

Two seventeenth-century Lives of St Patrick: their sources and composition



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TWO SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY LIVES OF ST PATRICK: THEIR SOURCES AND COMPOSITION

ABSTRACT

Two Lives of St Patrick were produced during the effort to preserve Irish hagiographical texts in the wake of the Reformation: the Latin translation of the Middle-Irish Tripartite Life by John Colgan, and an abbreviated reworking of that text copied out by Míchéal Ó Cléirigh. This article identifies the sources of these Lives with new precision, showing that the texts of Patrick's Life circulating in the early seventeenth century were little different from those that survive today. It also addresses how the constituent sources of these Lives were put together, and characterises the interventions their authors made within them.

AT THE CLOSE of the Middle Ages, at least five distinct vernacular Lives of St Patrick were circulating in manuscript. First and foremost was the *Vita Tripartita*, or 'Tripartite Life' ('VT'), a sprawling, three-part omnium-gatherum peppered with occasional bursts of Latin prose.¹ This text survives in two mostly complete witnesses, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 512 ('R') and London, BL, MS Egerton 93 ('E'). Each witness preserves a separate version of the text, characterised by their later additions: R contains several long passages inserted within the text, and hence has been called the 'interpolated' version of the Life, while E has appended a list of Patrick's ordained followers.² In addition to the full Tripartite Life, there were also at least four separate abbreviations and reworkings of this long Life. As described by Ludwig Bieler, they are the *p*-branch texts (surviving in three principal manuscripts, including the Book of Lismore), the *k*-branch texts (two manuscripts), and two further individual witnesses: the Life preserved in the Leabhar Breac (RIA MS 23 P 16 [1230]), and that in RIA MS C iv 3 (1192).³ All of these shorter Lives agree on the broad outlines of Patrick's life and deeds – his birth in Britain, his kidnapping, his escape and later return – but they differ, often substantially, in how they present this narrative, and often draw on sources beside the Tripartite Life.⁴ To all this must also be added the mass of lore and anecdotes circulating

¹Kathleen Mulchrone (ed.), *Bethu Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick* (Dublin, 1939). All further citations from VT are from this edition by line number unless specified.

²Kathleen Mulchrone, 'Die Abfassungszeit und Überlieferung der Vita Tripartita', *ZCP* 16 (1927), 1–94, at 6–33; Mulchrone, 'The Tripartite Life of Patrick: fragments of Stowe copy found', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 20/3–4 (1943), 129–44, at 131–2.

³Ludwig Bieler, 'Bethu Phátraic: Versuch einer Grundlegung des Verhältnisses der irischen Patriciusviten zu den lateinischen', *Anzeiger der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse* 111 (1974), 253–73, at 257–8.

⁴See summary table in Mulchrone, 'Abfassungszeit', 8–16.

independently, including Patrick's genealogy and individual miracle tales, and, of course, the Latin tradition.⁵

Such was the situation confronting the Franciscan scholars of Counter-Reformation Ireland as they worked to gather, copy, and export hagiographical narratives from Ireland to Louvain.⁶ Included in their preserved Lives are two separate versions of the Irish Life of Patrick, both amalgams of multiple earlier sources. One is a rather free Latin rendering of the Tripartite Life by John Colgan, published at Louvain in 1647.⁷ The other Life, a form of the shorter Life augmented with passages and readings from VT itself, was copied out by Míchéal Ó Cléirigh, sent to Louvain, and now survives in Brussels, Bibliothèque royale du Belgique (KBR), MS 2324–40, fols 13r–23r (henceforth 'B').

Neither of these two Lives has received much comment; they do, after all, largely reproduce medieval vernacular Lives that survive to this day. As shown below, however, previous efforts to identify the sources used are incomplete. This article thus aims to provide a detailed account of the sources lying behind Colgan and Ó Cléirigh's texts, and investigate how they were brought together. This analysis shows, firstly, that in the early seventeenth century, hagiographers had access to more or less the same vernacular sources for Patrick's Life as we do today. It also shows that the Life in B was certainly contemporary with Míchéal Ó Cléirigh, and that his colleague and distant relative, Cú Choigcríche Ó Cléirigh, may have been its author. Beyond this, it illustrates the working method of seventeenth-century scribes and scholars as they worked through the textual remnants of centuries past, and underlines the mixture of freedom and fidelity with which they approached their sources.

1. THE BRUSSELS LIFE

Míchéal Ó Cléirigh transcribed this Life into Brussels, KBR MS 2324–40 around 1630.⁸ He gives no indication of his source, but does express bemusement (and apparent dismay) with his exemplar, warning the reader not to think the whole Life of Patrick is present:

⁵The main texts of the Latin tradition are discussed recently in Elizabeth Dawson, *Lives and Afterlives: The Hiberno-Latin Patrician Tradition, 650–1100* (Turnhout, 2023), but note that this overlooks many lesser-known works: see e.g. Ludwig Bieler, 'Eine Patricksvita in Gloucester', in J. Autenrieth and F. Brunhölzl (eds), *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff zu seinem 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* (Stuttgart, 1971), 346–63. For a helpful (if incomplete) guide to Patrician arcana, see Charles Plummer, *Miscellanea hagiographica hibernica* [...] (Brussels, 1925), 219–22.

⁶Pádraig Ó Riain, 'The Louvain achievement II: hagiography', in Edel Bhreathnach, Joseph MacMahon, and John McCafferty (eds), *The Irish Franciscans, 1534–1990* (Dublin, 2009), 189–200; Mícheál Mac Craith, '“Beathaíonn na bráithre na briathra”: the Louvain achievement', *Seanchas Ardmhacha* 21/2–22/1 (2007–8), 86–123.

⁷John Colgan, *Triadis Thaumaturgae* [...] Acta (Louvain, 1647), 117–88.

⁸The folios containing the Life of Patrick are undated, but colophons in the rest of the manuscript span a range between 1627 and 1635: Pádraig Breatnach, 'KBR MS 2324–40', in *Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Irish Language in the Bibliothèque royale de Belgique / Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België* (in progress), Irish Script on Screen (ISOS), DIAS <https://www.isos.dias.ie/RLB/RLB_MS_2324_40.html> (accessed 16 October 2024).

Na tuiccedh, 7 na mesadh aonnduine go bfuil betha Pátruicc go himlan annso óir ní fhuil do réir fhirinne na seinleabhar *acht* cuid don bhethaidh thóisigh ann 7 bíd na trí bethaidhe do gnath a n-aoinleabhar gach áit ina mbí betha *Patruicc* a nEirinn sgriobhta san nGaoidhilg.⁹

‘Let no one suppose nor deem that the Life of Patrick is here in its entirety, for, as the old books attest, there is only a portion of the first Life; and wherever the Life of Patrick is written in Ireland in Irish, the three Lives are usually there in one book.’

To judge by this colophon, Ó Cléirigh was familiar with multiple Lives of Patrick. Apparently, the full Tripartite Life (*na trí bethaidhe*) was the one he most commonly encountered, but that he qualifies his statement with ‘usually’ (*do gnath*) suggests that he may have read some of the abbreviations as well. The Life he copied, however, appears to have been unfamiliar to him. It is largely unfamiliar to modern scholars as well. It survives in no other manuscript. Pádraig Breatnach noted simply that it was a copy of the ‘Shorter Version’ of Patrick’s Irish Life.¹⁰ Ludwig Bieler, in his assessment of the relationships of the many Irish Lives of Patrick, considered it to be a late conflation of a copy of the Tripartite Life and a *p*-branch text.¹¹ Both statements are accurate to a degree, but the situation is rather more complex.

