What the Butlers Saw: Acallam na Senórach and its Marginalia in the Book of the White Earl

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Abstract

In the fifteenth-century ‘Book of the White Earl’ (the older, intercalated section of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 610), Acallam na Senórach, the well-known fíanaighecht text, is annotated in the hand of the text’s main scribe. He adds a sporadic series of marginal headings, summaries and brief notes on places mentioned in the text. These constitute valuable evidence for the text’s reception in later medieval Ireland. In this article, I explore the critical approaches to the Acallam implied by these annotations and discuss the various possible interests in the text that might have led to them being made. The notes are printed in full in an Appendix.

1. Introduction

Acallam na Senórach (‘colloquy of the elders’) is a lengthy, late Middle Irish, prosimetric text narrating St Patrick’s circuits around Ireland in the company of Cailte mac Ronáin. Cailte is over three hundred years old and a former member of the fían (‘warband’) of the long-dead sage and warlord, Finn mac Cumail. In the course of the journey, Cailte recounts deeds and adventures of the fían, mostly based on his personal experience, his tales prompted by enquiries concerning the names of places. In the narrative present, their journey is also eventful. Indeed, while the Acallam has sometimes been described as a collection of stories, it is increasingly read as a single literary work with complex patterns of internal references and thematic connections between the embedded narratives and the frame-tale.

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Many studies of the *Acallam* have either been concerned with locating it within the history of *fianaighecht* (‘material pertaining to Finn and the *fían*’) or relating it to the historical context in which it was composed. However, the text clearly continued to be of interest throughout the medieval period. It was probably composed in the early thirteenth century but the three earliest manuscripts of this text date from the fifteenth century. In addition, two additional versions were produced. The *Acallam bec* (‘small colloquy’) dates from shortly after the earlier *Acallam*, while the fifteenth century also saw the composition of the *Agallamh Déanach* (‘the late colloquy’; also known as the *Reeves Agallamh*). *Fianaighecht* narratives were composed throughout the later Middle Ages in the form of *laoidhe* (‘ballads’) and these are often framed by a dialogue with St. Patrick.

The *Acallam* is a complex text in which a wide variety of characters, themes and perspectives intermingle. How was it read and understood by the later medieval scribes, scholars, patrons and audiences responsible for its survival and why did they consider it to be important? In response to this question, I will focus on one particular fifteenth-century manuscript version of the earlier *Acallam* in which a series of marginal notes have been added to the text summarising or highlighting certain sections or points within it. Whitley Stokes integrated many of the notes into his edition (see Appendix) and two notes have been cited individually in previous studies. However, there has yet to be a survey of the notes as a whole, their function within this manuscript and what they have to tell us about how the *Acallam* was understood in the fifteenth century.

The manuscript in question is Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Laud Misc. 610. The varied texts contained in this well-produced vellum codex are all in Gaelic. They have already been catalogued

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in detail. 10 Laud Misc. 610 was compiled and written for Éamonn Mac Risteard Buitilléar (Sir Edmund Butler, ob.1464), probably between 1453 and 1454. 11 The folia that contain the Acallam, however, are among those intercalated from a slightly older manuscript. A marginal note in Laud Misc. 610 proper states that the older manuscript was written for Éamonn’s uncle, Séamus Buitilléar (James Butler, 4th Earl of Ormond, 1390–1452), otherwise known as the White Earl. 12 This older manuscript is thus known as ‘The Book of the White Earl’. 13

The Munster-based Butler dynasty was one of the most powerful factions in the Hiberno-Norman colony and in Ireland overall in the fifteenth-century. Many topics concerning the Hiberno-Norman nobility – in particular, their engagement with Gaelic literary culture – are in need of further research and cannot be treated adequately here. Suffice to say, several such dynasties became increasingly autonomous from the central administration of the English colony in Ireland and open to alliances with Gaelic factions in the course of the later Middle Ages. 14 Séamus Buitilléar is usually understood as part of this phenomenon and is particularly known for adopting elements of Gaelic legal tradition in running his own estates in Ormond. 15 There is a suggestion in some Gaelic sources that he oversaw, by force or diplomacy, some sort of peace between the Gaels and the English. This is implied both in the somewhat critical Gaelic praise poem composed for him by Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn (ob.1448) 16 and in the Annals of the Four Masters, in which his death notice is followed by the statement, ‘síth Gall & Gaoidheal do dhul ar c-culaibh iar n-écc an iarla’. 17

To return to our manuscript, a single scribe appears to have written all known fragments of the ‘Book of the White Earl’. Féilire Óengusso (‘the feast-day calendar of Oengus’), an Old Irish

16 Aithdioghluim Dána, ed. and transl. by L. McKenna, 2 vols., Irish Texts Society Main Series 37 and 40 (Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1939 and 1940), I, 139–43, II, 84–86.
metrical martyrology, and the *Acallam* are bound into Laud Misc. 610. A bifolium from the ‘Book of the White Earl’ containing a fragment of a prosimetric recension of the *dindshenchas* (‘traditions concerning place-names’) is bound elsewhere. The scribe’s hand appears in another manuscript, where he produces copies of the *Banshenchas* (‘traditions concerning women’), and the *Senchas Síl hÍr* (‘traditions concerning the descendants of Ír’), a genealogical treatise on Gaelic dynasties in Ulster.

