

# H and the First Recension of the *Táin*

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As is well known, the first recension of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* ‘The Cattle-raid of Cooley’, the central tale of the Ulster Cycle, does not survive complete in any one manuscript. The standard edition, that of Cecile O’Rahilly, is based on two of the extant witnesses: Lebor na hUidre being the preferred source until it breaks off (at l. 2546) with the Yellow Book of Lecan utilised from that point to the end (l. 4159); readings from other codices are given in footnotes.<sup>1</sup> Alongside the reconstructed text provided by O’Rahilly, the four major manuscript texts of the first recension are also in print;<sup>2</sup> this allows for detailed analysis across the different witnesses and facilitates scrutiny of the authority of O’Rahilly’s edition.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the overlapping of the manuscript texts of the first recension of the *Táin* would seem to facilitate the reconstruction of a complete narrative.

However, certain problems are inherent in the editorial approach taken by Cecile O’Rahilly, particularly in her use of Lebor na hUidre.<sup>4</sup> The issues involved may be foregrounded by focusing on one significant aspect of the first recension: what position should be taken with regard to the four substantial interpolations, added by H to the LU copy of the text (some on erasures, others on intercalated leaves), a number of which are also found in Eg. and O’C?<sup>5</sup> The sections in question are:

LU 55b34–56a12 (TBC1 ll. 66–112);  
LU 70b32–72b (TBC1 ll. 1545–712);  
LU 74b38–76b (TBC1 ll. 1904–95);  
LU 82b23–44 (TBC1 ll. 2524–46).

- 1 See O’Rahilly 1976, xxii–xxiii; TBC1.
- 2 The four manuscripts in question are: Royal Irish Academy MS 1229 (*olim* 23 E 25), Lebor na hUidre (c. 1100) [LU]; Trinity College Dublin MS 1318 (*olim* H 2 16), Yellow Book of Lecan (composite; 1391–1401) [YBL]; British Library, Egerton MS 1782 (early 16th century) [Eg.]; Maynooth, Russell Library MS 3a1 [O’Curry MS 1] (late 16th century) [O’C].
- 3 The editions, corresponding in order to the manuscripts listed in n. 2, are: Best and Bergin 1929, ll. 4479–6722; Strachan and O’Keefe 1912 [TBCY]; Windisch 1913, 121–58; Ó Fiannachta 1966.
- 4 This occupies a very important place in our manuscript tradition as it is the oldest vellum to contain vernacular Irish narrative. The principal scribe who wrote c. 60% of the codex is designated M; his co-worker, referred to as A, scribed c. 12% of LU; while a later interpolator, known as H, was responsible for c. 28% of its contents. Recently, it has been suggested by Elizabeth Duncan (2015) that H may actually represent the work of six different scribes.
- 5 These interpolations are discussed in detail in Thurneysen 1921, 235–410; O’Rahilly 1976, viii–xvii; and Dooley 2006, 64–100: Chapter 3. ‘A Scribe and His Táin: The H Interpolations in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*’.

All of these are written in the hand designated as H1 by Duncan (2015, 51).<sup>6</sup> If we think that a critical edition is a feasible goal for the presentation of the text of the first recension of the *Táin*, the question I would like to pose is whether the additions by H should be included in such an edition as, with a couple of minor exceptions, they are not to be found in YBL.

The possible approaches which may be taken to editing the first recension of the *Táin* are, in theory, quite numerous. However, for a text of this length, attested in a limited number of manuscripts—all of which have been edited separately (see above fns 2–3)—the scholarly consensus determined that a single composite edition was a desideratum.<sup>7</sup> This is what O’Rahilly provided. However, the nature and make-up of her work begs a question that must be repeatedly posed: what is it that we understand Recension 1 to be? Are the H-interpolations to be included in Recension 1 solely because they are present in the oldest manuscript even though we know that they are a later addition to LU? In most of these, H would seem to have been utilising earlier materials, adapting and reworking them to fit the contexts required; he may also have been responsible for the composition of short new supplementary and connective sections.<sup>8</sup> If we believe that the YBL narrative draws upon an uninterpolated version of the *Táin*, should we privilege this text and consequently omit the H-interpolations when editing the first recension, especially when narrative coherence seems to be retained and even improved when this material is discounted? What about the latter sections of this recension (amounting to nearly 40% of the narrative) where we rely primarily though not exclusively on YBL for the establishment of the text?<sup>9</sup> As regards the last 500 lines or so, YBL is our only witness to the first recension, and hence textual readings can only be compared with parallels in the second recension.

