record of how the information regarding Walter Reagh's whereabouts was relayed to Sir Henry Harrington, who effected the outlaw's eventual capture on seventh April. On the following day

⁷⁷ O'Donovan, *Annala Riogachta Eireann*, 6:1956-59.

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Walter Reagh was brought to Dublin, and on ninth April he was examined by the Lord Deputy and Council and sentenced to be hanged in chains, a punishment which was carried out on the tenth of that month.⁷⁸

The information gleaned from these sources allows for a partial reconstruction of the faint marginal gloss on page 173 of H 4. 22, quoted above.⁷⁹ It is possible that the last syllable of Henry Harrington's name has been preserved in the three letters –*tún* visible in the part of the gloss which follows Walter Reagh's name and lineage, suggesting that this portion of the note reads "*isan uaimh talmhan anaice cnuic luaidi*⁸⁰ *fuair Caiptin Harringtún é, 7 e arna mairnedh do [...]*, in the souterrain cave next to a mound of lead (?). Captain Harrington captured him, and after his betrayal he [...]" The entry thus accords with contemporary accounts that Walter Reagh was brought to some kind of subterranean hiding-place for recovery when wounded, and that he was discovered there following his betrayal by a trusted attendant. Despite what has been lost, the legible portions of the gloss on page 173 of the *Auraicept* thus provide sufficient information to identify this marginal entry in the fourth volume of H 4. 22 as a reference to the events of April 1595 relating to Walter Reagh Fitzgerald. Although the note may provide a clue to the later fortunes of the manuscript, the question of whether it was added contemporaneously or retrospectively to the event is still a matter of speculation; it cannot be said with certainty, on the basis of this evidence alone, that the date of Walter Reagh's

⁷⁸ J. S. Brewer and William Bullen, eds., *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts Preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth*, 6 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867-1873; repr. Kraus-Thomson: Nendeln/Liechtenstein, 1974), 3: 228.

⁷⁹ See above, p. 154.

⁸⁰ The *AFM* entry refers to the leaden roof (*ceud luaidhe*) of the church at Crumlin that was plundered by Walter Reagh a month before his capture, but whether the (very faint) words *cnuic luaidi* should be read here as a reference to this plunder, perhaps taken to produce lead bullets for ammunition, i.e. that the cave to which Walter Reagh was brought was also a hiding place for his spoils, is uncertain.

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execution coincided with the composition of some part of the *Auraicept* itself.

III.

Having examined the evidence provided by some of the marginalia associated with the H 4. 22 *Auraicept* for the history of the witness, the final dimension of this discussion will consider what the H 4. 22 copy of the *Auraicept* itself can reveal about the transmission of the treatise in the later medieval period. Of necessity this contribution focuses on only a small portion of the text, and it should be acknowledged that future research might yield much additional evidence to clarify these observations.

For convenience, the section subject to analysis here will be referred to as the “Book of Amaigen.”⁸¹ This is a title drawn from the scholiasts themselves, for whom it designated the third of four internally signposted sections of the main body of the *Auraicept*,⁸² each of which was attributed to a different pseudo-historical author.⁸³ The limitations of adopting such a selective approach to the contents of the *Auraicept* are evident, since not only are the four individuals with whom the authorship of the text was associated manifestly

⁸¹ Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 1028-1101:78-83 (cf. ll. 3984-4135:224-29).

⁸² At line 1636 in Calder’s “Short Text” edition (*Auraicept*, 126), a scholiast inserted the comment *conige seo corp ind Auraicepta*, “thus far the body of the Primer.” The material that follows this, much of which was included by Calder in his edition, consists of a series of closely related tracts, the order and content of which varies across the different witnesses. For discussion of the *Auraicept*’s structure, see Rudolf Thurneysen, “*Auraicept na n-Éces*,” *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 17 (1928): 277-303; Erich Poppe, “The Latin Quotations in *Auraicept na n-Éces*: Microtexts and their Transmission,” in *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Transmission*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 296-312, at 296-97; and Hayden, “Poetic Law,” 23-34.

⁸³ The preceding two were respectively ascribed to Cenn Fáelad mac Ailella (Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 1-734:6-55 (cf. ll. 2260-3492:174-209)) and Ferchertne Fili (ibid., ll. 735-1027:54-78 (cf. ll. 3493-984:209-24)), while the following and final book was attributed to Fénius Farsaid, Goídel mac Ethéoir and Íar mac Nema (ibid., ll. 1102-636:82-126 (cf. ll. 4136-725:229-47)).