To start, the text of B is reliant on not two but three versions of the Life of Patrick. For the first years of Patrick’s life, from his birth to his servitude under Miliuc maccu Búain (approximately VT 81–206), B is based upon a Life from the *k* branch. This relationship may have been overlooked by Bieler as the sole published *k*-branch text, edited from Dublin, King’s Inns, MS 10 (‘K’), is acephalous, and thus lacks the relevant passages.¹² The other surviving copy, in the Liber Flavus Fergusiorum (Dublin, RIA MS 23 O 48a [476] = ‘F’), contains clear parallels with B’s text. Compare, for instance, the following readings, where ‘L’ is the *p*-branch text from the Book of Lismore (University College Cork, no shelf no.):¹³

B, fol. 13v23–4: do taet *drucht* uisce eiste (‘beads of water come out of it’)¹⁴

F, fol. 29ra34: do thaeth *drucht* uisci *trem*pi

vs

⁹B, fol. 23r22–4. Text based on Pádraig Breatnach, ‘Notula Patriciana’, *Éigse* 27 (1993), 80, compared against MS and Breatnach’s re-edition in ‘KBR MS 2324–40’. My translation.

¹⁰Breatnach, ‘KBR MS 2324–40’.

¹¹Bieler, ‘*Bethu Phátraic*’, 258.

¹²R. I. Best (ed.), ‘Betha Pátraic’, in O. J. Bergin et al. (eds), *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, vol. 3 (Halle a. S., 1910), 29–42.

¹³All readings from L cited by line numbers from the edition: Whitley Stokes (ed.), *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford, 1890).

¹⁴Here and elsewhere, I suppress interlinear glosses in B. All extensions of abbreviations are marked in italics; punctuation and capitalisation are mostly my own.

VT 87: dofuisim husce ('it produces water')

L 50: dofussim uisqui

B, fol. 14v14–15: Patricius, ut¹⁵ est, pater ciuium a papa dicitur
Celestino ('He was called Patricius, that is, "the father of
citizens", by pope Celestinus')

F, fol. 29rb36–7: Patricius .i. i. [sic] pater ciuum [sic] a papa dicitur
Celestinus

vs

VT 205–6: Patricius id est pater ciuium, a papa Celestino ('Patricius,
that is, "the father of citizens", by pope Celestinus')

L 149: Patricius .i. athair na caitherdha, a ainm la Selistinus .i.
comarba Petuir.

As Bieler noted, the rest of the Life is based primarily on a conflated *p*-VT text, though the narrative also draws from other sources. Deciphering exactly where one source stops and another begins is not always possible; all the Lives of Patrick that the compiler used follow the same basic account, and B is often modernised to the point that key differences between the abbreviations and VT are lost.

Moreover, the compiler did not merely switch from one source to the next. Where multiple branches overlap, readings from each often interweave. The scene presented below, in which Patrick returns to Ireland, is a particularly complicated example. Readings from the two main Lives of Patrick used (VT and *p*) are included within the passage, as is a likely reading from *k*. Below, underlining shows where B shares readings with VT, while bold text shows readings in common with *p*; a parallel with *k* (cited here by page and line numbers from Best's edition of K) has a dashed underline:

B, fols 15r32–15v5:

Do rala fris an mac mallachtan cédna tainic re Palladius .i. Náti
mac Garrchon.

Sinell immorro mac Fionnchadha as é ro chreid ar tús d'feruibh
Erenn **do Dhia, & do Patraicc** go **ffarguibh** Patraicc ben-
nachtuin fair féin 7 for a chloinn ina dhiaigh.

Do taod iarumh seach or nErenn soir **go hInis Patraicc**. Is
ann sin táinicc Benén ina mhuinnteras 7 ad bert-somh gomadh
(gomadh) comhorba dhó é iar ttain amhail ro derbadh.

Is ann sin dano ro mhallach Patraicc Inbher nDomhnann 7
Inber nÁinghe ar ni fhuair iasg inntibh. Ro bhennach im-
Inbher mBoinne óir fuair iascc ann.

'There appeared against him the same son of perdition who came
against Palladius, Nathí mac Garrchon.

¹⁵Ó Cléirigh has corrected 'ut' to 'id' in the manuscript.

Sinell mac Finnchada, now, he was the first of the men of Ireland to believe in God and Patrick, so Patrick left a blessing on him and his children after him.

He comes, then, past the coast of Ireland east to Inis Pátraic. There Benén came into his retinue, and he said that he would in time be his heir, as happened.

That was when, moreover, Patrick cursed Inber Domnann and Inber Áinge, because he found no fish in them. He blessed Inber Bóinne, however, because he found fish in it.'

k (K 32.22–3):

Tainic *immorro* Nathi mac Garrchon inna agaid seom ⁊ is he tainic inn-agaid Pallaidi (...)

'Nathí mac Garrchon came against him, and he had come against Palladius ...'

p (RIA MS 24 P 25 [475] = 'Lc', p. 93a11–22):¹⁶

[I]s e tanig a n-agaid Patraic annsin .i. Sinell mac Finnchada uero is e *cet* fer do creid **do Dia ⁊ do Patraic. For facaib didiu bennachtain fair ⁊ for a shil.**

.xl. bliadan on la tanig Patraic a nErinn co laithi a etsectai.

Fo ceird a luing iar sin sech Erinn soir **co hIniss Patraic.** Luid a tir. Arroed aroili fer *for aoghaidect* i suidiu ⁊ creidiss do. Boi dono alaili mac isin toig do bert serc do Patraic *conach caomnacht* sgart[h]ain fris ⁊ is e Beneon gilla Patraic innsin.

Is andsin ro mallach Innber nDomnand ⁊ Innber nAinge ⁊ ro bendach Innber mBoinne ar fuair iasg and.

'This is who came against Patrick there: Sinell mac Finnchada, now, who was the first man who believed in God and Patrick. He [Patrick] left a blessing on him and his descendants.

Forty years from the day Patrick came into Ireland to the day he passed away.

He sent his ship then past Ireland to the east to Inis Pátraic. He went on shore. A certain man took him in there as a guest, and believed in him. Now, there was a certain boy in the house, who loved Patrick, so he could not separate from him, and that is Benén, Patrick's *gilla*.

Then he cursed Inber Domnann and Inber Áinge and he blessed Inber Bóinne because he found fish in it.'

VT (E only), 313–17, 359–64, 368–70:

Tanic uero Nath Í mac Garrchon ana aigid-seom. Ro mallach Pátraic.

Sinell uero mac Findchada, is é toisech ro creit Deo i nHéirinn tria

¹⁶This passage in L 253–71 (the only published version of *p*) has here been conflated with the Life of Patrick in RIA MS C iv 3. See Bieler, '*Bethu Phátraic*', 258.

praecept Patraic. Is aire sin dorat Pátraic bennachtain fair 7 fora
 síl.

[...] [L]uid o immrum soimech sech or nHéirenn sair, co ngab
 i nInbiur Domnand. Ní fuair íasc ann. Dubert maldachtain fair.
 Doluid do Inis Pátraic, 7 docóos uad do Inbiur Ainge. Ní frith ní
 do ann. Dobert dano maldachtain fair, 7 ni toirthiget dib línaib.
 Is ann sin tanic Benén ina munteras. [...] Dixit Pátraic: ‘Heres
 regni mei erit.’

Doluid do Inbiur Bóindi. Fófuair íasc ann. Dobert bennachtain
 fair, 7 is toirthech int inber.

‘Nathí mac Garrchon came against him, however. Patrick cursed
 him.

Sinell mac Finnochada, now, he was the first to believe in God in
 Ireland through Patrick’s preaching. That is why Patrick gave a
 blessing on him and his descendants.

[...] He went east, rowing easily, past the coast of Ireland, until he
 came to Inber Domnann. He found no fish there. He cursed it. He
 came to Inis Pátraic, and sent to Inber Áinge. Nothing was found
 for him there. He cursed it then, and neither is fruitful.

Then Benén came into his retinue [...] Patrick said: “He shall be
 my heir”.

He came to Inber Bóinne. He found fish there. He blessed it, and
 the inlet is fruitful.’