Here I briefly itemise the contents of the four H-interpolations and their place and significance within the first recension.

- 6 Addition of material defines a large part of the nature of H1’s interventions in LU; he composed no full texts, but was responsible for significant additions to *Scél Túáin*, *Aided Nath Í*, *Aided Echach meic Máireda*, *Serglige Con Culainn*, *Senchas na Relec*, *Genemáin Áeda Sláine*, *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, *Fled Bricrenn* and *Tochmarc Emere*, as well as the *Táin*.
- 7 The various approaches, which may be taken to editing medieval Irish texts are detailed in Murray (2009); this contribution includes a critique of the place of the Lachmannian critical edition within the discipline. To add to the extensive bibliography in that article, one of the anonymous reviewers brought a recent publication edited by Quinn and Lethbridge (2010) to my attention; this deals with similar issues in Old Norse studies. Of particular interest here is the contribution by M.J. Driscoll, which contains, *inter alia*, an excellent discussion (pp 90–95) of ‘new’ or ‘material’ philology.
- 8 This was also the opinion of O’Rahilly 1976, xxii.
- 9 We might ask if H ever had access to the entire *Táin*: see the tentative suggestion in O’Rahilly 1976, xvii that there may never have been a complete text of the story in LU.

Interpolation 1: LU 55b34–56a12 (TBC1 ll. 66–112)

This is the only one of the four H-interpolations which is also to be found in Recension 2; due to lacunae in the manuscripts, we do not know if it once formed part of the texts in YBL or O’C, but it is present in Eg. (Windisch 1913, 122–3). It is a syllabic poem of 212 words (in 46 lines) beginning *Atchíu fer find firfes cles* ‘I see a fair man who will perform weapon-feats’,<sup>10</sup> which serves to augment the famous re-iterated prophecy of Fedelm, *Atchíu forderg, atchíu ríad* ‘I see it blood-stained, I see it red’. It is written *in rasura* and O’Rahilly (1976, x–xi), following Thurneysen, suggests that it may have replaced an earlier *rosc(ad)*; she is also of the opinion (p. xi) that there ‘seems no reason to doubt that in this instance it was taken by the H-interpolator from a version later than U [Lebor na hUidre] and like Recension II’. The significance of this observation is now not as clear as scholarship moves towards a consensus that scribe ‘H is not to be dated much later’ than scribes A or M.<sup>11</sup>

Interpolation 2: LU 70b32–72b (TBC1 ll. 1545–712)

The second interpolation begins at the end of LU p.70 and is found mainly on an intercalated vellum leaf (pp. 71–2). It occurs at one of the cyclical points in the text where there are repeated single combats; the structure of the narrative at this point reminds one of a comment by Joseph Nagy (1989, 150) concerning *Acallam na Senórach* that it feels like it ‘could begin, resume, or be put on hold at any point’.<sup>12</sup> This narrative contains significant sections replete with Old Irish features alongside very brief passages containing Middle Irish elements;<sup>13</sup> the strong suspicion must be that H was responsible for composing these later lines in order to link together pre-existing written materials and to facilitate their integration into the surrounding narrative. As has been argued in another context: ‘Here the weight of literary

10 Discussed in Ó Concheanainn 1984, 224–5 and Miles 2011, 151–2. So unimpressed was Donnchadh Ó Corráin 2015, 26 with this interpolation that he refers to H as a scholar of ‘poor taste and slow wit’.