He does not, however, identify himself. All of his work is in Gaelic and he writes in Gaelic script, although it has been suggested that the decoration used in the ‘Book of the Earl’ was ‘inspired by foreign models’. In general, this manuscript has been admired for its physical quality. The scribe’s extant texts are all substantial, encyclopaedic compilations of material. Apart from *Senchas Síl hÍr*, which focuses on Ulster, they are not associated with a particular region or dynasty. The notes presented here, which, I believe, are all in his hand, for the most part confirm his close engagement with Gaelic literary tradition through their use, when designating episodes, of forms comparable to superscriptions in medieval Gaelic manuscript compilations. It is possibly significant, however, that the formula used in n.9 – ‘nota qualiter [...]’ (‘note how [...]’) – is rarely found among annotations in Gaelic manuscripts but does appear in medieval English and Scots manuscripts. The scribe might, therefore, have experience of commentary traditions within other milieux.

2. The Notes

2.1. Definition

Thirty-five notes are found in the margins of the *Acallam* in the ‘Book of the White Earl’ in the hand of the text’s main scribe. They are printed in full in the Appendix. Twenty-one are already in-

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19 Laud Misc 610, fols 59r–72r, 123r–146v.
cluded in Stokes’ edition, while fourteen are presented here for the first time. There are some notes in later hands but these do not pertain directly to the *Acallam* and they are not included in this study.

2.2. Layout, Script and Location
The notes are all marginal or intercolumnar, never interlinear. The script used is essentially that of the main text, although the letterforms are slightly smaller and abbreviations are used much more heavily. The initial of each note is highlighted. The inks used are very similar to those used for initials in the main text. Six notes are entirely rubricated.27

Overall, the notes are found throughout the *Acallam* in the ‘Book of the White Earl’. They appear between lines 2799 and 7820 of Stokes’ edition, this manuscript’s version of the *Acallam* only spanning lines 2044–7986 (with lacunae). Their distribution within the text is slightly irregular. In some places, successive sections of the text are accompanied by marginal notes.28 In others, substantial sections of the text are not annotated.29

2.3. Purpose and Function

2.3.1. Titles and Headings
While Dooley has described n.18 as a ‘scribal gloss’ and Carey has described n.16 as a ‘marginal addition’,30 the notes, in general, neither explicate specific points within the text nor make sense if inserted into it. Instead, they resemble a system of titles or headings. Most describe certain sections of the text or else highlight a particular place or incident. For the most part, they do not add new information and generally employ very similar vocabulary. They resemble the main text in terms of decoration and script and so they do not come across visually as glosses. Were it not for the manuscript’s current binding, the notes would be clearly visible in the margins as if for ease of reference.

*Table 1: Note Types*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type 1: Tale titles</th>
<th>1, 2, 4, 6, 13, 24.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 2: Places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Onomastic narratives</td>
<td>3, 5, 10, 14, 20, 21, 23.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Place-names</td>
<td>12, 19, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34.</td>
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</tbody>
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27 nn.3–5, 19–20, 33.
28 e.g. nn.1–5, 11–13, 19–21, 29–32.
29 e.g. fols.123v–126v before n.1 or between n.10 and n.11, n.15 and n.16, and n.22 and n.23.
30 Dooley, ‘Date and purpose’, p. 101 n. 11; Carey, ‘Conversation between worlds’, p. 86 n. 44.
The notes relate to the text in three different ways, as summarised in Table 1 above. The Type 1 notes correspond structurally to titles found in the tale-lists and as headings in manuscripts, with the generic tale-type followed by the specifics of person and place.\footnote{P. Mac Cana, The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1981), p. 130; E. Poppe, ‘Reconstructing medieval Irish literary theory: the lesson of Airec Menman Uaird maic Coise’, Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies, 37 (Summer 1999), 33–54 (p. 35).} In the case of n.13, the first word – presumably the tale-type – is illegible but the concluding ‘[...] inso’ (‘[...] here’) suggests it took this form (c.f. nn.4, 6). n.2 and n.24 relate to episodes in the frame-tale; otherwise, these narratives are stories told by Cailte. In these cases, Cailte’s stories are all ultimately onomastic but Type 1 notes frame them in terms of events and characters and thus provide more immediate access to the content. They also serve to identify and delineate complete narrative units. n.1 (‘De scelaib Saidbe ingine Buidb Deirg\footnote{‘From the stories of Sadb, daughter of Bodb Derg’ or, alternatively, ‘concerning the stories [...]’}’) is slightly different, in that it seems to allude to a wider body of material about Sadb.\footnote{This Sadb is occasionally attested as the mother of Finn’s son, Oisin: T. P. Cross, ‘The Gaelic “Ballad of the Mantle”’, Modern Philolology, 16:12 (Apr. 1919), 649–58 (p. 656).} This type of note thus seems to bypass the conceit of the Acallam in order to demonstrate that the narratives it contains could exist as free-standing texts within the wider literary canon or even, in the case of n.1, as part of a cycle concerning a particular character.