In the above passage, the compiler of B has relied on *p* for the underlying structure of the plot, while readings from other branches – predominantly VT – were used to emend or alter the text. VT was used for *sech* or *nEreenn*, ‘past the shore of Ireland’ (vs *sech Erinn*, ‘past Ireland’), while the compiler of B probably relied on *k* to remind the reader that Nathí had previously come against Palladius. This process of carefully choosing and editing passages and phrases from various Lives of Patrick is a consistent feature of the Life in B. In general, the compiler follows one basic text for the plot, and inserts readings and events from other sources within that matrix. A provisional guide to which text served as the substrate in any given section is presented below; note that most sections feature readings from multiple branches, and the breaks between each segment are rarely exact:

No.	Folio/line	Source	Comments	Contents
1.	13v1–11	VT		
2.	13v12–21	NS	<i>Naemshenchus</i> , Version C (see below)	
3.	13v22–25	<i>k</i>		
4.	13v25–28	<i>p?</i>	This miracle also circulated independently (see below)	Patrick’s first miracle
5.	13v28–14v16	<i>k</i>		

No.	Folio/line	Source	Comments	Contents
6.	14v16–15r32	VT		
7.	15v1–17r31	<i>p</i>		
8.	17r31–17v3	?	Paralleled in <i>Betha Beraig</i> (see Appendix)	Achad Gréine
9.	17v3–18r26	VT	Often includes details not found in VT.	
10.	18r26–19v22	<i>p</i>	The plot proceeds as in <i>p</i> , but often shares readings with VT.	
11.	19v lower marg.	VT		Bite/Assicus
12.	19v23–20r2	?	Has textual relationship to Ó Domhnaill’s <i>Beatha Choluim Chille</i> (see Appendix)	Áth Carpait for Daoil
13.	20r2 – end	<i>p</i>	Generally closer to <i>p</i> , although numerous readings are closer to VT.	

Table 1: Principal sources for B

Two of these sections, nos. 2 and 11, can tell us a great deal about the nature of Ó Cléirigh’s source; taken together, they show that the compiler was a contemporary of Míchéal Ó Cléirigh, and that Ó Cléirigh’s exemplar may have been a fair copy of the new Life.

No. 11 above (a marginal addition at the bottom of fol. 19v) provides evidence for the latter claim. This passage, derived from two widely separated passages in VT, is inserted near the end of a stretch of text generally dependent on *p*:¹⁷

B fol. 19v, lower marg.:

Luidh Patraicc asidhe go hArd Fothadh a tTir Aodha 7 saidhis clí i nArd Fot[h]adh 7 arabharach ba crom 7 fagbais Bite mac bráthar Aisicus ó Ailfinn ann 7 \do/ rala gurab iad comharbadha Cholaim Chille ro aittrebh fri haimsir ann iarsin.

‘Patrick went from there to Ard Fothad in Tír Aeda and set a post in Ard Fothad and the next day it was crooked and he left Bite, the son of the brother of Assicus from Elphin there, and it happened that the heirs of Colmcille dwelled for a while there after that.’

VT 1730–5:

Luid iar sin itir Ess Ruaid 7 muir hi Crich Conaill, dú itá indíu Ra[i]th Chungai. Sádis clí and 7 asbert robad chongbail 7 cathir dó cum .uiii. episcopis 7 ubi est Bite filius fratris Asici ó Ail Find.

¹⁷Compare e.g. B fol. 19r20 ‘fuarattar uadh an ní chuinghe-si’; Lc p. 99a3–4 ‘ro etsat uad in ni connuige’; VT 1368 ‘atchota[t]sat’.

Is and sin dorairngert di Domnall *macc* Aedo *maicc* Ainmirech
.i. ro sáith-som clí i nArd Fóthaid 7 arabárach ba cromb.

'He went after that between Assaroe and the sea into Crích Chonaill, where Ráth Chungai is today. He set a post there and said that it would be a foundation and community to him with seven bishops, where also is Bite, the son of the brother of Assicus from Ailfinn.

That is when he prophesied Domnall mac Aedo maic Ainmirech: he set a post in Ard Fothaid and the next day it was crooked.'

VT 1088–90:

Attát a thaissi i Ráith Chungai, 7 la Pátraic in chell. Fordosrala muinte *Choluim* Chille 7 Aird Šratha.

'His [viz. Assicus'] relics are in Ráth Chungai, and the church is Patrick's. The people of Colmcille and Ardstraw seized it.'

What has happened here is: 1) the two separate stories told in VT 1730–5, in which Patrick 'set the post' (*sádis clí, ro sáith-som clí*) of two new foundations, have been combined into one single passage in B, such that Bite has been left in Ard Fotha(i)d, and the mention of Domnall mac Aedo has been lost; and 2) the conclusion of a separate passage about Bite, Assicus, and Ailfinn, in which it is noted that Assicus' relics are in Ráth Chungai (VT 1073–90), has been added here, with the assertion in the original (that the church is properly Patrick's, but that the *muinte* of Colmcille and Ardstraw have unjustly taken it over) downplayed: the text now only has Colmcille's successors dwell there for a time.

Notwithstanding these errors of interpretation, this passage shows meticulous attention to the whole of VT. The two passages relevant to Bite and Assicus were extracted and combined from far-flung corners of VT and placed at the equivalent location in the much-reduced narrative taken from *p*.¹⁸ This sort of care in sifting through and selecting passages is characteristic of the work elsewhere in B.

The placement of this passage in the margin, moreover, may indicate that Ó Cléirigh's exemplar was written out by the compiler (or a colleague). On occasion, Ó Cléirigh would reproduce marginal glosses from his exemplar in the margin of his own copy, and it is plausible he did so here as well.¹⁹ If so, he had access to a copy of the text that was still being tweaked and polished by the person (or persons) who had put it together.

Even if Míchéal Ó Cléirigh was not faithfully reproducing a marginal note in passage no. 11, the evidence of passage no. 2 confirms that the compiler of B must have been his contemporary. This section, which gives Patrick's

¹⁸In B, this passage comes after a poem blessing Fergus mac Conaill (= VT 1738–49), whereas in the original Tripartite Life, the second note about Assicus and Bite comes just before it (= VT 1730–7).

¹⁹Compare, for instance, the marginal note in the Life of Mochua in the Book of Leinster, fol. 82r, with that in Brussels, KBR 2324–40, fol. 107v.

genealogy, tracing it back to the Fir Bolg, is extracted from the lengthy poem about various saints and their genealogies, *Naemshenchus Naem nÉrenn*, as the compiler himself indicates: ‘... amhail derbhus an rann san duain ina bfuil senchus naomh na hÉrenn’ (‘as the quatrain in the poem that contains the lore of the saints of Ireland confirms’; B, fol. 13v16). There are three main recensions of this poem surviving in early-modern and medieval manuscripts (titled Versions A, B, and C).²⁰ Version C was the work of Cú Choigríche (‘Peregrine’) Ó Cléirigh (fl. 1630–62),²¹ and his version of the text is the closest to that found in the Brussels Life. Below, Version C and the parallel passage from B are given, with select variant readings from the other two surviving versions of the *Naemshenchus* in the footnotes.²²

Naemshenchus Naem nÉrenn (qq. 11–12):

Do siol an Neimhidh sin tra
Cruithnigh is Brethnaigh buada²³
senathair Gailian nar gann
Fer mBolcc is Tuat De Danann.

As da shiol²⁴ Patraicc ro fes
dlecchar dhín a shaóir-shencus
gen gob do shiol mac Milidh ngle
leis do naomadh ar naoimne.

B, fol. 13v18–21:

Do shiol an Neimidh sin thrá,
Cruithnigh, is Bretnaigh búadha.
senathair Gáilian, nar ghann,
Fher mBolcc is Tuath De Dhanann.

As dá shíol Pattraicc ro fes
dlegar dhínn a sháoirshenchus:
giongub do shíol mhac Miledh ngle
leis do naomhadh ar naoimhne.

²⁰Charles Plummer, ‘A tentative catalogue of Irish hagiography’, in Plummer, *Miscellanea hagiographica hibernica: vitae adhuc ineditae* [...] (Brussels, 1925), 171–283, at 227–9.

²¹Eoin Mac Cárthaigh, ‘Ó Cléirigh, Cú Choigríche (O’Clery, Peregrine)’, in Eoin Kinsella et al. (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 2009, <<https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006305.v1>> (accessed 15 October 2024).