11 Breatnach 2015, 76. Scholarship has not yet had the opportunity to attempt to distinguish between the possible different H hands on the basis of language usage or linguistic choice.

12 This addition treats of the treacherous meeting of Finnabair and Cú Chulainn with Ailill allowing his jester to stand in for him, before detailing numerous other incidents: the battle between Cú Roí and Muinremair; the deaths of the *macrad* of Ulaid; the seizing of Rochad; and Cú Chulainn’s killing of the royal mercenaries.

13 This was also the opinion of O’Rahilly 1976, xi: ‘the opening and connecting passages... may have been composed at a later date to introduce and join together what Myles Dillon has called the “canonical text”’. Interestingly, the section from ll. 1545–732 contains five examples of the verbal form *gúitir* (pass. sg. pres. ind. or pass. impv. sg. of *guidid* ‘beseeches’), which is not found elsewhere in LU.

interest falls upon the activity of the *final* redactor, whose artistry requires far more careful attention than it has hitherto been accorded.<sup>14</sup>

Interpolation 3: LU 74b38–76b (TBC1 ll. 1904–95)

After 9 lines written *in rasura* at the bottom of p.74b, this interpolation is also found mainly on an intercalated leaf, one which is significantly smaller in size than the surrounding leaves.<sup>15</sup> Once more, the substantial Old Irish elements in this addition are linked together with brief sentences and phrases in Middle Irish;<sup>16</sup> again we may suspect H's role as final redactor and as composer of the linking materials.

Interpolation 4: LU 82b23–44 (TBC1 ll. 2524–46).

The short fourth interpolation, *Comrac Maind*, detailing Cú Chulainn's single combat with Mand Muresci mac Dáiri of Fir Domnann, is written in Middle Irish and may well have been composed by H himself (this seems more probable if we accept his authorship of the connective materials in Interpolations 2-3).<sup>17</sup> Significant diagnostic dating features include frequent short Middle Irish alliterative runs (*Ba fer borb brogda iarom im longud , im ligi ... Fer dothengt[h]ach dobeóil ... Ba fer tailc trebur*, ll. 2526–8); the use of the dative after a preposition which originally governed the accusative alongside an example of an independent object pronoun (*commél eter mo lámaib hé*, l. 2530); and the attestation of the Middle Irish 1st sg. fut. form of *téit* (*Ragat-sa*, l. 2530). Furthermore, early linguistic features are not present.

14 Rosenberg 1975, 67–94; quoted in Alter 1981, 19–20.

15 This insertion treats specifically of the treachery of Medb in arranging a meeting of deception with Cú Chulainn in her attempts to overwhelm him; this echoes the duplicity of Ailill in Interpolation 2 in arranging a meeting between Cú Chulainn and Finnabair, then getting his jester to stand in for him in proceedings.

16 The Middle Irish aspect of parts of Interpolations 2–3 is readily demonstrated. There is only a small number of examples of the Middle Irish 3rd plural independent pronouns—*íat* and *siat*—attested in the portion of Recension 1 preserved in LU. These are all to be found in these two interpolations. In what follows, bolded forms represent independent object pronouns; italicised examples are used with singular forms of the copula: *íat* (l. 1605); *siat* (l. 1633); **íat** (l. 1644); *siat* (l. 1692); **íat** (l. 1693); *iat* (l. 1941); *iat* (l. 1942); *iat* (l. 1947); *iat* (l. 1948 [x2]).

17 H's authorship of Interpolation 4 has also been posited by O'Rahilly 1976, xvi–xvii. Interestingly, as pointed out to me by one of the anonymous reviewers, a brief resumé of this narrative is preserved as the first part of the *dinnsenchas* entry on Mag Mandachta (Gwynn 1924, 278–9). The brevity of this text, the fact that *Táin Bó Cúailnge* is cited by name, and the circumstance that two of the lines from the *Táin* are quoted practically verbatim therein would point towards its derivation from our interpolation.