The seventeen Type 2 notes relate directly to place-names. Of these, seven explicitly refer to onomastic narratives. For example, n.3, n.5 and n.20 employ the ‘cid diata [...]?’ (‘whence is [...]?’) formula. This is often used in texts to introduce a narrative relating the etymology of a name. It occurs in certain dindshenchas compilations, for example, but also appears elsewhere.\footnote{‘The prose tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas’, ed. by W. Stokes in Revue Celtique 15 (1894), 277–336 (pp. 288–89, 297–98); The Death-tales of the Ulster Heroes, ed. by K. Meyer, Todd Lecture Series 14 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1906), pp. 22, 24, 32, 36; c.f. N. K. Chadwick, An Early Irish Reader (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), p. 42.} These therefore also function as titles. Ten Type 2 notes simply name places. In these cases, the note may refer to the place, not to the onomastic narrative: while there is a narrative associated with the place-name in the main text in eight cases, n.25 and n.32 refer to places with which the Acallam does not associate a narrative. In the Acallam, places are often reported to have once had a different name. The name by which they are now known (at least within the text) is derived from some deed by members of the fian or, sometimes, by Patrick; Type 2 notes always use the later name.

In Type 3, twelve notes designate a particular incident, often some sort of encounter between characters. This category includes some problematic items. n.31, now partly illegible, seems to designate Cailte’s journey to Ess Ruaid, which is rather more substantial than an incident, but the note does not resemble Type 1 in structure. Similarly, n.15 concerns Cailte’s specific act of slaying
Milid, the king of the world, but places it in the broader context of Milid’s invasion. Again, it makes no use of the tale-type structure. **n.9** denotes a particular incident – Patrick’s endorsement of the art of music – but goes beyond other notes in this category by explicitly instructing the reader that this is important via the aforementioned ‘nota qualiter’ formula. It is also distinctive as the only note in Latin.

These two notes illustrate the range of emphases in Type 3. **n.15** states that Milid ‘is mentioned here’ (‘is ann indister Milid’), the circumstances of his death following in a relative clause, as if the appearance of this character is of primary interest. Meanwhile, **n.9**, as we have seen, identifies key ethical point in an event. Other Type 3 notes are more equivocal.

**n.18** is rightly described by Dooley as a gloss and thus does not fit any of these three categories. It glosses the line ‘triar álaind a n-aenbali’35 in ‘In cloch so a hainm cloch na cét’, a short prophecy poem recited by Patrick.36 This suppletive note names the **tríar** (‘trio’) as Patrick, Colum Cille and Brigit. As Dooley has pointed out, both poem and note are referring to the triple cult established at Downpatrick by John De Courcy in 1185 with the claim that the bodies of all three saints had been found and translated there.37

I have not been able to establish what else distinguishes the rubricated glosses. They appear throughout the text but, with the exception of **n.33**, they have a slight tendency to cluster together (**nn.3–5, 19–20**). Type 1 (**n.4**), Type 2 (**nn.3, 5, 19, 20**) and Type 3 (**n.33**) are all represented. That they are rubricated, however, further suggests that they constitute an apparatus around the main text.

The formal appearance of the notes and their relationship to the main text suggest that they are headings for sub-divisions within the *Acallam* and constitute a guide for reading it. We have noted that the scribe’s other extant works are predominantly collections. His marginal notes suggest he is treating the *Acallam* as likewise comprised of distinct components. This need not imply that he believed the *Acallam* to be a composite text but rather that he analysed its structure as such. Importantly, the notes make no apparent distinction between the different levels of narration, annotating both the frame-tale and the embedded narratives in similar ways. While he is interested in sub-dividing the *Acallam* critically, he treats it as a single unit rather than as a framed collection.

As a system of headings and subdivisions, however, the notes are hardly comprehensive. Substantial sections of the *Acallam* in the ‘Book of the White Earl’ are not annotated. Furthermore, Type 3 relates to incidents as opposed to sections of text and **n.9** is explicitly to do with the text’s interpretation. It thus seems reasonable to ask whether the notes instead evidence a specific interest in the text. There appear to be a number of interesting possibilities as to what this interest might be.