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legendary, but the ascription of specific sections to their authority is also a feature of the later commentary tradition.⁸⁴ In this sense, authorial attribution by the later scholiasts is just one more pointer to the circularity of the process of accretion which the text underwent, in that the decision to impose a structure onto the work in this way may derive from references or associations drawn from secondary or tertiary scholia, rather than from any original form which the core text was understood to have. Nonetheless, the present focus on the material associated with Amairgen serves the purpose of highlighting, as a case-study, both the processes underlying the accretion of scholia in the *Auraicept* as well as some specific features of this commentary which have been cited as evidence of a

⁸⁴ One indication of this is that the beginning of each “book” usually does not correspond in any way with the larger hand frequently used to distinguish core *lemmata* in the manuscripts. For example, in the Book of Lecan witness (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 535 (23 P 2), fol. 157rb), much of the “Book of Amairgen” is written in larger script, but the *circumstantiae* employed as an introduction to the section are written in a smaller hand. However as Ahlqvist notes (*Early Irish Linguist*, 26-27 and 33), differentiating between older material and later commentary using the criterion of script-size is not always a reliable or straightforward approach: thus while the “Group B” copies of the text typically adhere to such paleographical distinctions throughout, the Book of Lecan witness constitutes the only member of this group in which most of the material comprising the “Book of Amairgen” is written in a larger hand, even if the ornate initials or large-script *incipit* which characterize this section in other “Group B” copies may indicate that the exemplars for this group used large script for the entire passage. The problematic nature of using script-size to the exclusion of other dating criteria, with particular reference to the material considered here, is also noted by Harry Roe in his review of Ahlqvist’s edition, *Peritia* 6/7 (1988): 337-39. Indeed, Rijcklof Hofman has more recently argued that the compilers of the *Auraicept* “conceived their primer as a basic text accompanied by commentary from the outset,” in imitation of Latin grammatical commentaries on Donatus: see his “Latin Grammars and the Structure of the Vernacular Old Irish *Auraicept na nÉces*,” in *Spoken and Written Language: Relations between Latin and the Vernaculars in the Earlier Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Garrison, Marco Mostert and Arpád Orbán, with the assistance of Wolfert S. van Egmond, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, vol. 24 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 185-98, at 197.

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distinction between two groups of witnesses: namely Calder's "Short" and "Long" texts respectively, broadly corresponding to Ahlqvist's Groups "B" and "C." As has been observed at the start of this paper, the position of the H 4. 22 copy within this framework has not previously been examined in detail.

The most salient feature of the "Book of Amairgen" is its brevity: in Calder's "Short Text" edition, the third section of the *Auraicept* comprises only 73 of the total 1636 lines of material that constitute the so-called "main body" of the treatise. The subject matter of this section is part pseudo-historical origin-legend⁸⁵ and part grammatical precepts of an elementary nature, though it lacks the clear question-and-answer structure and more predictable pattern of exegetical analysis for individual terms and concepts that characterizes much of the preceding commentary associated with the poet Ferchertne.⁸⁶ Calder's description of the third book in the preface to his edition stated only that "there is a long excerpt from the Book of Amergen dealing with the origin of Goedelg. This passage is of earlier date and language than the general run of the tract. In substance it is an alternative prologue."⁸⁷ Ahlqvist later modified Calder's view by suggesting that the repetitive nature of the commentary associated with Amairgen could be attributed to the fact that it originally stood at the beginning of the treatise as a whole, but that "at some stage of the textual history of the *Auraicept*, so much additional material (mainly related to the *Lebor Gabála*) had come to be assembled around this part of the canonical *Auraicept* that a scribe found that it would be worthwhile repeating the original later as a separate 'book' of its own."⁸⁸ Accordingly, he included what he deemed to be the earliest stratum of this material at the beginning of his edition (§§1.2-1.17), while sounding a cautionary note that the

⁸⁵ For discussion of the origin-legend material in the Book of Amairgen, an aspect of the passage which will not be considered in great detail here, see for example Bart Jaski, "'We are of the Greeks in our Origin': New Perspectives on the Irish Origin Legend," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 46 (2003): 1-53.

⁸⁶ Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 735-1027:54-79 (cf. ll. 3493-984:209-24).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, xxvi.

⁸⁸ Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, 33.

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various manuscript witnesses “do not agree entirely on what to take as text and what to take as commentary” in this section.⁸⁹ Ahlqvist added, however, that the original precedence of the Book of Amairgen within the compilation as a whole is indicated by a number of quotations that seem to refer to this section in what now stands as the introduction to the *Auraicept*.⁹⁰ For example, the “Book of Cenn Fáelad,” currently first in the sequence of four sections, is described by the scholiasts as *brollach ind Auraicepta*, “the Prologue of the Primer,”⁹¹ but an interpolation in the “Group B” witnesses claims that it is a later addition to the compilation:

*Caidi log 7 aimser 7 perso 7 tugait scribind in
Uraicepta? Ni oenlog tra lasna cethri libro, amal
atbert in fili: a n-as tuiseach, is ed is deghenach, a
n-as dedhenach, is ed as toisseach .i. a n-as
toisseach iar n-urd lebhurda, is ed as dedhenacho
arricht .i. lebor Cindfaeladh mic Oilella.*

What are the place, time, person and cause of writing of the Primer? Not one place have the four books, as the poet says: what is first is last and what is last is first, to wit, what is first according to book order was invented last; to wit, the book of Cennfaeladh, son of Oilill.⁹²

This claim on the part of the scholiasts that the *Auraicept* did not always begin at the beginning would seem to support Calder’s observation that the Book of Amairgen was of earlier date and language than other parts of the text. Both of these arguments for the relative dating of the material can be substantiated, moreover, by the attestation of early linguistic forms in a passage on Fénus Farsaid’s invention of the alphabets at the beginning of the fourth book, suggesting that at least some of the material which now stands at the

⁸⁹ Ibid., 33 and 47-48.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁹¹ Calder, *Auraicept*, l. 81:8-9 (cf. l. 2358:174).