## Discussion

The way we treat these four H-interpolations depends upon the goals we set ourselves in the editorial process.<sup>18</sup> There are three primary scholarly activities requiring three different approaches we might envisage here:

- (1) editing the text as part of an edition of LU;
- (2) an edition of the LU *Táin*;
- (3) a critical edition of the first recension.

Option (1) obviously requires that all H material be included in the edition. This has already been completed with the excellent semi-diplomatic edition of LU produced many years ago by Best and Bergin (1929, ll. 4479–6722); their work also has the advantage of using a smaller type-face for the H-interpolations, further set off by the use of bold square brackets to mark his interventions. Option (2), the edition of the LU *Táin*, has been completed but has been imperfectly realised. The text, as it is in the manuscript, is available in Best and Bergin's edition; this does not equate to a complete edition of the LU *Táin* because it does not incorporate or discuss variant readings from other witnesses in the apparatus as one would expect in a traditional scholarly edition. The necessary work has been done, however, by O'Rahilly in her edition (TBC1). The first 77 pages of the edition (ll. 1–2546), the accompanying translation on pp.125–95 and the notes on pp.239–74, are in effect an edition and translation of the LU *Táin*. This is explicitly acknowledged by O'Rahilly (1976, xxii) in her introduction when she tells us: 'The text of the present edition is a transcript of that part of TBC contained in LU, and for the part missing in LU a transcript of the continuation of TBC in YBL. Readings from other manuscripts are given throughout in footnotes'. Consequently, despite the title of O'Rahilly's volume, option (3), a full critical edition of the first recension—whether we believe such an undertaking to be feasible or desirable—has not yet been fully realised.

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18 There are some themes, which recur throughout these additions which we might briefly note here. The primary interest of H seems to be in continuing 'the process of eulogizing Cú Chulainn' (Herbert, 2009, 214) and in comparing his heroic nature with the treachery of those he is fighting against: consequently, he displays 'a general interest in warp-spasm descriptions' (Dooley, 2006, 79). Thus, we find Cú Chulainn called in *riastarthe* 'the distorted one' in Interpolation 1 (l. 96); his warp-spasm is described in some detail in Interpolation 2 (ll. 1651–7); and it is mentioned again in his single combat with Mand in Interpolation 4 (ll. 2544–5). Such a focus—which involves lauding one side while denigrating the other—fits well within the framework of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* with its emphasis on the bravery of Cú Chulainn; on his martial prowess in battle (particularly single combat); and on the trickery of his enemies and how he must resort to trickery to counter this (see Miller 2014).

O’Rahilly’s approach, while eminently defensible particularly considering the magnitude of her achievement, leaves a number of questions about the nature and make-up of the first recension unresolved. Let us take the four H-interpolations one by one and see what part they might play in a putative critical edition.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the fact that H’s initial intervention is written on an erasure, it should be included in any edition of the first recension of the *Táin* as there is no way to restore or regain that which has been removed. Furthermore, as Ann Dooley (2006, 69) has remarked about this particular example, ‘it is not really useful to foreclose critical examination of the existing substituted text by viewing its surviving, rewritten versions as a mere consolation prize for the now vanished privilege of access to an older, hence more challenging and more “authentic”, discourse’; this is especially true where there is no access to the earlier source. It is also possible, though much less likely, that H inserted what he took to be a better version of the same poem here and that what he erased was similar in content to what now stands there.

The situation with regard to the second interpolation is not as clear. The erasure on the bottom of p.70b most likely contained the material which is reinserted on p. 72b24–46 (TBC1 ll. 1695–712).<sup>20</sup> Significantly, the tale flows perfectly without the interpolation. The last line before the insertion reads (ll. 1543–4):

*Ni baí inneth foraib trá isind aidchi sin acht adchota fer do dingbáil Con Culaind for áth namá úadib.*

Their only anxiety that night was to get someone from among them to contend with Cú Chulainn at the ford.

The first line of the material re-inserted on p.72b24 is (l. 1695):

*Guitter dano Cúr mac Da Láth dóib im dula for cend Con Culaind.*

Then Cúr mac Da Lath was asked by them to encounter Cú Chulainn.