35 *Acallamh*, l. 5432: ‘the splendid trio in one place’ (my translation); *Tales of the Elders*, p. 152.
36 *Acallamh*, ll. 5425–37; *Tales of the Elders*, p. 152.
2.3.2. The Type 2 notes, Muinter Roduib and central Connacht

First, geographic distribution of the notes is uneven, although given that the Acallam is the narrative of a journey, it is difficult to tell whether interest in any one point in the text is to do with characters, themes and suchlike or the location. Indeed, it has been suggested that the dindshenchas genre, with which the Acallam has some connections, is rooted in the lack of any such distinction.38

Two striking runs of mainly Type 1 and Type 3 notes occur in Ulster and Leinster.39 Type 2 notes, which focus on place, are somewhat sparse in these runs. These occur, instead, with particular frequency in another distinct section of the Acallam. Ten out of the eighteen Type 3 notes are found in the course of Patrick and Cailte’s third journey through central Connacht, termed the ‘Mayo Sequence’ in Anne Connon’s recent work.40 The notes found in this section include n.25 and n.32, the notes with no associated narrative, suggesting that the region itself was of interest. Only five of the Type 1 and Type 3 notes occur in this section.41

There is a particular cluster of five Type 2 notes associated with a specific area of central Co. Roscommon approximating to the diocese of Elphin.42 This is striking, as it has been suggested by both Ann Dooley and Anne Connon that this area’s local dynasty, Muinter Roduib (a sept of Sil Muiredaig), was closely associated with the composition of the Acallam as we have it.43 Connon has identified several of the sites that are visited by Patrick and Cailte in this area as future Patrician foundations controlled by Muinter Roduib during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries and centred on the Augustinian house at Roscommon. Out of about a dozen main locations in the Acallam that are of importance in Connon’s study, four are mentioned in a succession of Type 2 notes.44 The locations are Sliab Formaile, Cluain Imdergtha, Topur Patraic and Inis na Scríne. The notes on Sliab Formaile and Cluain Imdergtha specify that those places are ‘in Connacht’ and the note on Inis na Scríne (and the main text) places it on Findloch Cera (modern Lough Carra). Connon identifies the latter three as Kiltullagh, Ballintober and Church Island (which is, indeed, on Lough Carra).45 Ballintober was the site of an Augustinian abbey, founded in 1216, and Church Island was apparently among its possessions. Kiltullagh, meanwhile, was a Patrician church that

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39 nn.1–7; nn.11–15.


41 nn.22, 24, 31, 33, 35.

42 nn.26–30.


44 nn.27–30.

came into the possession of Roscommon at some point during the later Middle Ages. No ecclesiastical site is suggested for Sliab Formáile. In the *Acallam*, it is part of a favoured hunting circuit of the *fian*, the detailing of which, Connon argues, helped orientate the reader in this geographical area.\(^{46}\) The inclusion of extra topographical details in the relevant notes suggests that the fifteenth-century scribe of the ‘Book of the White Earl’ was also interested in the area.

The scribe could have had knowledge of the provenance of the *Acallam* or could have deduced it from the same evidence that Dooley and Connon used. Alternatively, the notes could be derived from a manuscript closer to the original. However, there is reason to doubt that the scribe is highlighting the text’s provenance. The premier piece of evidence for associating the text with Muinter Roduib – Patrick’s highly amicable encounter at Firchuin with Dub mac Muirgissa, the sept’s ancestor\(^{47}\) – is not marked by any note. Furthermore, if the scribe was interested in the locations mentioned as thirteenth-century ecclesiastical sites, then this interest is entirely implicit.

What can be said with more certainty is that his interest is geographical. Not only are most of the notes in this section of Type 2 but, as we have seen, they often add further details on a site’s location. This is a trend among the notes on the third Connacht journey. In other instances in this section, n.25 specifies that Beann in Baille is in Maenmag (modern Co. Galway), while n.32, referring to Sid Duma (another site in Connacht), doubly specifies that it is ‘i Connachta i. i Luignib’ (‘in Connacht, that is, among the Luigni’). n.19 specifies that Ráth Cind Chon is in Mag Femen; this is in Munster but it stands at the beginning of the third Connacht journey. Admittedly, elsewhere among the notes, two unrelated places in Leinster are treated with similar specificity.\(^{48}\) Finally, in n.29, ‘Topur Patraic’ (‘Patrick’s well’) is given in place of the main text’s ‘Tipra Pátraic’.

As Connon has pointed out, despite being synonymous, *tipra* and *topar* (both mean ‘well’) are not generally interchangeable in place names. In this case, it is the form of the name in n.29 that is attested in all sources other than the main text of the *Acallam*.\(^{49}\) This suggests that the notes were not simply derived from a study of the main text but from some sort of independent knowledge of the area.

The Butlers may have had diplomatic contacts with factions in the central Connacht region or the manuscript scribe may have had his own connections there. The churches controlled by Muinter Roduib, including Ballintober, were on the Cruach Phádraig (Croagh Patrick) pilgrimage route.\(^{50}\)

Prominent in the later Middle Ages, this is potentially a source of interest in the area and an interest

\(^{46}\) Connon, ‘Plotting *Acallam na Senórach*’, pp. 75–76.