⁹² Ibid., ll. 63-67:6-7.

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end of the “main body” of the compilation may have also been a relatively early development within the commentary tradition.⁹³ Thus while it is clear that the material in the “Book of Amairgen” consists of multiple layers of scholia accumulated over an uncertain period, it is possible that at least some of this commentary may belong to an earlier stratum of the compilation.

The scholiasts delimited the material they associated with Amairgen by invoking a standard set of rhetorical *circumstantiae* as an introduction to the section:

*Is e seo a thosach in Uraicepta [i]ar nAmairgein
nGlungeal. Locc don libur-sa Tochur Inbhir Moir i
crich hUa nEnechglais Cualand: et aimser do
aimsear mac Miled. Perso do Amairgein Glungeal
mac Miled. Tucaid a denma mic Miled dia tothlugud
fair amal ata 'nar ndiaidh.*

This is the beginning of the Primer according to Amairgen Whiteknee. The place of this book [is] Tochur Inbhir Moir in the territory of the Hy Enechglais Cualann; its time was that of the sons of Míl; its person was Amairgen Whiteknee, son of Míl. The reason for making it was that the sons of Míl demanded it of him as is after us.⁹⁴

The two principal themes of origin-legend and letter classification that follow under this heading are closely intertwined. The doctrine on letters has been incorporated into the commentators' familiar

⁹³ On these forms see Roisin McLaughlin, “Fénius Farsaid and the Alphabets,” *Ériu* 59 (2009) 1-24, at 2-3.

⁹⁴ Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 1028-33:78-79 (cf. ll. 3984-88:224). The association of Amairgen with An tInbhear Mór, or the area around modern Arklow, is paralleled in the *Lebor Gabála* tradition, and is also recounted in the deeds of the sons of Míl given in *AFM* M3501.1 (O'Donovan, *Annala Riogachta Eireann*, 1:26-27); for discussion see Liam Price, “The Place-Names of the Barony of Arklow, County of Wicklow,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 46 (1940-1941): 237-86, at 273-75.

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refrain that Irish was the most comprehensive of all tongues because it was formed from the best parts of all the languages at Babel, as articulated in their observation that “*cach son do na airnecht cairechtaire isna aipgitribh ailibh ol chena arrichta carechtaire leosumh doibh isin beithi-luis-nin in ogaim*” (for every sound for which no characters were found in all the other alphabets, characters were found for these in the Ogam alphabet).⁹⁵

The basis for this argument appears to be the notion that every Irish vowel could be pronounced in different ways depending on its quantity. Given that the Irish approach to letter classification was itself closely modeled on the doctrine of Latin grammatical authorities,⁹⁶ it is not surprising that the scholiasts in this section explained this concept of phonological variation by invoking a Latin quotation, ultimately (though perhaps not directly) drawn from Donatus’s discussion of letters in his *Ars grammatica*, which explains that “*Latinae uocales omnes et produci et corripri possunt*” (all Latin vowels can be either lengthened or shortened).⁹⁷

The idea that a single alphabetic character might represent multiple sounds gave rise in turn to the citation of words that demonstrate these phonological distinctions. Such an illustrative approach to explaining short, middle and long syllabic quantity, as well as the related problem of consonant-class agreement, is a feature of commentary elsewhere in the *Auraicept* and associated texts, as for example when the scholiasts cite rhyming word-pairs such as *bas* ‘palm’ and *las* ‘shine!’, *bras* ‘boastful’ and *gras*,⁹⁸ *cenn* ‘head’ and *lenn* ‘cloak,’ or *donn* ‘brown’ and *conn* ‘bulge.’⁹⁹ The Book of

⁹⁵ Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 1055-57:80-81 (cf. ll. 4011-13:224-25).

⁹⁶ For discussion, see for example Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, 7-10 and 41.

⁹⁷ Donatus, *Ars maior* 1:2.12 (De littera), ed. Louis Holtz, *Donat et la tradition de l’enseignement grammatical. Étude sur l’Ars Donati et sa diffusion* (IV^e-IX^e siècle) (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1981), 604.

⁹⁸ Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, 51, offered no translation for this word, which is not attested in the *DIL*. If its vowel is meant to be long, it could be *grás* ‘mercy,’ but this would presumably require a long vowel in its corresponding pair, e.g. *brás* (= *prás* ‘brass’) (?).

⁹⁹ Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, 51, §6.13.

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Amairgen contains no such pairs, but does cite the trio of words *grus* ‘cheese,’ *cloch* ‘stone’ and *linn* ‘pool.’ While these examples may echo a similar preoccupation with distinctions of consonant class, their primary function in this particular context was to introduce a lexical dimension to the scholiasts’ argument for the linguistic superiority of Irish over Latin. Thus it was claimed that “*cach duil do na rabha ainmniugud isna berlaib ailib airichta ainmnighthi doibh (isin Gaedilg)*” (for every element for which there was no name in the other languages, names were found in Gaelic),¹⁰⁰ and *grus*, *cloch* and *linn* assumed the role of headwords for comparative lists of Latin and Irish terms denoting various types of cheese, rocks and bodies of water respectively:

Leithi i foclaib .i. grus ⁊ cloch ⁊ lind, ni fil a fregra
sin lasin Laitneoir: grus .i. tanach.¹⁰¹ *galmula*¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 1061-62:80-81.