This constitutes a coherent follow-on; this is also how the text is presented in YBL and in a condensed and altered format in the Book of Leinster (LL);<sup>21</sup> thus, YBL and LL most likely drew here on an uninterpolated version of the

19 Dooley 2006, Chapter 3 adds consideration of a fifth interpolation into the mix, the last five lines of the poem beginning *Éli Loga* ‘The Incantation of Lug’ written *in rasura* (ll. 2130–5); because of its brevity, I have not included discussion of it here though, interestingly, it too is focused on Cú Chulainn’s battle fury.

20 See O’Rahilly 1976, xi, n.2.

21 Strachan and O’Keeffe 1912, ll. 1360–1, 1487–8 (ll. 1362–486 in their edition are from LU and are not present in YBL); O’Rahilly 1967, ll. 1816–8.

first recension.<sup>22</sup> The interpolation, while not overly intrusive, is not very well integrated with either the preceding or following narrative sections. Although some of the materials in Interpolation 2 are early, and are particularly striking (especially Cú Chulainn's treatment of Finnabair and the jester), its claim for inclusion into a critical edition of Recension 1 rests primarily on the fact that it is scribed by H and preserved in LU. However, both LL and YBL bear witness here to the later existence of an uninterpolated version of the first recension.

Interpolation 3 shares many of the same concerns just noted regarding Interpolation 2, in this case with the issues being (at least to my mind) more clear cut and straightforward. Similar to the previous example, material erased at the bottom of p.74b is likely to have been re-inserted on p.76b (TBC1 ll. 1975–95); however, the short passage excised (similar presumably to TBCY ll. 1709–16) seems to have been expanded, with the passage in LU being twice as long as the one in YBL.<sup>23</sup> With regard to the coherence of the uninterpolated narrative, the text before the insertion reads (ll. 1899–903):

*Is and sin asbertatár na mná fri Coin Culaind dogníthe a c[h]utbiud isin dúnud úair nád baí ulcha leiss , nícon téigtís dagóic acht siriti ara chend. Ba hassu dó ulcha smérthain do dénam leiss. Conid gní-som aní sin ar dáig cuingthi comraic fri fer .i. fri Lóch.*

Then the women told Cú Chulainn that he was jeered at in the camp since he was beardless and goodly warriors did not oppose him, only mere boys. It were better for him to put on a beard of blackberry juice. So this he did in order to seek combat with a grown man, that is, with Lóch.

The beginning of the material re-inserted after the interpolation on p.76b runs as follows (ll. 1975–6):

*Táinic dano Lóch i n-agid Con Culaind do dígail a bráthar fair, ar donadbacht dó ba ulcha boí lais.*

So Lóch, since he saw that Cú Chulainn had a beard, came to attack him to avenge his brother's death.

The narrative arc here is good—better than when read with the interpolation included<sup>24</sup>—and this is also how it is presented in YBL and in a slightly expanded

<sup>22</sup> In the case of LL, the major point telling against such an interpretation is the presence therein (just noted) of the poem from Interpolation 1.

<sup>23</sup> See O'Rahilly 1976, 266n..

<sup>24</sup> This brings to mind the comment of Gregory Toner (2009, 120) that H 'appears to have been interested in the historical veracity of the texts in the manuscript but was not attempting to produce coherent, consistent narratives'.

format in LL.<sup>25</sup> Although H made a concerted effort at the start and end of the interpolation to meld his material into the neighbouring text, the main body of what he added is not directly connected with the surrounding narrative; consequently it is not as well integrated into the *Táin* as Interpolation 2.

The fourth intervention by H constitutes the last part of the LU *Táin* before it breaks off incomplete. Scribe M started a sentence with *Foidis Medb*; the rest of the column was erased; the original rubricated title attached to the large initial ‘F’ was removed; a new title *Comrac Maind* was substituted in its place; and this text was entered by H *in rasura*. The grounds for including it in a critical edition of the first recension are slim. There is a strong possibility that it was actually composed by H himself; furthermore, the next episode in the story, preserved in both YBL and O’C., also begins with the words *Foidis Medb*, and may actually be closer to the original Recension 1 text.