\(^{48}\) nn.12 and 14.

\(^{49}\) Connon, ‘Roscommon locus’, pp. 57–58.

in the topography of ecclesiastical sites is also supported by the scribe’s annotation of passages relating to the church at Loch Daim Deirg in Ulster. On the other hand, if the scribe was interested in Cruach Phádraig, one might expect a note at the point at which Patrick recounts his journey to the mountain to Cailte. Yet there is no such note. We must therefore conclude that, while there are striking correlations between the notes and this clearly important section of the Acallam, no one explanation is sufficiently consistent to take much further.

2.3.3. Comparing texts and identifying lacunae

In two cases, sections of the Acallam marked with notes in the ‘Book of the White Earl’ are absent or fragmentary in the Acallam in the late fifteenth-century Book of Lismore. The latter text suffers from multiple, lengthy lacunae but these mostly occur on account of the physical loss of folia during its subsequent history. However, as Parsons has shown, there are instances in which the lacunae are textual.

Table 2: BWE notes and textual lacunae in the Book of Lismore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n.26</th>
<th>nn.33–35</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole episode</td>
<td>ll. 6444–6529</td>
<td>ll. 7597–7843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(‘Acallamh’).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode in Book</td>
<td>fol.236ra 39–236ra 40</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Lismore.</td>
<td>(ll. 6444–6445)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Lismore.</td>
<td>(ll. 6446–6494)</td>
<td>(ll. 7596–7883)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition of</td>
<td>Frag.</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode in Book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Lismore.</td>
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In one such instance, lines 6446–93 of Stokes’ edition are omitted between the two columns on fol.236r in the Book of Lismore. Thus omitted are the remainder of the king of Connacht’s

\[\text{nn.2–4.}\]

\[\text{‘Acallamh’, ll. 7760–86; Tales of the Elders, p. 216.}\]


\[\text{Parsons, ‘A reading’, pp. 20–22.}\]
onomastic enquiry concerning Fert Fiadmoir, Cnoc in Chircaill and Cnoc in Chongna as well as much of Câlta’s narrative response.\textsuperscript{56} The place-names are listed in n.26. In another omission, the Book of Lismore lacks lines 7597–7882. These lines, in other manuscripts, detail the return of Câlta and Cas Corach from Ess Ruaid (Assaroe) and their adventures at the fort of Bairnech mac Cairbh. They then reunite with Patrick at Fert in Gedig and all attend the wedding of Aillenn, another daughter of Bodb Derg, and Æd mac Muiredaig, the king of Connacht.\textsuperscript{57} These events, which have been described by Parsons as being ‘of great thematic importance’ and essential for the cogency of the narrative,\textsuperscript{58} are consistently annotated with nn.33–35 (the situation is summarised in Table 2 above).

Two further notes appear to correspond with textual lacunae in the ‘Book of the White Earl’. n.10 designates the narrative behind the name Tonn Clidna, the first full narrative to follow a major lacuna, equivalent to lines 3521–3717. n.11 also follows a lacuna in the ‘Book of the White Earl’ covering lines 3975–4078 and indicated by an insertion mark at fol.130\textsuperscript{vb} 37.\textsuperscript{59} In both cases, the note refers to what immediately follows each lacuna rather than to what is missing.

In another manuscript of the Acallam, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. B.487,\textsuperscript{60} one lacuna includes the story of the daughters of Túathal Techtmar, which is designated by n.13.\textsuperscript{61} However, the lacuna possibly results from folio loss.\textsuperscript{62} Parsons stresses the need for further work to be done on this manuscript.\textsuperscript{63}

These examples suggest that some of the notes might have been produced as a result of the comparison of the ‘Book of the White Earl’ text of the Acallam with one or more other manuscripts in the tradition. n.26, nn.33–35 and possibly n.13 highlight points at which the testimony of the ‘Book of the White Earl’ is distinctive or at least intact. In contrast, n.10 and n.11 mark points at which the ‘Book of the White Earl’ text is defective. There are, of course, problems with this interpretation. For various reasons, there are quite a lot of lacunae in the manuscripts of the Acallam and so some overlap with the notes is to be expected. There are also many other notes that relate to episodes which are fully present in the Book of Lismore or only seem to be absent due to folio loss. In any case, since any comparison could not have been with the Book of Lismore text itself due to it having been produced later, we are necessarily dealing a hypothesised, related text, making the discussion much more problematic.

