Riggs, P. (ed.): *The Wars of Charlemagne: Reassessments*. London: Irish Texts Society. Subsidiary Series 33. 2022. vii + 179 pp. ISBN 9781999804794. Price: €21.

The Wars of Charlemagne: Reassessments consists of the proceedings of the twenty-second annual seminar of the Irish Text Society (ITS) organized in conjunction with the School of Irish Learning at University College Cork.[1] The seminar took place in 2021, after being postponed because of the pandemic, and was dedicated to *Gabháltais Shearluis Mhóir / The Conquests of Charlemagne*, volume 19 in the main series of the ITS, edited and translated by Douglas Hyde. This is the Early Modern Irish translation of the popular Latin text known as the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin*, which was produced sometime in the fifteenth century and it is extant in eight manuscripts dating from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

The first chapter, 'How Douglas Hyde's three ITS Volumes (1899, 1919, 1939) marked his eventful career' by Liam Mac Mathúna (pp. 1–29), examines lesser-known aspects of the life of the editor and translator of *Gabháltais Shearluis Mhóir* (*GSM*) around the dates of publication of the three volumes that he published with the Irish Texts Society: *Giolla an Fhiugha* and *Eachtra Cloinne Righ na h-Ioruaidhe* (*The Lad of the Ferule* and *Adventures of the Children of the King of Norway*) (1899), *GSM* (1919), and *Sgéalta Thomáis Uí Chathasaigh* (*Mayo Stories told by Thomas Casey*). This is a well-documented and welcome introduction to the life and work of the important and multifaceted man behind *GSM* and so many other academic and literary pieces.

The next chapter, 'Charlemagne in the Irish and Hiberno-Latin Tradition' by Mícheál Mac Craith (pp. 30–85), is a lengthy piece that offers a panorama of the textual evidence relating to the figure of Charlemagne, presenting it under three headings: life lived, life written, and afterlife. Mac Craith offers a good overview of texts about Charlemagne and of his long-lasting influence during the Middle Ages and beyond. Particularly noteworthy is the presentation of Charlemagne as 'Father of Europe' and the discussion of his image in literary texts. This last section is briefly concerned with the *Chronicle of the Pseudo-Turpin* (p. 41).

The second part of the chapter focuses on Charlemagne in the Irish tradition, also following the abovementioned headings of life lived, life written, and afterlife. Some connections between the Carolingian court and the Irish come to light. The section dedicated to the afterlife of Charlemagne in the Irish tradition will perhaps be of greatest interest to readers since it discusses all the narratives and

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1 The seminar appears as the twenty-first in the 'Foreword' (p. v). See, for example, the news of the postponement on the ITS website (https://irishtextssociety.org/news.htm, accessed 13/02/2024).

the few poems associated with him, including *GSM*. Mac Craith comments on the style of the Irish translations, a topic that will be reprised in the following chapter (pp. 102–107). In this regard, the author suggests that 'pastoral concerns dictated the use of a simple unadorned style in the composition' of *GSM* (p. 85). The author also discusses genealogical tracts of Anglo-Norman families in Ireland claiming descent from Charlemagne to enhance their status. Overall, Mac Craith offers a very good summary of the Charlemagne material in Ireland and of the role of the mendicant orders, both Franciscans and Dominicans, in the revival of interest in the stories about the Frankish emperor; the author builds on Conor McDonough's findings about the Dominican provenance of TCD MS 667 to advance 'the use of the Charlemagne material by both the Dominicans and Franciscans in pursuing their pastoral goals' (p. 85).

In 'The Language of *Gabháltais Shearluis Mhóir*' (pp. 86–108) Ken Ó Donnchú undertakes a linguistic analysis of *GSM*, a translation that has been described as 'linguistically direct, simple and unadorned' by previous commentators (p. 107).[2] After discussing the difficulties of dating the translation, Ó Donnchú defines his objective and his methodological approach, namely: the study of the preservation and innovation in the language of *GSM* by comparing the text in the Book of Lismore (used by Douglas Hyde) and occasionally other manuscript witnesses, with the grammatical tracts, which gives us an idea of certain written standard and the flexibility in the use of the language for literary purposes. The analysis focuses on the variety observed in nominal morphology (the gender of nouns and oblique case forms), the use of inherited and innovatory forms of prepositions, and developments in the verbal system that occur in Early Modern Irish; numerous examples are provided. The next section is dedicated to the style of *GSM* which, as has been argued before by O'Rahilly (1919) and Poppe (2019), differs greatly from the more elaborated and sometimes archaicising tendencies of contemporary translations. Ó Donnchú indicates, however, that there are differences in the surviving copies of *GSM*: the Egerton 1781 text, for instance, does agree more closely with the conventions of Early Modern Irish prose. He also lists a few embellishments found in the Book of Lismore text. It should be noted, in this regard, that the addition he presents on p. 104 shows, in fact, that the source text of the Irish translation belongs to the C family of manuscripts, a group of manuscripts containing a version of the chronicle that circulated mostly in Britain, which is discussed primarily in Ó Riain's chapter (pp. 131–155). This version is characterised by a more or less stable structure of chapters and a number of distinctive readings (see also below for more details). The Irish translator is very likely following here the 'nimius clamor et ululatus omnium' of the C recension (Walpole 1976: 98). The discussion of the influence

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2   On p. 88 Ó Donnchú refers to Trinity College Dublin MS 667 using its old shelfmark, TCD MS F.5.3.

of the Latin source text on the syntax of the Irish text, the selection of verbal forms (in this case the verbal of necessity), and word choices is noteworthy. Ó Donnchú's conclusions regarding the accessibility of the language of *GSM* and the interest of the translator in staying close to his model as being consequences of the use of the text for preaching nicely complements other contributions in this book.