¹⁰¹ Multiple layers of glossing in this passage have compounded the uncertainty surrounding the meaning of these terms. Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, Early Irish Law Series, vol. 4 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1997), 328, notes that *grus* is the most common term for ‘cheese’ in the law-texts, and is listed in *Uraicecht Becc* among the types of food which a householder provides for a visiting lord and his attendants. Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 1082-85:82-83, translates the three occurrences of *grus* in this passage as ‘curds,’ ‘curd’ and ‘stirabout’ respectively, while he renders *tanach*, which is here equated with *grus*, simply as ‘a cheese.’ However, Kelly (*Early Irish Farming*, 329) has suggested that *tanach* must have been a cheese product of the harder variety, since a blow caused by a piece of it that had been hurled from a sling was enough to bring about Queen Medb’s death in the Old Irish tale *Aided Meidbe*. *Grus* may thus be better translated as ‘cheese’ here, while the word *gruth*, which is clearly from the same root, could refer instead to ‘curds.’ The clearly related Latin words *galmula*, *galmarium* and *galmalam* are poorly attested elsewhere (for examples, see *The Non-Classical Lexicon of Celtic Latinity*, Vol. I: Letters A-H, ed. Anthony Harvey and Jane Power, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, Medieval Latin Dictionaries, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 330). Their equation in the *Auraicept* with the Irish terms *gruth*, *gruthrach* and *fáiscre* (*grotha*, lit. ‘curds which have been pressed’) could suggest that they reference dairy products of which the consistency lies somewhere on the spectrum between curds and soft cheese, but

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lasin Laitneoir, gruth lasin nGoedel dia frecrea;
galmarium lasin Laitneoir, faiscre lasin
nGaedel;¹⁰³ *galmalam* lasin Laitneoir, gruthrach
lasin nGaedel; grus lasin nGaedel, ni fil a
fregarthach-side lasin Laitneoir.

Lapis lasin Laitneoir, cloch lasin nGaedel;
petra lasin Laitneoir, ail lasin nGaedel; *sropula* (sic)
lasin Laitneoir, carrach lasin nGaedel. Cloch (no
ael) 7 onn 7 ailcne immorro, is iat sin cenela cloch do
na fuilet freacartaich icon Laitneoir.

Aqua lasin Laitneoir, usce lasin nGaedel;
amnis lasin Laitneoir, aband lasin nGaedel;
piscina lasin Laitneoir, iachlinn lasin nGaedel;

the evidence is decidedly vague: in the glossary *Sanas Cormaic*, for example, the word *gruth* is glossed only as *i. fonaithe*, i.e. something that has been ‘cooked’ or ‘baked.’ One might also speculate on whether the scholiasts’ preoccupation here with the word *gruth* and semantically related terms might be related to Amairgen’s association elsewhere with curds, his prodigious poetic talent having been revealed by the recitation of a poem beginning with the words *In ith Greth gruth?* “does Greth eat curds?”: see *The Book of Leinster, formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, ed. R. I. Best, Osborn Bergin, M. A. O’Brien, and Anne O’Sullivan, 6 vols. (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1954-1983), 2:435-36, ll. 13565-617; and Kuno Meyer, ed., *Sanas Cormaic (Cormac’s Glossary)*, 57, §690, as well as the discussion by Paul Russell, “Poets, Power and Possessions in Medieval Ireland: Some Stories from *Sanas Cormaic*,” in *Law, Literature and Society*, ed. Joseph F. Eska, CSANA Yearbook, vol. 7 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 9-45, at 18-19 and 35-36. The precise chronology of the accretion is of course uncertain, but it at least demonstrates how the scholiasts of the *Auraicept* could draw on particular types of examples to illustrate a variety of points simultaneously.

¹⁰² Glossed *no gal* in H 4. 22.

¹⁰³ This example is not given in the YBL text, and is missing from Egerton 88 due to a lacuna (see note 109 below) but is present in Calder’s “Short Text” edition and the H 4. 22 witness (*Auraicept*, ll.1083-84:82).

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linn, immorro, lasin nGaedel, ni fhil a frecre lasin
Laitneoir. Leithiu didiu in Gaedel i foclaibh 7 i
llitribh desin anda in Laitneoir.

[Irish is] broader in words, to wit, *grus* curds; *cloch*
stone; *lind* pool, the Latinist has nothing to
correspond with those; curd, that is a cheese:
galmula with the Latinist, curds with the Gael: to
correspond with the Latinist's *galmarium* is the
Gael's cheese: *galmalam* with the Latinist,
gruthrach with the Gael: "stirabout" with the Gael,
there is nothing answering to that with the Latinist.

Lapis with the Latinist, stone with the Gael: *petra*
with the Latinist, rock with the Gael: *scopulus* with
the Latinist, sharp pebble with the Gael. *Cloch*, *onn*
and *ailcne*, however, these are kinds of stones to
which the Latinist has nothing corresponding.