### Lebor na hUidre and the Yellow Book of Lecan

Because LU was in North Connacht in the period between 1359 and 1470, Tomás Ó Con Cheanainn (1996, 71–3) saw it as the source of a number of surviving texts in YBL; indeed, he believed (1983) that Giolla Íosa Mac Fhir Bhisigh transcribed the YBL *Táin* directly from LU with omission of the H-interpolations. Such a relationship between LU and YBL (and other North Connacht manuscripts) has not found favour among other scholars and the arguments advanced against such an interpretation have been conveniently assembled recently by Ruairí Ó hUiginn (2015, xviii–xix) and Nollaig Ó Muraile (2015, 198–203).

Particularly illuminating with regard to the relationship between LU and YBL is Máire Herbert’s analysis of *Aided Nath Í* ‘The Violent Death of Nath Í’, a text preserved in both these manuscripts, as well as in the Book of Ballymote.<sup>26</sup> From a detailed collation of the three witnesses, she concludes (2015, 90) that ‘while all ultimately derive from a common archetype, none is a direct copy of another’. She shows how the additions to the LU copy of *Aided Nath Í*, by both M and H,<sup>27</sup> were made from a version which was also the ancestor of the text in YBL. Herbert (2015, 97) also points to the different approaches taken by M and H to the adding of material to the *Aided*: M’s additions are ‘usually recognisable as secondary’ while H is more concerned with physically making space for the interpolations but is not concerned with distinguishing between them and the original M material. Similarly, Liam Breatnach (2015), in an examination of *Immram Curaig Maile*

25 Strachan and O’Keeffe 1912, ll. 1639–43, 1709 (ll. 1643–708 are taken directly from LU and are not in YBL); O’Rahilly 1967, ll. 1973–83.

26 Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, MS 23 P 12 (compiled c. 1384–1406).

27 Duncan 2015, 51 identifies this writer as H1, the same hand she deems responsible for the *Táin* interpolations.

*Dúin* ‘The Voyage of Máel Dúin’s Coracle’ (preserved in LU, YBL, Harleian MS 5280,<sup>28</sup> and partially in Eg.), presents detailed evidence to show that the text scribed by M in LU differs significantly from those in YBL/Harl.; that the YBL/Harl. texts are not copied directly or indirectly from LU; and that the YBL/Harl. copies and the part of the *Immram* scribed by H—identified by Duncan (2015, 51) as H3—must derive from the same ultimate source. Thus, both Herbert and Breatnach would posit an earlier source underpinning YBL and parts of LU.

This idea of an earlier source, while it contributes to our understanding of how the first recension of the *Táin* was created, still leaves some important issues unresolved. Similar to *Aided Nath Í*, a significant number of the later additions by M to the *Táin*—many listed by Tomás Ó Con Cheanainn (1983, 176–7)<sup>29</sup>—would seem to come from an earlier source underpinning LU and YBL. More significantly, however, the picture that emerges for the H-interpolations—which in the examples adduced by Herbert (H1) and Breatnach (H3) are seen to derive from such a source—will not work for the first recension of the *Táin* because, as we have seen, apart from some minor exceptions these additions to the LU copy are not present in the version in YBL. We will need to compare the entire range of H’s interventions against the extant versions of these texts in YBL (and in other manuscripts) to identify the variety of sources at his disposal. Such an undertaking might help to give non-palaeographical support for the separation of H into a number of different scribes as articulated by Elizabeth Duncan, and to help in their stratification. Finally, in this regard it is salutary to remind ourselves of the comments of the editors of the YBL recension of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Strachan and O’Keefe, 1912, x) who argue that the ‘text of the YBL... apart from orthographical peculiarities... is, on the whole, superior to that of the LU’.