\textsuperscript{56} Parsons, ‘A reading’, pp. 20–21. 
\textsuperscript{57} Tales of the Elders, pp. 210–17. 
\textsuperscript{58} Parsons, ‘A reading’, p. 22. 
\textsuperscript{59} Parsons, ‘A reading’, p. 17. 
\textsuperscript{60} Ó Cuív, Catalogue, I, 134–41. 
\textsuperscript{61} Acallamh, ii. 4139–4518. 
\textsuperscript{63} Parsons, ‘A reading’, p.27.
2.3.4. Broader Thematic Correlations

The correlations discussed thus far are striking and should not be discounted. However, each has its difficulties and each falls short of explaining all of the notes. Taking a broader perspective of the corpus, the notes evidence an interest in particular themes and characters within the text. Both the frame-tale of the Acallam and its various narratives involve the relationships of an array of distinct groups within Irish society and the wider world: royal dynasties, the fián, the church (mostly represented by Patrick), foreign visitors and invaders, the Túatha Dé Danann and other supernatural beings. As Carey has recently explored, such relationships are also framed in terms of different epochs.

The Type 3 notes, in particular, focus on identifying points of contact between various combinations of these groups. This appears to be the theme of interest in n.9, in which the reader is invited to note that Patrick endorsed the art of music after meeting Cas Corach. This musician from the sid and sage of the Túatha Dé Danann, who is being schooled by Cailte, acts as a meeting point between three worlds. The notes follow him particularly closely. In another example, the consistently annotated sojourn on Loch Daim Deirg involves an exchange of knowledge between Cailte and the two saints. It is noted when Patrick, Cailte or pre-Christian Gaels use Christian prayer to drive away demons and witches. Perhaps the most diverse gathering in the Acallam is the marriage of Aillenn ingen Buidb Deirg, of the Túatha Dé Danann, and Áed mac Muiredaig meic Fhinnacha, the king of Connacht, with the blessing of Patrick in the presence of Cailte and Cas Corach. This event is noted in n.35. However, again, if these are the scribe’s interests, they could be made much more apparent in the notes themselves. n.35, for example, does not emphasise the wide range of wedding guests in attendance but only actually mentions Aillenn and Áed.

It is worth speculating, cautiously, whether an interest in these sorts of encounters is related to the identity of the manuscript’s patron. Séamus Buitilléar was a Gaelicised Hiberno-Norman who was involved in both the English colony and in his culturally more diverse lands of Ormond, as well

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65 Carey, ‘Conversation between worlds’.
66 nn.7–9, 33. Dooley (‘Date and Purpose’, p. 121) and Carey (‘Conversations between worlds’, pp. 87–89) have both remarked on the thematic importance of this character to the Acallam.
67 nn.2–3.
68 nn.23–24, 29–30.
as engaging in diplomacy with Gaelic factions. He was no doubt aware of the multiple worlds and histories present in the island of Ireland and the notes in his manuscript, as well as his acquisition of a copy of the *Acallam* in the first place, could be derived from an interest in finding precedents and exempla for their interaction. The highlighting of the reference to the cult of Patrick, Colum Chille and Brigit in n.18, which Dooley emphasises is unique in Gaelic sources, further suggests that the scribe was motivated by a Hiberno-Norman outlook and an interest in the relationship with the Gaelic past.

3. Conclusion
In this paper, I have explored the treatment of the *Acallam* evidenced in the marginal notes in the ‘Book of the White Earl’ and suggested various interpretations of them. The notes may be a slightly sporadic referencing apparatus, an analysis of the narrative components that make up the *Acallam*, a sign of interest in certain regions for reasons external to the text, evidence of criticism of the textual tradition of the *Acallam* or an exploration of its themes. None are entirely convincing, in my opinion, but all are worth considering in trying to understand this material as evidence for the text’s reception. Indeed, as implied by the variety in the notes’ forms, a number of interests may have produced them. It can be said with more certainty, however, that the notes are derived from a reading of the *Acallam* as a single text, with frame-tale and embedded material being treated as amenable to the same forms of criticism. Our discussion also raises questions about the role of scribe and patron in the manuscript. Are the notes to be connected to the patron’s character and interests or to the more mysterious scribe, whose own background also seems to be complex? Certain notes from Laud Misc. 610 indicate that its scribes and Éamonn Mac Risteard Buitilléar enjoyed a close working relationship.70 This, along with other matters, such as Hiberno-Norman identity in the later Middle Ages and the under-explored Gaelic evidence concerning it, await further investigation.

4. Appendix: The Notes
The notes are printed in full below. Notes printed by Stokes are indicated by a plain reference, while a reference preceded by ≈ indicates the approximate location in his edition of a note he does not include. A reference to the translation by Anne Dooley and Harry Roe is also provided. Unfortunately, I lack the expertise required to identify many of the places mentioned in the notes and have thus only provided basic information on their location derived from their context within the *Acallam*. I also provide a brief summary of the narrative context.