Aqua with the Latinist, water with the Gael; *amnis*
with the Latinist, river with the Gael; *piscina* with
the Latinist, fish-pool with the Gael; to the Gael's
pool, however, the Latinist has nothing
corresponding. Hence then, the Gael is wider in
words and letters than the Latinist.¹⁰⁴

This show of one-upmanship prompted a defense against what
was claimed to be the "argument of the Latinist," according to which
Latin makes up for the deficiencies of its lexical corpus by assigning
a wider range of meanings to every word. As evidence of this
contention, the scholiasts again had recourse to Latin itself, invoking
an explanation ultimately derived from Isidore's discussion of nouns
in his *Etymologiae*.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., ll. 1080-95:82-83, (= ll. 4075-86: 226-27); Eds: to insure
clarity in this quotation, the Irish passage is given in regular type..

¹⁰⁵ W. M. Lindsay, ed., *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi etymologiarum sive
originum libri XX*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 1:7.1: *nisi enim
nomen scieris, cognitio rerum perit*; trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J.

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*Is ed asbeir in Laitneoir cid leithiu i foclaib 7 i llitrib
in Gaedalc ni leithe i ciallaibh; ar cia bet ilanmann
icon Gaedel ic sluinn na raet, tic in chiall relait asin
uathadh focul fil icon Laitneoir. Ni fir on, amal
asbert in Laitneoir fein: nisi sciris nomen, cognition
rerum periit, .i. atbail int aichnius inna raet meni
aichnigther int ainm.*

What the Latinist says is that though Gaelic is wider in words and letters, it is not wider in meanings; for though the Gael has many names in denoting the things, the relative meaning emerges out of the paucity of words which the Latinist does have. That is not true, as the Latinist himself says: *Nisi scieris nomen, cognitio rerum periit*, i.e. the knowledge of the thing perishes, unless the name is known.¹⁰⁶

These examples demonstrate the logical, if often circular, process of accretion that characterizes the commentary within this section, where scholia relating to Ireland's origin-legend engendered the theme of Irish linguistic superiority, and was linked to elementary grammatical doctrine concerning letter classifications. The three headwords *grus*, *cloch* and *linn*, primarily employed here to exemplify the lexical variety of Irish, may have simultaneously served as a mnemonic for rudimentary doctrine on consonant class,

A. Beach and Oliver Berghof, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 42. As Erich Poppe notes ("Latin Quotations," 307), this statement is also given verbatim by several Hiberno-Latin grammarians, including Sedulius Scottus, *Tractatus in Donati artem minorum*, in *Priscianum*, in *Eutychem*, ed. Bengt Löfstedt, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, vol. 40C (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), 6; Donatus Ortigraphus, *Ars grammatica*, ed. John Chittenden, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, vol. 40D (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), 65, and the anonymous author of the *Ars Laureshamensis. Expositio in Donatum maiorem*, ed. Bengt Löfstedt, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, vol. 40A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), 10.

¹⁰⁶ Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 1095-1101: 82-83.

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as suggested by the fact that some manuscript witnesses also feature an illustrative verse stanza containing the word *grus*.¹⁰⁷

IV.

Having thus summarized the contents of the Book of Amairgen found in all extant witnesses of the *Auraicept*, it remains to examine what this section might reveal regarding the textual relationship of the H 4. 22 witness to other versions of the treatise, in particular those copies with which it has previously been grouped. In Calder's "Short Text" edition of the *Auraicept*, the Book of Amairgen concludes with the quotation from Isidore's *Etymologiae* on the role of names in understanding the nature of things, but the witnesses used for Calder's "Long Text" edition incorporate substantial additional material both before and after this point. Thus the quotation from Isidore in the "Long Text" is preceded by an expansion of the initial passage of pseudo-historical commentary, most of which elaborates on the Tower of Babel origin-legend.¹⁰⁸ The H 4. 22 witness contains only the first portion of this accretion, and in that sense occupies an intermediate position between Calder's

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., ll. 1064-67:80-81 (cf. ll. 4020-23:225). The stanza in question also occurs in a tract on the types of satire as an illustration of *dallbach beccthuinidi* 'lightly established innuendo.' This is listed as one of three types of *dallbach*, or satires for which the victim retains differing degrees of anonymity: see Roisin McLaughlin, ed. and trans., *Early Irish Satire* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2008), 54-55 and 73: *Ránac-sa a les / secha tét in glas / indid imdae grus / cenip imdae as* "I reached his farmyard / past which the stream flows, / in which cheese is plentiful / although it does not come plentifully out of it." As noted by Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 326 n. 66, the metre of this poem establishes the short length of the vowel in *grus*, contrary to D. A. Binchy, ed., *Crith Gablach*, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series, vol. 11 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1941), 2.27 (= *CIH* II.777.22-23), and *DIL*, s.v. *grús*. Versions of the stanza are included in both Calder's "Short" and "Long" text editions, but it is not present in the H 4. 22 witness.

¹⁰⁸ Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 4024-61: 225-26.