In the next chapter, 'The Manuscript Copies of *Gabháltais Shearluis Mhóir*' (pp. 109–130), Andrea Palandri reassesses the manuscript evidence and demonstrates that three different translations of the Latin *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin* were produced in Ireland (an argument presented in Palandri 2019: 150–153). Palandri achieves this by comparing sections of the text across as many manuscripts as possible (some copies have significant gaps) using the software Kaleidoscope (only available for macOS according to the company's website). Transcribed texts were standardised for this purpose and the software highlighted the textual differences, which is shown by means of images in the article. It is indeed a shame that the table on p. 110 lacks the colours representing the chapters of the chronicle preserved in each manuscript and the passages analysed in the article. The first version, *GSM*-1, survives in four manuscripts from the fifteenth century, including the Book of Lismore employed by Hyde as the base for his edition. The second translation, *GSM*-2, is extant in three incomplete manuscripts. A comparison of selected passages from *GSM*-1 and *GSM*-2 with Kaleidoscope (screenshot on p. 115) show similarities in the translations, which may suggest that they 'may not be entirely independent of each other' (p. 115), although the significant distance between *GSM*-1 and *GSM*-2 in most parts is still indicative of a rewriting effort. Finally, *GSM*-3 is a very fragmentary text in a fifteenth-century manuscript that shares some readings at the beginning with *GSM*-2. As a consequence, Palandri posits certain degree of contamination between the different translations.

In the following section, Palandri provides a useful description of the manuscripts of *GSM*-1 (the version of the translation for which we have more data) in order to introduce an analysis of the linguistic differences between manuscript witnesses. Such analysis yields interesting results as regards particular linguistic features of individual copies, which may help to identify regional dialectal and stylistic practices, an exciting prospect for future research. This is connected to a strand of argument in line with Mac Craith and Ó Donnchú: that 'whoever was responsible for translating these texts was intentionally avoiding stylised and archaic language' and that those responsible may have been mendicant friars guided by preaching purposes (p. 128). Such a need for understandability would possibly allow for local variations to crop up.

The last chapter, Diarmuid Ó Riain's 'The *Chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin*: Introduction to the Latin template for the *Gabháltais Shearluis Mhóir* and its manuscript transmission in Ireland and beyond' (pp. 131–155) offers illuminating

observations about the insular Latin version, known as the C-type or family of manuscripts after Meredith-Jones (1936). Ó Riain supplies us with a complete list of the manuscripts that contain this version: the C recension is represented in thirteen manuscripts (C1 to C13) of British or Irish provenance with the exception of two (C4 and C12) coming from northern France. These texts are still unedited, although a transcription of C1 can be found in Schmidt's edition of the *Karolellus* (a Latin poem based on the chronicle) and Meredith-Jones employed C3 to supply variants in the apparatus of his edition of the chronicle, following his contention that C3 contained all the characteristic readings of the C recension. Ó Riain's collation of the prologue (the Letter to Leoprand) and two passages from chapter seventeen from ten of the manuscripts (published as appendix A and B) shows that Meredith-Jones's claim is an 'overstatement' and that 'the C3 readings provided in the Meredith-Jones edition are not therefore entirely representative of the C recension.' (p. 142). He also demonstrates that C1 and C3 share distinctive readings and must belong to a separate group within the C family. This study constitutes a great contribution to our understanding of this family of manuscripts and the existence of sub-groups within it. In this regard, Ó Riain refines the work by Stephen Shepherd, the editor of the Middle English *Turpines Story*, for whom the insular tradition of the chronicle was 'a thriving tradition, one that produced enough different copies introduced over enough time to develop at least one sub-group with its own *sub*-sub-groups' (p. 148, fn. 64; see also Shepherd 2014: xxxix).

Regarding the source text of the Irish translations, Ó Riain shows proof of their 'close affinity but not dependency' (p. 145): C9 (TCD MS 667) is closest to *GSM*-1 and *GSM*-2, but it is not their immediate template. Furthermore, he shows the relative isolation of C9 within the Latin manuscript tradition. He concludes that there were at least two Latin texts of the chronicle circulating in Ireland in the late medieval period (the model of TCD and that of *GSM*). Finally, Ó Riain stresses the long-established and vibrant insular manuscript tradition in Ireland which facilitated the transmission and translation of texts from Britain. In this respect, an interesting piece of information that the author offers is that Charlemagne appealed so much to some Irish Benedictine monasteries in southern Germany in the fifteenth century that their foundation histories were reworked to give the emperor a prominent role in them.

A short note on some errors that remained after proofreading seems to be in order here, hoping that it would be useful: 'but as it not pertinent to our discussion today' (p. 41); read Otto III for Otto 111 (p. 49); 'to the them' (p. 50); 'that that' (pp. 62, 73); 'which appears to be have been assembled' (p. 89); 'indictators' (p. 107); 'fo' (p. 127, fn. 17); Hämel's article appears as 'Überlieferung und Beteutung' throughout chapter five (the title is correctly spelled in the Bibliography, though); Compostellan appears as 'Compestelan' (p. 138, fn. 24).

To conclude, this is a valuable contribution that succeeds in reassessing the Early Modern Irish *Gabháltais Shearluis Mhóir* and its source text, the insular

Latin recension, and will thus prove to have significant implications for the study of other insular translations of the Latin chronicle. A more careful proofreading of the book would have spotted the several repetitions, spelling mistakes and typos, but this does not affect the readability of the texts at all. *The Wars of Charlemagne: Reassessments* is a must-read for those interested in the Irish translation of the *Chronicle of the Pseudo-Turpin* and in the dissemination of this Latin text in the north of Europe.

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