70 ‘Laud Misc. (cont.)’, ed. by Dillon, §§xxvii, xxxix, lvi, xci (pp. 140–41, 142–45, 150–51).
Some of the notes are obscured to various extents by the manuscript binding. In most instances, text which is obscured in the digitised manuscript is either to be found in Stokes’ edition – if the note is printed there at all – or can be reconstructed with reference to the note’s context. In the case of the latter, hypothesised letters are encased in square brackets. Abbreviations are underlined.

In the reference table, notes printed by Stokes are indicated by a plain reference, while a reference preceded by \(\approx\) indicates the approximate location in his edition of a note he does not include. A reference to the translation by Anne Dooley and Harry Roe is also provided (‘D & R’). ‘(R)’ indicates a rubricated note.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>BWE (fols)</th>
<th>Stokes (ll.)</th>
<th>D &amp; R (pp.)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n.1</td>
<td>126(^a) 32</td>
<td>2799</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>West Ulster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.2</td>
<td>126(^v) 31</td>
<td>2886–87</td>
<td>88–89</td>
<td>East Ulster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.3 (R)</td>
<td>126(^v) 2</td>
<td>2906</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>East Ulster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.4 (R)</td>
<td>127(^a) 21</td>
<td>2973</td>
<td>90–91</td>
<td>East Ulster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>127(^v) 11</td>
<td>3051</td>
<td>93</td>
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<td>3146</td>
<td>95</td>
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</tr>
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<td>3345</td>
<td>101</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>129(^v) 27</td>
<td>3453–54</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>South Ulster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.9</td>
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<td>105–106</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Munster</td>
</tr>
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<td>151–52</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</table>
1. De scelath Saidhe ingine Buidb Deirg ‘From the stories of Sadb, daughter of Bodb Derg’.

Caithe is explaining three place-names by telling the story of the death of Sadb, Finn’s wife, in an ambush by Clann Morna.

2. Áígidecht Cháilti co tech Colmáin Éla 7 Eoganain aír Loch daim deirg ‘Caithe's sojourn at the house of Colmán Éla and Eoganán on Loch Daim Deirg’.

Caithe arrives at the monastic community on Loch Daim Deirg.

3. Cid dia ta Loch daim deirg Ni insa ‘Whence the name Loch Daim Deirg? That is not hard’.

Caithe is asked by two saints, Colmán Éla and Eoganán, to explain the name Loch Daim Deirg.

4. Athad ingine rig Muman le hOissin insa ‘Here is the elopement of the daughter of the king of Munster with Oisín’.

Caithe tells Colmán and Eoganán the story behind the name Tipra Banntrachta, in which Oisín elopes with the daughter of the king of Munster.

5. Ráith aine, cid dia tá ‘Ráth Aine, whence the name?’

Caithe arrives at Ráth Aine and is asked the name’s origin by the king of Ulster.

6. Cath Traga Rudraigi insa ‘Here is the battle of Rudraige’s shore’.
Cailte is telling the story of two of the Fian slain on this shore.

7. *Is ann tainic Cas Corach mac Caincinde dochum Cailti* ‘It is here that Cas Corach mac Caincinde came to Cailte’.

Cas Corach, a musician, comes to ask if he can travel with Cailte and learn from him.

8. *Is ann tagla Cas Corach mac Caincinde air Pátraic i. in timpanach* ‘It is here that Cas Corach mac Caincinde met Patrick, that is, the timpanist’.

Cas Corach is introduced to Patrick.

9. *Nota qualiter Patricium edixit*71 *artem timpanistarum* ‘Note how Patrick ordains the art of the timpanists’.

Patrick complies with Cas Corach’s request that he bless musicians.

10. *[...] abur on abur Tonn Clidna [...]* ‘say whence Tonn Clidna is said’.

The son of the king of Corcu Duibne asks Cailte the origins of the names Tonn Clidna and Tonn Téite.

11. *Is ann so thainic rí Laigen dochum Patraic* ‘Here, the king of the Laigen came to Patrick’.

Áed mac Echach Leithdeirg, who has just escaped from the *síd*, comes to join Patrick. He is actually the son of the king of the Laigin.


Cailte, Patrick and their entourage find the tomb of Roiriu, Cailte’s sister.

13. *[...] ingen[a?] [tuath]ail techt[ma]r inso* ‘[...] daughter(s?) of Tuathal Techtmar, here’.

Cailte tells of how the king of Leinster tricked the High King, Túathal Techtmar, into letting him marry both of his daughters.

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71 This note is also edited in ‘Laud Misc. 610 (cont.)’, ed. by Dillon, ſeiv (p. 154) and Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, I, p.76. Both expand *edixit* (from *edicere* ‘to proclaim, appoint, ordain’) while Stokes reads *edixit* (from *edicere* ‘to lead out, bring up, educate’). The nature of the abbreviation means that this will remain uncertain.
14. *Dicitur tulach in Mail ar machaire Laigen* ‘It is called the burial mound of Mál upon the plain of the Laigen’.