²²Paul Grosjean (ed.), ‘Naemshenchus Náemh nÉrenn’, in J. Fraser, Paul Grosjean, and J. G. O’Keeffe (eds), *Irish Texts*, fasc. 3 (London, 1931), 40–80, at 42.

²³MS reading; Grosjean emends to *Cluada*. Compare Version B, in KBR MS 5100–4, fol. 212r21–2: ‘cludha’.

²⁴Compare Version A, in KBR MS 5100–4, fol. 206r21: ‘Da sil sin’.

‘From the seed of that Nemed, then,
 (are the) Picts and excellent Britons.
 (He was) the ancestor of the Gaileoin, no little thing,
 of the Fir Bolg and the Tuatha Dé Danann.

From his seed is Patrick, as is known;
 his noble history is required of us:
 though he was not of the seed of the bright sons of Míl
 by him were sanctified our saints.’

Given the reliance on this version of the *Naemshenchus*, it is possible that the compiler was Cú Choigcríche himself, who, it has been argued, edited other medieval Irish texts in similar ways.²⁵ There is no positive evidence, however, so this identification must remain speculative.

In summary, it appears that the Life of Patrick in Brussels, KBR MS 2324–40 was the product of the early seventeenth century, likely created within the Ó Cléirigh circle, perhaps by Cú Choigcríche Ó Cléirigh. It relies largely on three separate Lives of Patrick, being based, depending on the section, on the Tripartite Life or two of its abbreviations. To this were added a handful of other passages, including an excerpt from the *Naemshenchus* (Version C), as well as the occasional piece of trivia, such as the name of the leper whom Patrick encounters in VT 914–23 (Comlachán, apparently).²⁶

It is possible, moreover, to identify how the versions of VT and *p* used to create B relate to other witnesses of those texts. It is clear that the text of VT available to the compiler was not derived from any now surviving, and may have been superior at points. For instance, in B, the description of what Palladius (the ineffective first missionary to Ireland, according to the Patrician legend) left at Cell Fine includes a ‘chest with the relics of Paul and Peter, and the writing-tablet’ (*comhrair go ttaisibh Póil 7 Pettair 7 an pólaire*: B, fol. 15r26), whereas VT (albeit here represented only by E) replaces *pólaire* with *in clár i scribad*, ‘the tablet onto which he would write’ (VT 296). This has the appearance of a gloss that has displaced the original, perhaps unfamiliar word.²⁷ Where multiple copies survive, moreover, B’s text does not agree consistently with any single witness, although it generally hews closer to E, and the fragments in RIA B iv 1b (1269), part II (= ‘S’):²⁸

²⁵Pádraig Breatnach, ‘The methodology of *seanchas*’, *Éigse* 29 (1996), 1–18; and Pádraig Breatnach, ‘A seventeenth-century abridgement of *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill*’, *Éigse* 33 (2002), 77–172. Note, however, Mac Cárthaigh’s reservations (‘Ó Cléirigh, Cú Choigcríche’).

²⁶See B, fol. 18r13. Unnamed in VT, this leper is called ‘Comlach’ in the notes to the Martyrology of Oengus, as printed in Whitley Stokes, *The Tripartite Life of Patrick, with Other Documents Relating to that Saint*, 2 vols (London, 1887), ii, 556–7; and Whitley Stokes (ed. and trans.), *The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee* (London, 1905), 204–5.

²⁷A later usage of this word at VT 520 is glossed as a ‘book satchel’, *teig liubair*, in the fragments in Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, MS 1337, pp. 520–8; edited in Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, xlvii–lvii, at li; see too *eDIL* s.v. *pólaire* (*DIL* s.v. *polaire*: O-P col. 194).

²⁸Readings in S cited from Kathleen Mulchrone, ‘The Tripartite Life of Patrick: fragments of Stowe copy found’, *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 20/3–4 (1943), 129–44.

<i>tuargbadh as in tioprait</i> B, fol. 17v16	asin E isin R (VT 1068)
Drumae a ainm B, fol. 17v22	i nDrumae E i nDruime R (VT 1221)
espuicc Sochall B, fol. 17v30	S\e/acnull E Sachall R (VT 1243)
At bert an t-aingéal B, fol. 18r8	Ro rádi int aingil fri Pátraic E S <i>om.</i> R (VT 1275)
amhail at bert B, fol. 18r11	ut ipse dicit E ut ipse dixit S <i>om.</i> R (VT 1284)

As for *p*, the text of B is typically closer to the Lismore copy than either of the other independent surviving witnesses of *p*, but it does, on occasion, share a reading with the other texts ('P' is the copy in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Fonds celtiques et basques MS 1):

B, fol. 20v25–6: *rectaire Nais .i. Faillen dono a ainm-séin*
(‘the steward of Naas – Faillén, that is, by name’)

P, fol. 75rb49–50: *rechtaire Nais .i. Faillen*

Lc, p. 100a8–9: *rectaire Nais [...] .i. Faillen*

L 400–1: *rechtuire Náis, Faillén a ainm.*

B, fol. 22v2: *géscca fineamhna* (‘an arm of a vine’)

P, fol. 76va31–2: *gésga fin finemnach*

Lc, p. 102a15: *gesca finemnach*

L 590–1: *gesca finemna*

B, fol. 22v12: *laithe a eitseachta antí naomh Patraicc*

(‘the day of St Patrick’s passing away’)

P, fol. 76va45: *aimsir eitsechta Patraic*

Lc, p. 102a27: *amsir etsecta Patraic*

L 601–2: *laithi a eitsichta inhi noebh Patraic*

But:

B fol. 20v20: *an áit a ndúas é* (‘the place it was eaten’)

P fol. 75rb37: *a bail i nduass*

Lc p. 99b42: *bail a nduass*

L 390: *a bhaile ar’hithed*

As for the *k*-branch text, B is unlikely to have worked directly from F (no comparison with K, given its missing beginning, is possible). In the passages where the compiler was drawing from *k*, B often shares readings with VT against F. Although it is possible that these readings result from careful comparison with the text of VT the compiler had to hand, they are frequent enough that the compiler probably worked from a separate *k*-branch text: in addition to ‘ciuium’ and ‘cium’ in the passage cited above, note, for instance, the following passage, in which B preserves an entire phrase: F, fol. 29b8 ‘... *forsin tenid ro laisset ...*’ = B, fol. 14r20–1 ‘... *forsin teine 7 do rad a anáil fó ro lassat ...*’ = VT 131–2 ‘*forsin teinith 7 a ndorat a anáil foí, ro laisset ...*’.

In short, it appears that the compiler of B was working with copies of Lives of Patrick that have since been lost, but which were little different from the witnesses surviving today.

2. COLGAN'S *VITA SEPTIMA*

In his hagiographical collection on the 'three wonder-workers' of Ireland, *Triadis thaumaturgae* [...] *acta*, John Colgan identified seven Lives of St Patrick.²⁹ Three of these still go by the numbers Colgan bestowed on them (the so-called *Vitae secunda, tertia, and quarta*); the first is better known as Fiacc's Hymn (*Génair Pátraice*), while the fifth and sixth are known by their authors ('Probus' and Jocelin of Furness, respectively).³⁰ The seventh is Colgan's own translation of the Tripartite Life.

In his notes to this translation, Colgan gave a brief overview of his procedures for translating and editing the texts at hand, including an account of his source material and how he used it:

Hanc vitam damus ex tribus peruetustis MS Hibernicis, inter se collatis, desumptam [...]

[O]bseruandum quod tria manuscripta exemplaria iam memorata quorum primum & praecipuum erat descriptum ex vetustis membranis Cle[ri]orum Antiquariorum in Vltonia, secundum ex Deor-aniorum in Lagenia, tertium ex quibus (nescio cocidibus transumptum) in nonnullis ab inuicem discrepabant; vno fusius quae in aliis pressius, & vno latinè, referente quae in aliis Hibernicè referebantur. Nos autem fidem res fusiùs & latinè referentis sequuri [sic; leg. 'sequuti'] sumus. (Colgan, *Triadis thaumaturgae*, 169a–b)

'We give this Life from three very ancient Irish manuscripts collated against each other [...]