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“Short” and “Long Text” editions.¹⁰⁹ Otherwise the two versions of the Book of Amairgen presented by Calder are similar, save that in the “Long Text” edition, a) the scholia on Latin and Irish lexical equivalents for bodies of water has been moved to the end of the section,¹¹⁰ and b) this displaced passage was followed by the repetition of a short excerpt, originally occurring immediately after the first sequence of pseudo-historical material in the book, which comments on the division of letter-classes and the diversity of linguistic elements in Irish. The repeated passage is textually closer to the version given toward the beginning of the Book of Amairgen in the “Short Text” and in H 4. 22¹¹¹ than it is to the one preceding it in the “Long Text,”¹¹² suggesting that the repetition may have resulted from a conflation of different versions rather than the reproduction of commentary occurring earlier in the same witness:

*Rolaiti iarum a feudha four leith et a thaophoumna
four leth co bfil cach ai diph for leith ou'raile, ar ni
bfil leuthguta and amal nach bfil la Greca aucht
muiti nama. Gach duil do nach raibe ainmniuccd
isna beurlaibh ailiph arichta a ainmniugud doiph
isin Gaidile, ut est, grus, cluoch, lind.*

Therefore its vowels were placed apart and its consonants also apart, so that every one of them stands apart from the other. Semivowels do not exist, as they do not exist with the Greeks, but only

¹⁰⁹ The additional material in H 4. 22 corresponds to Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 4024-30: 225. It should be noted, however, that there is a lacuna of considerable extent in the Egerton 88 copy, which encompasses the end of the “Book of Ferchertne” and the beginning of the “Book of Amairgen,” so it is not clear how much of this additional material was also included in Egerton 88, although the remaining text of this section in Egerton 88 otherwise corresponds closely to that in YBL. The lacuna involves the material in Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 3706-4083:216-27; see also O’Grady, *Catalogue*, 1: 105.

¹¹⁰ Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 4091-95: 227.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 1058-63: 80.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, ll. 4015-19: 225.

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the mutes. For every element, for which there was no name in the other languages, names were found in Gaelic, e.g. *grus*, 'curds'; *cloch*, 'stone'; and *linn*, 'pool.'¹¹³

In contrast to both the YBL and Egerton 88 witnesses, the H 4. 22 copy of the *Auraicept* contains neither features (a) nor (b); instead its version of the Book of Amairgen ends, as in Calder's "Short Text" edition, with the quotation from Isidore. However, Calder's "Long Text" edition shows that the misplaced and repeated passages at the end of the Book of Amairgen in YBL and Egerton 88 are also followed by yet another interpolation, identified by Ahlqvist as a distinguishing feature of the "Group C" witnesses of the *Auraicept* on the grounds that it consists of material not found in other versions of the text.¹¹⁴ In his description of Egerton 88, O'Grady dismissed this additional commentary as "an unconnected passage, not given in BB [the Book of Ballymote], and written like the law tracts i.e. the text in a large character, with gloss both interlinear and apart."¹¹⁵ The so-called "law-text format" of the interpolated passage is indeed striking in this context. Not only is the use of larger script in the *Auraicept* an inconsistent feature of extant witnesses of the treatise—and one more commonly characteristic of the "Group B" copies—but it is also typically confined to material found in all witnesses, and only occasionally features marked spacing or substantial interlinear glossing. The disrupted passages of commentary that appear throughout the *Auraicept* also suggest that it was typical for material written as interlinear glossing in earlier witnesses to be incorporated as continuous text in later ones. It is thus noteworthy that the format and glossing of the interpolated passage in YBL and Egerton 88 have been carefully reproduced in all later copies of the treatise in which it occurs: a point that further highlights the unreliability of using such

¹¹³ Ibid., ll. 4096-101: 227-28.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., ll. 4102-35: 228, and Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, 27.

¹¹⁵ O'Grady, *Catalogue*, 105.

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paleographical evidence as an exclusive indicator for the relative dating of the text.¹¹⁶

The interpolated passage at the end of the Book of Amairgen in Calder's "Long Text" consists of three questions relating to stress and syllable-length in Latin compound verbs, each of which is accompanied by its corresponding answer. The first question asks how the first-person plural of the compound Latin verb *circumdare* is formed, and the second why its penultimate syllable is short; the third question considers the related issue of why the accent falls on the short penult in this verb (-*da*-), rather than on the second syllable -*cum*-.¹¹⁷ The text of the first two questions and their corresponding answers is generously spaced, written in a larger hand than that used for the preceding commentary, and accompanied by additional interlinear explanatory glosses; the third question and its answer are given in continuous spaced text written in a similarly large hand.

Contrary to O'Grady's contention that the interpolation was an irrelevant addition to the surrounding scholia, it is clear from the content of these three questions that they form a logical continuation of the preceding commentary on letter classification and quantity in the Book of Amairgen, since they are concerned with syllable length and accentual placement. These linguistic points could be readily illustrated using Latin grammatical doctrine on compound verbs, which explains in some detail how the addition of a prefix to a simplex verb in Latin may or may not affect the form, quantity and stress of syllables in the latter. The repetition of a summary passage on alphabetic classification immediately before this interpolation, which has been cited above as a possible indication of a conflation of different versions of the text, could also suggest that at some stage in the *Auraicept*'s textual transmission, precisely the same process took place within the Book of Amairgen as occurred in the structure of the entire work: namely a scholiast felt that so much additional material, mostly relating to the Irish origin-legend and lexical variety, had

¹¹⁶ See TCD MS 1318 (H 2. 16), col. 234a (YBL); BL MS Egerton 88, fol. 71; NLI MS G53, pp. 109-10; and TCD MS 1317 (H 2. 15b), p. 122.