Cáilte is asked to explain this name and tells the story of Mál, son of the king of Alba, who was killed in a dispute with the Fian after Mac Lugach eloped with his wife.

15. *Is ann indister Milid ri in domain do thuitet le Cáilte ar teoth diarraidh braiget ar Find* ‘Here is mentioned Milid, king of the world, who fell at Cailte’s hand after coming to seek hostages from Finn’.

Asked to explain a place-name, Cáilte tells how Milid mac Trechossaig invaded Ireland and how he (Cáilte) slew him.

16. *Conid ann do chreidset Túath Dé Danann do Patraice* ‘So it is here that the Túatha Dé Danann gave allegiance to Patrick’.

Donn mac Midir submits to Patrick on behalf of the Túatha Dé Danann.

17. *Is and tuc rí Muman Caissil do Patraic* ‘It is here that the king of Munster of Cashel came to Patrick’.

Eogan Lethderg, king of Munster, welcomes Patrick. Another hand has added ‘mac Alpraind’ (son of Calpurnius).

18. *i. Patraic agus Colum Cill agus Brigit* ‘i. Patrick and Colum Cille and Brigit’.

This is a gloss on the line ‘triar álaid a n-aenbali’ in the poem ‘In cloch so a hainm cloch na cét’, recited by Patrick.

19. *Raith Cind Chon i Maig Fheimin* ‘Ráth Cind Chon in Mag Femen’.

Cáilte is asked to explain this place-name.

20. *Cid dia tá Benn bán in retha e ter Sliab Claire agus Sliab Crot* ‘Whence the name Benn Bán in Retha, between Sliab Claire and Sliab Crot?’

Cáilte is asked to explain this place-name.

21. *Ut dicitur Cuillind a n-Ib Cuanach aniu* ‘So it is called Cuillend in Uí Cuanach today’.

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72 *Acallamh*, l. 5432: ‘the splendid trio in one place’ (my translation).
73 *Acallamh*, ll. 5425–37.
Caílte is asked to explain this place-name.

22. *Is and tainic Bé Bind ingen Treoin co Find mac Comhaill* ‘Here, Bé Bind, daughter of Treoin, came to Finn mac Cumaill’.

Asked to explain a place-name, Caílte tells a story centring on Bé Bind seeking Finn’s protection.

23. *Raithin na Senaigachta cid dia ta* ‘Raithin na Senaigachta, whence the name?’

Caílte is asked to explain this place-name.

24. *Sén na n-én dona gortaib* ‘The banishment of the birds from the fields’.

In the narrative present Caílte, expels a flock of demonic birds from the area by invoking Patrick and the Trinity.

25. *Bein in Bailb a Maenmag* ‘Beann in Bailb in Maenmag’.

Patrick and Caílte meet on Beann in Bailb.

26. *Fert Fiadmóir 7 Cnoc in Chircaill 7 Cnoc in Chongna* ‘Fert Fiadmóir and Cnoc in Chircaill and Cnoc in Chongna’.

Caílte is asked about these place-names.

27. *i. Sliab Formaile i Connachta* ‘i. Sliab Formaile among the Connachta’.

Caílte is asked about this place-name.

28. *Cluain Imdergtha i Conachtaib* ‘Cluain Imdergtha among the Connachta’.

Caílte is asked about this place-name.

29. *Topur Patraic* ‘Patrick’s well’.

This is the new name for ‘Muine na n-Anmaite’ (‘thicket of the witches’74) after Patrick drives out the witches.


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74 *Acallamh*, l. 6760.
The witches (see n.29) flee to Inis na Scríne (Church Island) on Findloch Cera (Lough Carra).  

31. [...] 

Cailte and Cas Corach leave Patrick and head for Ess Ruaidh to the north.

32. [Sid] duma [i Conn]acht .i.[i Lu]gnib ‘Síd Duma in Connacht .i. among the Luigni’.

Cailte and Cas Corach pass this location on their way north.

33. [Co]nid ca[i]lti [agus e]as co[r]ach [mac e]ain cindi [...] co [...] bairnig [mac c]airph o choll[amair bre]g ‘So it is Cailte and Cas Corach mac Caincinde [...] of Bairnech mac Cairbh, from Collomair Breg’.

Cailte and Cas Corach meet Bairnech, the king of Ireland’s steward, at Carnfree and visit his fort.

34. Fert in gedig ‘The grave of Gedech’.

Patrick meets with the king of Connacht at ‘the grave of Gedech’, who is either Ailill and Medb’s druid or one of Patrick’s bishops.  

35. Is ann sin tainic Ailled[n] ingen Buidb Deirg dindsaig ri Condacht ‘It is here Aillenn, daughter of Bodb Derg, comes to seek the king of Connacht’.

Aillenn, of the Túatha Dé Danann, weds the king of Connacht.

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76 The Acallam itself is uncertain on this point: Connon, ‘Roscommon locus’, p. 44.