## Conclusions

The aim here is not to dismiss the importance of the H-interpolations in LU and the notable role they play in our understanding of the make-up and development of the *Táin* narrative complex, particularly as later additions are often as traditional and significant as earlier ones. Nevertheless, I believe that these interpolations have been given undue prominence in our analysis of the first recension of the *Táin*. Despite the fact that they are later additions—though not significantly later if we accept the reasonably early date advanced for H and the fact that he was reworking pre-existing written materials—the central importance attached to these H-interpolations is predicated on their survival in our oldest manuscript witness to the text. If they were present only in YBL (even if they contained materials

28 British Library, London, MS Harleian 5280 (early 16th century) [Harl.].

29 He interprets the evidence of these glosses differently, however, believing (p.175) that the YBL *Táin* ‘was redacted directly’ from the interpolated text of LU.

dated linguistically early), it is my opinion that they would not have cast the same shadow over scholarship on the *Táin*. Similarly, if only a later copy of the LU *Táin* had survived, the physical singularity of these interventions would not be as observable and they would have taken their place—fully integrated into the text, ironically enough—with other scribal interventions present in the narrative, some recognised as such, some which have probably remained unidentified. However, comparison with other manuscripts, particularly YBL, would always have brought the substance of these particular passages and their additional nature back into focus.

Although an early generation of scholars saw H's interventions in the first recension of the *Táin* (and in LU in general) as 'rude and violent' (Best and Bergin, 1929, xvi), nevertheless, they saw these additions as forming an integral part of the text as we see from the editions of Strachan and O'Keeffe (1912, vii), and O'Rahilly (1967, xxv–xxxvi). The language of the H-interpolations—early materials both linked together and to the central narrative by short sentences and brief passages of Middle Irish which H may have composed—shows us that the written and oral 'matter of Ulster' was a rich and bountiful source in the Middle Irish period, one which had much to add to any telling of this epic, in essence to create another multiform of the original.<sup>30</sup> All the interventions by H are of significance; none should be ignored. However, the fact that they must occupy a central place in an edition of LU, or of the LU *Táin*, should not blind us to the fact that we might need to be more circumspect about their inclusion in any critical edition of the first recension. We might follow the 'Guidelines for Editors of Scholarly Editions' published by the Modern Language Association, where its summary of the editorial discipline reads: 'the scholarly edition's basic task is to present a reliable text: scholarly editions make clear what they promise and keep their promises'.<sup>31</sup>

## Abbreviations

**A:** The scribe who wrote *c.* 12% of *Lebor na hUidre*; some texts including *Táin Bó Cúailnge* were begun by A and completed by M (the reverse does not occur).

**Eg.:** British Library, Egerton MS 1782.

**H:** The interpolator in *Lebor na hUidre*; *c.* 28% of the manuscript is in his hand. Gearóid Mac Eoin (1994) believes that H may have been a member of the Roscommon Uí Mhaoil Chonaire scribal family. It has recently been suggested

<sup>30</sup> For discussion, see Slotkin 1978–9, 449–50.

<sup>31</sup> Published by the Committee on Scholarly Editions (2006, 23–46, 47–9, at 48). I wish to thank Prof. Máire Herbert and two anonymous reviewers for their perceptive comments on the final draft of this article.

by Elizabeth Duncan (2015) that H actually represents the work of six different scribes.

**Harl.:** British Library, London, MS Harleian 5280.

**LL:** Trinity College Dublin MS 1339 (*olim* H 2 18), The Book of Leinster.

**LU:** Royal Irish Academy MS 1229 (*olim* 23 E 25), Lebor na hUidre.

**M:** The principal scribe of Lebor na hUidre, responsible for writing c. 60% of the manuscript.

**O'C.:** Maynooth, Russell Library MS 3a1 (O'Curry MS 1).

**TBC1:** C. O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension 1* (Dublin, 1976).

**TBCY:** J. Strachan and J.G. O'Keeffe, *The Táin Bó Cúailnge from the Yellow Book of Lecan with Variant Readings from the Lebor na hUidre* (Dublin, 1912).

**YBL:** Trinity College Dublin MS 1318 (*olim* H 2 16), The Yellow Book of Lecan.

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