¹¹⁷ An edition, translation and more detailed commentary on this passage are in progress by the author.

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accumulated within the section that it was worth repeating more immediately relevant doctrine before introducing this new illustrative material relating to stress and syllable-length in Latin compound verbs. The interpolation may also demonstrate the continuous incorporation of Latin grammatical doctrine even during the latter stages of the *Auraicept*'s transmission, highlighting how the accretion of commentary in the treatise was hardly a linear process whereby a short and distinctly Latinate "core" of linguistic matter came to be surrounded by increasing quantities of either explanatory etymological glosses or non-grammatical material from other vernacular sources. It is difficult to establish a chronology for its inclusion with any certainty, however, given the probability that so many earlier witnesses have been lost.

It has been noted that the interpolation on compound verbs in the "Group C" copies of the *Auraicept* was identified by Ahlqvist as a distinguishing feature of the longest version of the treatise. It is also the case that the contents of the Book of Amaigen in the H 4. 22 witness, listed by both editors of the *Auraicept* amongst the "Group C" manuscripts, are in fact both structurally and textually closer to the "Group B" witnesses, with the exception that H 4. 22 contains some of the expansion of the pseudo-historical material in the section. It does not, however, contain any of the additional material found after the Isidorean quotation.¹¹⁸ Yet the three questions concerning compound verbs do appear elsewhere in the fourth volume of H 4. 22: namely on a small, trapezoidal slip of vellum inserted after page 158 of the manuscript. Judging from the marginal spacing of the writing around the edges of this slip, which are only obscured on one side by the manuscript's binding, it was not included in the volume as a scrap but was rather a spare piece of vellum used to record some short grammatical notes. The first seven lines of the slip contain, in continuous script, a) the two questions concerning compound verbs and their corresponding answers, or in other words, the generously spaced "main text" material of the *Auraicept*-interpolation just discussed, but without any of the interlinear explanatory glosses which accompany it in the Egerton 88

¹¹⁸ Calder, *Auraicept*, l. 1101: 82 (cf. l. 4091: 227).

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and YBL witnesses. This is followed by b) four lines written in Irish concerning the concept of “nullity” of phonetic value and c) a fragmentary Latin text on the phonetic basis to the order of vowels, which also occurs in two separate tracts on letters.¹¹⁹ The H 4. 22 copy of the *Auraicept* contains none of this material, but the other witnesses used by Calder for his “Long Text” edition contain interpolations of both items “a” and “b.” In the case of item “a,” the text has been spaced and interlinear glossing added, as described above; in that of item “b,” the four-line passage from the trapezoidal fragment in H 4. 22 has been reproduced almost verbatim within an earlier section of commentary, with no other intervening material.¹²⁰

While the textual similarity between the material found in the trapezoidal fragment in H 4. 22 and that incorporated into the other two “Long Text” witnesses used by Calder is noteworthy, it does not necessarily follow that the fragment itself formed a direct source for the interpolation attested in these two manuscripts; such rudimentary grammatical material could derive from a didactic text that also existed elsewhere. Moreover, preliminary study of the commentary in other sections of the H 4. 22 *Auraicept* points up the complexity of the relationship between this witness and the other two “Long Text” versions edited by Calder.¹²¹ However, the external evidence

¹¹⁹ Using both of these tracts and the H 4. 22 fragment, the text of item “c” has been reconstructed by Patricia Kelly, ed. and trans., “A Fragment of Latin Grammar,” in *Ogma. Essays in Celtic Studies in Honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin*, ed. Michael Richter and Jean-Michel Picard (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 243-50.

¹²⁰ Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 2836-43:188-89.

¹²¹ For example, one of the points of similarity between H 4. 22 and the other “Long Text” witnesses, as well as Ahlqvist’s “Group A” copies, is their incorporation of a series of Latin quotations concerned with corporeal vs. incorporeal nouns and natural vs. metaphorical gender in the second book (*Auraicept*, ll. 3235-48:201). A comparison of the unedited witnesses shows that the first quotation in this series was already a product of conflation in the earliest extant copies, and thus its meaning may have been somewhat unclear to the sixteenth-century scholiasts. While the text of this quotation in the YBL, Egerton 88 and H 4. 22 witnesses unsurprisingly differs from that found in the “Group A” copies, it is also the case that the H 4. 22 scribe has both reproduced

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presented in the first section of this paper supports the assignment of a mid- to late-sixteenth century date to the fourth volume of H 4. 22, in a milieu that was both geographically and vocationally suited to foster connections with the law-schools in Ardkyle and Park. It is therefore possible that the trapezoidal slip could have formed either a direct or close indirect source for the interpolation found in several of the “Group C” witnesses, of which Egerton 88 and YBL, both produced in these schools, constitute the earliest extant versions.

Exactly when the trapezoidal fragment came to form part of the volume that Lhuyd purchased in Sligo at the turn of the eighteenth century is unclear, but it probably occurred in one of these locations when the composition of the earliest “Group C” witnesses of the *Auraicept* was still ongoing. The content of the slip is certainly in keeping with other “miscellaneous items” found the fourth volume of H 4. 22, including numerous grammatical notes of an elementary nature and an 18-stanza poem on accentual rules.¹²² It is clear from the inclusion of such matter alongside a copy of the *Auraicept* that rudimentary linguistic doctrine was of particular interest to the compiler of this manuscript, perhaps Tomás Mac Fhlannchadha himself, who may have intended it as a collection of material for use by a student of law.