It should be noted that the three aforementioned exemplars – the first and foremost of which was written out from the ancient parchments of the Uí Chléirigh antiquaries in Ulster, the second from those of the Uí Dheoradháin in Leinster, the third taken from certain books (I know not which) – differ considerably from one another: one is longer where the others are shorter, and one recounting in Latin what is recounted in Irish in the others. We have, however, followed the testimony of the longer and more Latinate account.'

There have been few attempts to identify these manuscripts. Whitley Stokes, the first modern editor of the Tripartite Life, wrote that '[o]f Colgan's three MSS. none are known to exist'.³¹ Kathleen Mulchrone, the subsequent editor,

²⁹Colgan, *Triadis thaumaturgae*, 1–188.

³⁰See Dawson, *Lives and Afterlives*; Ludwig Bieler, *Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick: Colgan's Vita secunda, quarta, tertia, and quinta* (Dublin, 1971); Helen Birkett, *The Saints' Lives of Jocelin of Furness: Hagiography, Patronage, and Ecclesiastical Politics* (York, 2010), 25–57.

³¹Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, x–xiii (quotation on x).

was more optimistic. Her identification of Colgan's sources relied on her reconstruction of the text's transmission. She categorised the surviving manuscript witnesses (including fragments) into two branches, one headed by E, and the other by R.³² As noted above, the principal difference between these witnesses is additional passages found in one but not the other: R contains several interpolations, including a scene in which Patrick prophesies the future saints Finnian, Colmcille, and Comgall, while E appends a list of twenty-four people *i nn-úrd la Pátraic* (i.e., his ordained followers, or perhaps those ordained by him) to the end of the Life.³³ Mulchrone claimed that the division between the textual tradition of those manuscripts went back to before 936, as the list in E includes reference to a bishop of Armagh who died in that year.³⁴ Moreover, since the interpolations in R and the list of the twenty-four members in E are both present in Colgan's text, Mulchrone concluded that Colgan must have used both R and E for his translation.³⁵ As for the third text that Colgan used, Mulchrone suggested that it came from the *p* branch of the shorter Lives, as many of the passages not traceable in VT are present there.³⁶ Summarising her work, she wrote,

The present writer has already pointed out that Colgan's three originals included a manuscript of the uninterpolated version, very probably that known as Egerton 93 today, and a manuscript of the *p*-version of the short recension [...]. His third manuscript original was a copy of the interpolated version, and may now be assumed to be the copy known to us as Rawlinson B 512. There is no evidence in support of the claim that Colgan's originals are not now extant; the immediate transcripts from which he worked are, however, no longer in existence.³⁷

While true in its essentials – there is little in Colgan not found in other sources – Mulchrone's analysis misidentifies the texts that Colgan used.

There are two reasons to believe this is so even before considering the precise readings of Colgan's text. Firstly, subsequent research into the language and composition of the Tripartite Life strongly suggests that Mulchrone's depiction of the textual tradition is incorrect. Kenneth Jackson argued that the Tripartite Life had not reached its current form until the eleventh century, and thus the split between the branches must have happened well after the death of Joseph of Armagh in 936.³⁸ Furthermore, Colgan was explicit that one Life

³²See above, n. 2.

³³Interpolation in R at VT 590–600; list of twenty-four at VT 3122–46. For the meaning of *urd* here, see *eDIL* s.v. 1 *ord(d)* (= *DIL* O-P cols 154–5). The list also circulated independently; see e.g. Dublin, RIA MS D ii 1 (Book of Uí Mhaine), fol. 53ra; and Dublin, RIA MS 23 P 16 (an Leabhar Breac), p. 220b.

³⁴Mulchrone, 'Abfassungszeit', 5.

³⁵Colgan's version of the prophecy of the saints is at p. 127b (§1.65); the list of twenty-four people is found, unlike E's, in the body of the Life on p. 167a (§3.98).

³⁶Mulchrone, 'Abfassungszeit', 1–2 n. 3.

³⁷Kathleen Mulchrone, 'The Tripartite Life of Patrick: lost fragment discovered', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 20/1–2 (1940), 39–53, at 39 n. 1.

³⁸Kenneth Jackson, 'The date of the Tripartite Life of St. Patrick', *ZCP* 41 (1986), 5–45.

was long, and two were short, and there is no reason to mistrust him when he says that he used a single long Life; as shown below, he was truthful when it comes to the short Lives that he used.

An explanation is still required, however, for how elements of both R and E came to be in Colgan's long Life. Two possibilities suggest themselves. The first is that the list in E – an appendix – was in fact a feature of the shared archetype, and was only lost in an ancestor of R at a relatively late date. Alternatively, it is possible that Colgan was working with a conflated copy of the Tripartite Life. As Colgan noted, his long Life came from the Uí Chléirigh. As Míchéal Ó Cléirigh's familiarity with multiple copies of the Tripartite Life would indicate, that family appears to have had access to many Lives of Patrick, and they may well have created a version that included passages from multiple witnesses.

In any case, it is clear that Colgan had access to a text of the Tripartite Life that was different from those now existing. This point was already made by Stokes in his initial edition.³⁹ The subsequent discovery of the fragments in S has underlined that at least some of the variants in Colgan's translation cannot be the result of him adapting the text to his own Latin style. The fragments in S are often closer to Colgan's Life than R, as in the following Latin phrases:

Sedentibus, id est, quia erant stabiles et immobiles in malo (S 134)⁴⁰

Sedentibus: quia erant stabiles, immobiles in malo (Colgan, p. 117a)

Sedentibus, id est, stabiles quia erant et immobiles in malo

(VT 39–40: R only)

'“Sitting”, that is, because they were settled and unmoving in evil.'

Vos estis lux huius [mundi]. Christus ergo uera lux est quae illuminat omnem hominem (S 134)

Vos estis lux mundi. Et Christus ergò vera lux est, qui illuminat omnem hominem (Colg. 117b)

Vos estis omnem hominem (VT 59–60: R only)

'You are the light of this world. Christ, therefore, is the true light that enlightens everyone.'

(E is unfortunately difficult to compare, as it lacks the opening homily, which contains the most concentrated stretches of Latin prose preserved in S). S may be closer in places to Colgan's text, but it (or a copy) is unlikely to have been Colgan's Uí Chléirigh source: several of the variants Stokes noted in Colgan's Latin are absent in what remains of S as well.⁴¹

The other two Lives that Colgan used can also be identified. One was B itself. We know that Colgan had access to this manuscript; he wrote notes in

³⁹Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, x.

⁴⁰For a ninth-century parallel to this Latin passage, cf. Jean Rittmueller (ed.), *Liber questionum in Evangeliiis*, CCSL 108F: *Scriptores Celtigenae* 5 (Turnhout, 2003), ad Matt. 4:16, pp. 81–2 (ll. 16–26): 'SEDENTIBUS. Quia stabiles erant in malo'.

⁴¹Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, x–xi. Note e.g. S 134 'Nox (enim) erat in mundo' vs Colgan, p. 117b, 'Non enim erat lux in mundo'.

it.⁴² There are also numerous points where Colgan's Latin text shares unique readings with B. One clear example is the account of Patrick's first miracle. This was a self-contained anecdote found in the *p*-branch and also independently.⁴³ Of these, the closest match to Colgan's Latin translation is the text in B:

Colgan, p. 117a–b:

Quando enim mater sanctum puerum in vtero gestabat, filius Regis Britonum cum vxore venit ad ejus domum ... Hoc fuit primum, sed non praecipuum, prodigiorum hujus sancti viri.

'When his mother was carrying the holy child in her womb, the son of the king of the Britons came with his wife to her home ... This was the first, but not the foremost, of the miracles of this holy man.'

B, fol. 13v25–6, 28:

An tan buí halac[h]t a *mhat*hair fair-siumh do eccaimh mac rígh Bretan airm a mbáoi ... Ced-*fhiort* Pattraicc annsin.