Calder prefaced his edition of *Auraicept na nÉces* by referring to the treatise as a work that “opens up many questions.”¹²³ This discussion has sought to clarify and supplement what is known of the origins and date of only one extant witness to this text, in part by illustrating both the processes underlying the accretion of commentary in the *Auraicept* and also how this accretion has given rise to ambiguous and sometimes conflicting accounts of the H 4. 22 copy’s relationship to other extant witnesses. It has focused on only a small section of the treatise, and further editorial work on both the H

a textual omission found only in the YBL copy and introduced some innovations not attested elsewhere, thereby demonstrating his efforts to engage with the subject matter at hand notwithstanding its obscurity.

¹²² The poem begins on page 210 of the volume: see Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, 211.

¹²³ Calder, *Auraicept*, xix.

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4. 22 witness and other copies of the *Auraicept* would no doubt greatly illuminate the evidence set out here regarding the contents and use of *Auraicept na nÉces* and related material during the medieval period. In this sense, such a preliminary analysis merely emphasizes the extent to which the *Auraicept*'s own manuscript transmission is the hydra of the many questions to which the treatise gives rise: but it also demonstrates how much can be revealed by a closer study of the later development of this text, even when directed towards those witnesses that have contributed to the form of our published editions.

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Appendix One

Dedication of the *Auraicept*

The “Fierfesa” addressed several times by the YBL scribes as a dedicatee of the *Auraicept* may be Fear Feasa Mac Fir Bhisigh, based on a tentative reading of the surname which concludes a long and only partly legible marginal inscription in the YBL *Auraicept*, cols. 548-49 (see the facsimile edition by Robert Atkinson, *The Yellow Book of Lecan* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1896), 241; the note was transcribed by Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, 347, as “Forus mac Firasoiig”). References to the forename “Firfesa” alone occur in the margins to cols. 511, 524 and 534. This may be the individual alluded to by Roderic O’Flaherty in his *Ogygia seu, rerum Hibernicorum chronologia* (London: Robert Everingham and Benjamin Tooke, 1685), 9, where he cites the “Hibernica Grammatica” of “Firfessius Furbissius” as a source for his genealogy of Fénius Farsaid. In noting this passage from O’Flaherty’s work, Nollaig Ó Muraíle, *The Celebrated Antiquary Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh (c. 1600-1671): His Lineage, Life and Learning*, Maynooth Monographs, vol. 6 (Maynooth: An Sagart, 2002), 50, did not acknowledge *Auraicept na nÉces* as a possible source for O’Flaherty’s genealogy, stating instead that “there now seems to be no trace of the work cited by O’Flaherty (unless it be, perhaps, one of the extant copies of the tract called the *Uraicecht Becc?*).” However, O’Flaherty specified in the margin of page 9 in the *Ogygia* that his source was “Uraiceacht p. 4 col. 2.”

In light of the dedicatory marginalia in the YBL copy of *Auraicept na nÉces*, it is possible that O’Flaherty’s reference is to the genealogy of Fénius Farsaid in cols. 507.43-508.3 of this witness (Atkinson, *Yellow Book of Lecan*, 220-21). Here the *Auraicept*-scholiasts stated that Fénius Farsaid was the descendant of *Bath meic Ribath meic Goimeir meic Iaffeith meic Naoi* (cf. Calder, *Auraicept*, ll. 2465-70:177), a claim that accords with the genealogy given by O’Flaherty. If one takes the YBL copy of the *Auraicept* to begin at the top of col. 500 of the manuscript, the passage in question occurs at the end of the second column of the text’s fourth page. It should be noted however that according to Ahlqvist, *Early Irish Linguist*, 23,

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the YBL *Auraicept* begins with the material at col. 504.23, as per Calder's "Long Text" edition. Roisin McLaughlin, "Fénius Farsaid", has described the material on the two pages preceding this (YBL cols. 500.1-504.22) as a copy of *In Lebor Ollaman*, a Middle Irish tract which "preserves alternative versions of traditions found in the *Auraicept*."

The similarity between the two texts, and the fact that they are often juxtaposed in manuscript compilations, has led to inconsistency in catalogue descriptions of the material, which often include *In Lebor Ollaman* as part of the *Auraicept*; thus for example Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, 102, described the section beginning at col. 500 of YBL as "the Leabhar Ollamhan, which comprises the Uraicept." It is possible that O'Flaherty has similarly conflated the two texts here in citing his source for the Fénius Farsaid genealogy as the fourth page of the "Uraiceacht." As for O'Flaherty's reference to "Firfessius Firbissius," Ó Muraíle, *The Celebrated Antiquary* (50), identified two individuals who bear the name "Fear Feasa" in the Clann Fhir Bhisigh genealogies: one is the son of Cithruadh mac Diarmada Chaoich, alive in 1590, and the other his grandson, who was alive in the early 1660s. If O'Flaherty is referring to the original dedicatee of the YBL *Auraicept*, the individual he cites could be the elder of the two, although it should be acknowledged he is not very clear on the matter.