'When his mother was pregnant with him [Patrick], the son of the king of the Britons came to where she was ... That was Patrick's first miracle.'

L 52–3:

Ceitfhirt Patraic inso ⁊ a mbroinn a mháthar doroinne .i. mac rígh Breatan tainic co hairm i mbui in ben ...

'This is Patrick's first miracle and he did it in his mother's womb: the son of the king of the Britons came to where the woman was ...'

In both Colgan and B, the statement about the 'first miracle' comes at the end, whereas L places it first. In the same passage, the name of Patrick's mother also supports a link between Colgan's text and B: while she is called 'Conbais' in the independent Egerton version, and 'Cochmais' in *p* (L 54), she is named 'Conchess' in B (fol. 13v21), and 'Conchessa' in Colgan (p. 117).

A second example comes in Patrick's first arrival in Ireland, already discussed above:

B, fol. 15r32:

Do rala fris **an mac mallachtan cédna tainic re Palladius .i. Nát[h]i mac Garrchon**

'There came to him the same son of perdition that came to Palladius, that is, Nathí mac Garrchon.'

Colgan, p. 123b:

Idem enim iniquus Comes, id est Nathi, qui S. Palladio ante resistebat, Beati Patricij, postea doctrinae contradicebat.

⁴² E.g. on fol. 106v: Breatnach, '2324–40'.

⁴³ As in BL Egerton 93, fol. 19a (ed. in Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, xlvj).

‘The same wicked chieftain, that is, Nathí, who had previously stood against St Palladius, later gainsaid the teaching of St Patrick.’

As noted above, B here likely took its reading from *k*, albeit rewording it somewhat. If so, Colgan must have taken this passage from B: note, for instance, that the word ‘same’ (*cédna*, *idem*) is not present in *k*’s version (cited above).

Regarding the final Life, Mulchrone argued that Colgan had access to a *p*-branch text.⁴⁴ This does not withstand further scrutiny. Of the three passages provided as evidence by Mulchrone, the first is Patrick’s ‘first miracle’, which, as discussed above, is also found in B. The second passage details another of Patrick’s childhood miracles, in which he revives another young child from death; the third tells the story of a failed ruse meant to paint Patrick as a fraud. Neither of these are in B. Both, however, are found in the Life of Patrick in the Leabhar Breac (‘Lb’).⁴⁵

There is little to distinguish the versions of the second passage in *p* and Lb, but the third passage shows Colgan must have had a text close to Lb to hand. In that passage, Loegaire mac Néill, the pagan King of Tara, hatches a devious plan. He convinces one of his followers, Crundmael, to feign death, so Patrick would come and heal him. Then, when Patrick called upon the power of God, Crundmael would remain ‘dead’, making it seem as if Patrick, and thus his God, had no real power. Patrick sees through the ruse, and with a curse he ensures the follower’s feigned death becomes real. Given below are three versions, first from *p* (here, Lc, as L’s text is lacunose), then from Lb, and finally from Colgan:

Lc, pp. 94b39–97a4

Is annsin at bert Laogaire fria a gilla .i. Crundmaol a ainm, ‘Eirg amach’, ar se, ‘ar clochrod na Temra 7 coimlet h’aoss cumt[h]a fuil dot’ cend, 7 abrad is tuitim do ronais for na clochaib conid marb de, 7 at ber-sa frisin clerech techt dot’ dusgad’, 7 do rigned amlaid sin. O’t cuass didiu (didiu) [sic] do Patraic an sgel sin, atracht dia toduscad. O’t connairc Patraic in corp, ro foillsig Dia do conid breg do radad uime, conid and sin ro guid an Comde co nach ereochad in gilla do gres, 7 ro comuilled amlaid tre escone Patraic.

‘Then Loegaire said to his *gilla*, Crundmael, “Go out”, he said, “onto the stone road⁴⁶ (?) of Tara, and have your companions rub blood on your head, and have them say that you fell on the stones and died of it, and I will say to the cleric to go revive you”, and

⁴⁴Mulchrone, ‘Abfassungszeit’, 1 n. 3 (citing Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, xi–xii).

⁴⁵Whitley Stokes (ed. and trans.), *Three Middle-Irish Homilies on the Lives of Saints Patrick, Brigit, and Columba* (Calcutta: Private press, 1877), 8, 24, respectively. All citations from this source are given from the version on CELT, which introduces normalised spacing: Whitley Stokes (ed.), ‘Betha Phátraic’, compiled by Beatrix Färber, Elva Johnston, and Ruth Murphy, *Corpus of Electronic Texts*, 2012, <celt.ucc.ie/published/G201009/> (accessed 16 October 2024).

⁴⁶The other independent surviving MS of *p*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Fonds celtiques et basques MS 1, fol. 74ra30, reads ‘clocrat’, but cf. *eDIL* s.v. ? *clochrad* (= *DIL* C col. 250).

so it was done. Now, when Patrick was told that story, he got up to revive him. When Patrick saw the body, God revealed to him that he had been lied to, so he then prayed to the Lord that the *gilla* would never rise again, and it so happened through Patrick's curse.'

Lb, p. 24:

IS andsin at-bert in rig fria gilla .i. fri Crund Mael: 'Eirg immach for clochán na Temrach & not-léic féin fair & coimlet toes cumasctha [cumtha MS] fuil imot chend & abrat is tutim do-rochar forsna clochaib co n-erbaltais & at-bér-sa frisin clerech techt dot todúscad & ci at-béra-som frit-sa ergi na h-erig.' Do-rónad ámlaid. O't-connaire tra Patraic in corp ro follsig Dia dó co robréc tuccadimme conid aire sin at-bert-som:

A mo Chrund Mael, A mo gill mael, A mo gerat,
ge ro thiacht ní cen co ro-siacht, ní rot-éracht,
ge do-rochar, cen co torchar forsna clocha comul cricha
ge rot-siacht ní cen co tiacht, ní rot-ichthar.

IS derb dino nocho r' h-íccad la brethir Patraic Crund Mael & ni eracht itir o sin ille.

'Then the king said to his *gilla* (that is, to Crundmael), "Go out onto the stone causeway (*clochán*) of Tara and lay yourself down on it and have your companions rub blood around your head, and have them say you fell on the stones and died, and I will say to the cleric to go revive you, and even if he says to get up, do not get up". So it was done. When Patrick saw the body, God revealed to him that he had been deceived, so he said:

"My Crundmael, my ... , my hero,
Though something came, though it did not arrive, you did not get up,
Though you fell, though you did not fall, upon the stones – a compact ...
Though something reached you, though it did not come, may you not be healed."

It is clear, therefore, that Crundmael was not healed by Patrick's word, and he never got up again.⁴⁷

⁴⁷The translation is approximate; my thanks to Greg Toner for assistance here (any errors of interpretation are, of course, my own). Difficult points include 1) the word 'gill' in line 1 (nonce shortening of 'gilla'? Vocative form of 'gell'?); 2) the verbal forms in ll. 2 and 4, which may be corrupt ('rot-siacht' would sound nearly identical to 'ro tiacht', itself an unclear form, perhaps related to 'do icc' or 'téit'); 3) the cheville in l. 3 (? leg. 'crichtha', either the gen. sg. of the verbal noun or rather the past participle of 'críchaid'); 4) the otherwise unattested (to my knowledge) pronunciation of 'íccaid' as 'ich-', apparently guaranteed by rhyme. Then there is the metre: apparently 12² 12² 16² 12², but which may be best thought of as accentual, composed of three to four four-syllable segments per line, with the stress in each on the third syllable.

Colgan, p. 128b:

Iussit enim vt post transacta omnia jam memorata, vnus è seruis nomine *Erra maelus*, ad publicam vrbis plateam se conferat, faciem liniat sanguine, super plateam se prosternat, mortemque simulet; & casu quo S. Patricius se rogante superueniat, eum excitaturus; nullatenus indicet se viuum vel à mortuis resurrexisse. Erra maelus, reuera erro malus, assentit Regis iniquae inuentioni, sed ad suam perniciem. Re, vt excogitata, in effectum deducta, à Rege malignè rogatus superuenit Patricius; & dum jacentem aspiceret, rei que compositam fraudem, fictionem & indignitatem, à Domino revelante in spiritu admonitus edisceret, dixit; O Erro maele, sive verè, sive fictè laesus sis, non recipies medicinam: sive verè, sive fictè laesus sis, indè non resurges. Quod veridicum oraculum certissimus rei probavit eventus: nam Erra maelus, quam satis perversè simulavit se, tam satis aduersè obiisse inventus est mortem.

‘After everything just related had happened, he [Loegaire] ordered one of his servants, named Erramael, to take himself to the public plaza of the city, cover his face with blood, lay himself upon the plaza, and feign death; and if St Patrick were to come over at his request to revive him, he was not to show that he was alive, or had been revived from death. Erramael – really *Erro-malus* [‘Wicked, I wander’] – agreed to the wicked contrivance of the king, but to his own detriment. The thing was done as devised: Patrick, wickedly beseeched by the king, came over, and when he saw the man lying down, he ascertained, being warned in his spirit by the Lord, that it was a fraud, a fiction, and a mockery, and said,

“O Erromaël, whether truly, whether falsely you be wounded,
you will receive no cure:

Whether truly, whether falsely you be wounded

You will not get up from there.”

The ultimate outcome of the matter proved this to be a truthful prophecy: for with as much wickedness as Erramael feigned his death, with equal misfortune was he found to have perished.’

Both Lb and Colgan, unlike *p*, report Loegaire ordering Crundmael (or Erramael) to lie down upon the stones (*not-léic féin fair; se prosternat*); each also includes the curse that Patrick recites. A few elements are different in Colgan’s formulation, but I would suggest that these changes are Colgan’s own doing. Colgan’s rendition of the curse appears to be a loose paraphrase of a difficult piece of verse, while the difference between ‘Crundmael’ and ‘Erramael’ may be the result of Colgan wishing to create a Latin pun. It is possible, of course, that Colgan was here following a source with different readings from Lb. Even so, such a text would have been closer to Lb than to any surviving version of *p*.

Further evidence that Colgan must have drawn from a text similar to Lb comes in a third scene, not noted by Mulchrone or Stokes, in which Patrick causes the earth to swallow a druid:

Dum die quâdam Saballi commoratus, vir Dei diuinis mysteriis celebrandis operam daret, Magus quidam, *Mantes* nomine, nefanda maligni spiritus suggestionem instigatus, baculo, quem manu tenebat, per fenestram extenso calicem tetigit & euertit. Sed tam immanis sceleris punitio haud diu dilata. Magus enim illicò à terrâ dehiscente, & immani hiatu ipsum deglutiente coram populo adstante, & Dei magnalia in talibus prodigijs extollente, absorptus est. Et hinc illud inter Hibernos vulgare exortum est prouerbium. *Ní fiú a maoin Mantes*. (Colgan, p. 124b)

‘One day, when the man of God [Patrick] was celebrating the divine mysteries while at Saul, a certain druid named ‘Mantes’, spurred on by the wicked suggestion of an evil spirit, stretched a staff he held in his hand through a window, and struck and upturned the chalice. But the punishment for such an enormous crime was not long delayed: for at once the earth yawned open, and before the people present (who exalted the mighty works of God in such marvels) he was swallowed up, consumed in its enormous chasm. And hence the proverb came about among the Irish, *Ní fiú a mhaoin Mantes* (‘Mantes is not worth his wealth’ [?]).’

This precise scene is not present in any surviving copy of the full Tripartite Life (though a similar account is at VT 369–71). Nor is it present – not exactly, at least – in any other Life of Patrick. Rather, it appears to be Colgan’s own confection, cobbled together from B and a text much like Lb:

B, fol. 15v13–15:

Feachtus do Pattraicc occ aifrionn isin tSabhall, luidh draoi seach an ecclais ⁊ cuiridh a eachlaiscc tresan sinistir isin choileach aifrinn co ro dhóirt an coileach. Sluiccidh an talamh fochedóir an drai.

‘Once Patrick was in Saul performing Mass. A druid went by the church, and put his horse-switch through the window of the church into the chalice so the chalice spilled. The earth swallows the druid at once.’

Lb, p. 22:

Is andsin ro écnaig aroli drui éccraibtech .i. Mántais a ainm do Patraic. Fergaither Patraic fris. & do-beir amus do bachaill Ísu fair co torchair i fiadnaise na slóg & co ro sluic talum h-e, conid de-sin ata: Noconuil amáin Mántais.

Then a certain unbelieving druid named Mántais reviled Patrick. Patrick became angry at him, and attacked him with the Staff of

Jesus, and so he fell in front of the people and the earth swallowed him, and from that comes (the saying), ‘Mántais alone is no more’ (?).

Key elements of both accounts appear in Colgan’s retelling. Both the name of the druid and the proverb are recognisable in Lb (albeit in slightly different forms), while the open window through which the druid spills the Mass chalice is found only in B. What appears to have happened is that Colgan, seeing certain similarities between the two episodes, combined them into a single passage.

In summary, it appears that Colgan had access, as he claimed, to three Irish Lives. The long Life, once in the possession of the Uí Chléirigh, no longer survives; it combined features of the two surviving full texts of the Tripartite Life. The two shorter Lives he used can be identified as: 1) a Life related to the text preserved in the Leabhar Breac; and 2) the Life of Patrick in Brussels, KBR MS 2324–40.

Colgan may have been forthright about his Irish sources, but in addition to those three Lives, Colgan’s translation also bears the traces of a Life of Patrick he did not cite: the Latin Life by Jocelin of Furness, the twelfth-century hagiographer. There are many passages where Jocelin’s Life and the Tripartite Life overlap, and so Colgan frequently drew on Jocelin’s inimitable prose to structure his own *Vita septima*. Here, for instance, is Jocelin’s version of the druid-swallowing episode discussed above (reproduced from Colgan’s edition in *Trias Thaumaturga*; my translation):

Quadam die cùm in eadem Ecclesiâ almificus Antistes Patricius astaret altari, diuina mysteria agens, quidam maleficus filius perditionis, satelles sathanæ, accessu ausuque execrabili foris stans per fenestram cum virgâ calicem euertit, & sacrosancta sacrificia sacrilegus super altare effudit. Dominus autem scelus tam horribile in instanti terribiliter vindicauit, hominemque nefarium, nouo, imò innouato modo è medio tulit. Repente enim terra terribili hiatu aperiens os suum, sicut quondam Dathan & Abiron, deglutiuit magum illum, descenditque viuus vsque ad infernum. (Jocelin, p. 72a)

‘One day, when the almsgiving bishop Patrick stood by the altar in the same church, performing the divine mysteries, a certain evildoing son of perdition, a servant of Satan, drew near with detestable daring, and, standing outside, through the window upturned the chalice with a staff, and sacrilegiously spilled the sacrosanct sacrifice upon the altar. However, the Lord in an instant terribly avenged such a horrible crime, and caused the wicked man to disappear in a new – nay, renewed – manner: for suddenly the earth, opening its mouth in a terrible chasm, swallowed that druid like Dathan and Abiron of old, and he descended, living, unto Hell.’

In general, Colgan disguises his borrowings well (his text was given previously). Compare, for instance, Colgan's *Sed tam immanis sceleris punitio haud diu dilata* with Jocelin's *Dominus autem scelus tam horribile in instanti terribiliter vindicauit*: much the same ideas, sometimes the same words, but with the syntax rearranged. Still, a few close matches do sneak through, as when Jocelin's *terribili hiatu ... deglutiuit magum illum* becomes Colgan's *immani hiatu ipsum deglutiente*.

Looking at Colgan's text as a whole, his borrowings from Jocelin fall into two main camps. One is where Colgan leans on Jocelin, as above, for vocabulary and phrases to translate the Irish.⁴⁸ The other, more substantial changes come when Jocelin provides an explanation (sometimes rather tongue-in-cheek) for an action left otherwise unjustified in the original. For instance, in VT, there is a story about how bishop Assicus fled his foundation, only to be tracked down by his monks after seven years (VT 1080–90). Why he did so is not stated. Jocelin, however, explains that Assicus fled after he lied a single time, a failing he found so odious that it drove him to distraction. Colgan follows Jocelin in this, and in near-identical language: compare *Hic quâdam vice, dum verum assertiuè dicere debuit...* ('Once, when he ought to have spoken the truth forthrightly ...' Jocelin, p. 89b) vs *Hic ... dum quâdam vice verum dicere deberet ...* ('Once, when he should have spoken the truth ...' Colgan, p. 135a).⁴⁹ Perhaps because Jocelin's Life was in Latin, not Irish, Colgan did not allude to his reliance on it in his notes. Clearly, however, he was happy to draw on it in his translation: sometimes for sheer convenience, it seems, and sometimes because it appeared to preserve useful additional information.

CONCLUSION

The discussion above has established the main texts relied upon by John Colgan and the anonymous compiler of B (perhaps Cú Choigríche Ó Cléirigh) in creating their respective versions of the Life of St Patrick. It is possible, as I have shown, to trace most of the variants present in either text to a particular version of Patrick's Life, although the exact witnesses used rarely survive. This is, in a way, rather reassuring: what was available to a dedicated team of researchers in the early seventeenth century remains mostly available to us.

These texts also shed light on how those researchers handled the materials passed down to them. When multiple versions were to hand, scribes and scholars in the seventeenth century could be quite free in reshaping the text that they passed on. This is not to say that they were unconcerned with fidelity to the textual records before them; rather, it is clear that they conceived of 'fidelity' differently from the modern academic. Colgan wrote as a scholar,

⁴⁸E.g. *in condenso nemore* (Jocelin, p. 95b) vs *in condenso spinarum nemore* (Colgan, p. 151a) (= VT 2134: *i mmuiniu draigin*).

⁴⁹For another example, compare *Sanctus verò, quod illi daret ad manum non habens, erubuit* (Jocelin, p. 82a [misprinted as '92a']) vs *Vir autem Dei ad manum non habens, quam garrulis hystrionibus daret escam, erubuit* (Colgan, p. 157b), both explaining why Patrick cursed some importunate entertainers. This explanation is not present in the parallel episode in VT (2379–406).

presenting a composite account of Patrick's Irish Life for his Continental Catholic readers. Pursuant to this goal, he described his Irish source material in detail, even as he did not mention his reliance on Jocelin's earlier Latin translation. The compiler of B was very attentive to his source material, but he sometimes misunderstood those texts, already centuries old. Thus, where we have only a seventeenth-century echo of earlier hagiographical material, we can trust that the scribes and compilers were not engaging in wholesale reinvention. Any given passage, however, may stem from multiple sources melded together, or a misunderstanding of earlier language. These late texts can be trusted, in short, to transmit the gist of earlier sources, but are perhaps faulty or misleading in detail: or, to paraphrase Míchéal Ó Cléirigh, 'Ná tuigeadh agus ná measadh aoinne go bhfuil na foinsí go hiomlán anseo': let no one suppose nor deem that the sources are here in their entirety.

APPENDIX

The following two passages in B are not otherwise found in Patrician hagiography. The anecdote about Colmcille (1) is paralleled in Maghnus Ó Domhnaill's *Betha Colaím Chille*. These two accounts are closely related, but are still separate enough that it is unlikely that B is directly derived from Ó Domhnaill's text (B, for instance, has the axle break precisely three times, while this is unspecified in *Betha Colaím Chille*).⁵⁰ The other passage (2), about the founding of Achad Gréine, shares a loose parallel with an extended scene in *Betha Beraig*, the Life of St Berach.⁵¹ Here, there is no clear sign of textual dependence in either direction, but the principal characters and general gist of the account are the same, and I have not encountered it elsewhere.

1. *Áth an Charbaid ar Daoil*

B, fols 19v23–20r1:

Iarsin ro bhennach Patraicc Cinel cConaill roime gusan abhainn re n-abart[h]ar an Daol, ⁊ ro bhris cuing charpaitt Pattraicc annsin. Tánicc Patraicc uero as an ccarpat ⁊ ro fháoidh duine dia muinntir for fíodh do chuinghe adhbair chuinge. Cidh trácht ro bhris cong an charpait fo thrí. As annsin as bert Pátraicc, 'Ní regann an tír-si \a leas/ a bhennughadh, óir geinfidher mac innte fein ⁊ bídh Coluim [sic] Cille a ainm, ⁊ as dó atá a ndán an tír-si do (do) bhennughadh'. Áth Carpait for Dáoil ainm an átha agá r'airis Pátraicc an tan sin.

⁵⁰ Andrew O'Kelleher and Gertrude Schoepperle (eds and trans), *Betha Colaím Chille: Life of Columcille* (Urbana, IL, 1918), 12–14. Note also the related account in Kuno Meyer (ed.), 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 10 (1915), 338–48, at 340–1. A different prophecy by Patrick of Colmcille at a different 'Áth Carpait' (near Mag Luirg) is at VT 1655–63; the anonymous reviewer has also drawn my attention to the short passage in which a chariot yoke breaks three times at VT 2280–5.

⁵¹ Charles Plummer (ed.), 'Betha Beraig', *Bethada Náem nÉirenn*, vol. 1, 22–42, at 24.

‘After that Patrick blessed Cenél Conaill before him up to the river called the Daol, and the yoke of Patrick’s chariot broke there. Patrick came, then, out of the chariot, and he sent one of his retinue out into a wood to seek material for a yoke. However, the chariot’s yoke broke three times. Patrick said then, “This land needs no blessing, for a boy will be born in it, and Colmcille will be his name, and to him will fall the blessing of this land”. Áth Carpait for Daoil, ‘the Ford of the Chariot on the Daol’, is the name of the ford where Patrick stayed that time.’

2. *Achad Gréine*

B, fol. 17r30–v3:

Do chuaidh *Patraicc* iarsin go h*Achadh* n*Greine* go ro *bhennach* *Dobhtha* mac Aongusa gona c[h]loinn 7 at bert nách biadh clann *Dobhtha* gan maoin *acht* an céin bhis caora gan olainn & ro thaitin grian go mor isin ionad sin go maidin gonadh de aderar *Achad* n*Greine* [*sic*] de.

‘Patrick went then to Achad Gréine and blessed Dobtha mac Aongusa and his family, and he said that Dobtha’s descendants would lack riches only when sheep lacked wool, and the sun shone strongly there until morning, and that is why it is called Achad Gréine, “the Field of the Sun”.’

ABBREVIATIONS USED

B	Brussels, KBR, MS 2324–40
E	London, BL, MS Egerton 93
F	Dublin, RIA MS 23 O 48a (<i>Liber Flavus Fergusiorum</i>) (476)
K	Dublin, King’s Inns, MS 10
KBR	Bibliothèque royale du Belgique/Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België
L	Cork, University College Cork, Book of Lismore, cited from Whitley Stokes (ed.), <i>Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore</i> (Oxford, 1890)
Lb	Dublin, RIA MS 23 P 16 (An Leabhar Breac) (1230), cited from Whitley Stokes (ed. and trans.), <i>Three Middle-Irish Homilies on the Lives of Saints Patrick, Brigit, and Columba</i> (Calcutta, 1877), as given in the normalised version on CELT: Whitley Stokes (ed.), ‘Betha Phátraic’, compiled by Beatrix Färber, Elva Johnston, and Ruth Murphy, <i>Corpus of Electronic Texts</i> , 2012, <celt.ucc.ie/published/G201009/> (accessed 16 October 2024).
Lc	Dublin, RIA MS 24 P 25 (Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne) (475)
P	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Fonds celtique et basques MS 1
R	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 512
S	Dublin, RIA MS B iv 1b, part II (1269)
VT	Kathleen Mulchrone (ed.), <i>Bethu Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick</i> (Dublin, 1939)

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