CHAPTER FIVE

TRISTAN AND EARLY MODERN IRISH ROMANCES: JAMES CARNEY'S *UR*-TRISTAN REVISITED

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James Carney's *Studies in Irish Literature and History*, published over sixty years ago, comprises nine chapters, which all support the general thesis that '[…] early Irish written work has the character of written work. It is a literature based in part upon oral tradition, but the assumption that it is oral tradition in any very full sense cannot be made.'[1] Indeed, Carney argues that 'Irish literature has […] approximately the same relationship to the European literature that preceded it – whether Christian or classical – as has Latin to Greek.[2] By diminishing the input of native, oral tradition in Irish literature, and positing learned external models for many Irish texts thought of as traditional, Carney departed from what he regarded as having been the heretofore dominant 'nativist' view which considered Irish literature to be largely the product of the native Irish (and therefore originally pre-Christian) imagination.[3]

As was to be expected, reviewers of Carney's book were critical of his basic tenet. But they were also selective with regard to the sections in the book they assessed. Gerard Murphy, for instance, focused his review on four chapters: 'I. Composition and Structure of *Táin Bó Fraích*', 'III. The Irish Elements in *Beowulf*', 'VIII. The External Element in Irish Saga', and 'IX. Patrick and the Kings'.[4] Conn Ó Cleirigh, though he concentrated in his review on 'II. *Táin Bó Fraích* and *Táin Bó Cuailnge*', 'IV. Suibne Gelt and 'The Children of Lir', 'V. The *Vita Kentegerni* and the Finding of the *Táin*', as well as IX,[5] also made a crucial methodological observation which can be applied to the whole book:

> The basic tenet, on which rests the whole structure of argumentation concerns the nature of literary relationship. It is maintained throughout that this relationship between tales, or more accurately between *motifs*, can only be thought of in terms of literary borrowing. In other words, if what is assumed to be the same *motif* occurs in two stories, then one story must have borrowed from the other, and the only task of the literary historian is to determine the direction of the borrowing.[6]

Joseph Szövérffy, though calling Carney's book a 'battle cry', and 'one of the most controversial of modern Irish scholarship', viewed the work in a more positive light, but also raised points of criticism as far as methodology and execution were concerned. His review,

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[1] Carney, *Studies*, 322.
[2] Ibid., 312.
[3] For a recent critical assessment of both sides of the nativist *vs* anti-nativist debate, see Wooding, 'Reapproaching the Pagan Celtic Past'.
[4] Murphy, Review.
[5] Ó Cleirigh, Review.
[6] Ibid., 165.

shorter than the others, has no particular focus but touches on the chapters on *Táin Bó Fraích,* Saint Kentigern, and Suibne. He was the only reviewer to mention (although very briefly) the chapter 'VI. The Irish Affinities of *Tristan*', stating that it posed a problem which '[…] must be elaborated in separate books before final assessments of the questions can be made.'[7] Apart from Szövérffy's brief remark, the *Tristan* chapter has gone without comment in the reviews of Carney's book. It will be my first task, therefore, to supplement the existing reviews by giving an assessment of this chapter,[8] before making a counter-proposal as far as the Irish affinities of *Tristan* are concerned.

THE TRISTAN CHAPTER

In 'The Irish Affinities of Tristan', Carney reconstructed and discussed what he believed to have been the insular origins of the Continental Tristan material. At the centre of Carney's Tristan argument are a number of medieval Irish and Old Norse tales which, when certain salient motifs are combined, present us—*mutatis mutandis*—with the skeleton of the Tristan romance. Following the order in which Carney discussed them, the tales in question are:

Tochmarc Treblainne 'The Courtship of Treblann' (twelfth century)[9]
Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin 'The Story of Cano son of Gartnán' (late tenth century)[10]
Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne 'The Elopement of Diarmaid and Gráinne' (thirteenth or fourteenth century)[11]
Comracc Liadaine ocus Cuirithir 'The Meeting of Liadan and Cuirithir' (ninth century)[12]
Scél Baili Binnbérlach mac Búain 'The Story of Baile the Sweet-Speeched Son of Búan' (eleventh century)[13]
Tochmarc Becfola 'The Courtship of Becfola' (late ninth/early tenth century),[14]
Iartaige na hIngine Colaige do Grécaib 'The Fate of the Wicked Daughter of the Greeks' (twelfth century?)[15]

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[7] Szövérffy, Review, 55.
[8] While Carney revised some of his tenets in later publications, he does not seem to have revisited the Tristan question. See Carney, 'Early Irish Literature: The State of Research', 127-8.
[9] Dating by Jennings, 'A Translation of the *Tochmarc Treblainne*'. See edition in Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften'.
[10] Dating by Binchy, *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin*, xi.
[11] Edited and translated in Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmuda agus Ghráinne*. On the date, see Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht*, xiv. Although it should be noted that the earliest manuscript of the text dates from the seventeenth century. Note also the recent discussion in Breatnach, 'Transmission and Text'.
[12] On the date, see Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics*, 82. Edition complete with poems, and translation, in Meyer, *Liadain and Curithir*. I will not discuss *Liadan and Cuirithir* (as Carney referred to the story) any further here: I find the connection to both *Tristan* and other Irish stories so superficial and tenuous that further discussion would only serve to obscure our understanding of how all these tales may be related. Carney himself stated of this text (*Studies*, 220): 'This story is confused and improbable'. He compares the ending of Liadan dying upon Cuirithir's flag stone (for prayer), and the fact the Cuirithir went to sea, and that Liadan died near the sea to the death of Tristan and Iseut near the sea in Brittany, and to their union in death. In my opinion, there is nothing to suggest that Liadan and Cuirithir were actually united in death, and that both couples died near the sea does not seem a strong connection to me.
[13] This story has been edited and translated numerous times: Meyer, *Hibernica Minora*, 84; Meyer, 'Scél Baili Binnbérlaig'; Hull, 'The Text of *Baile Binnbérlach mac Buain*'. A translation can be found in Dillon, *The Cycles of the Kings*, 27-28. See also the discussion on the date of the text in Murray, 'Some Thoughts', 84-5.
[14] This is the date given in the most recent edition of the tale in Bhreatnach, 'A New Edition of *Tochmarc Becfhola*'. Since Bhreatnach addresses Carney's arguments in relation to *Tristan* (ibid., 65-6), I will not discuss *Tochmarc Becfola* further here.
[15] Since no official title is given in the manuscript, Carney referred to this text simply as *Ingen Ríg Gréc* 'the daughter of the king of the Greeks'. For the sake of simplicity, I will use Carney's title when discussing this

Kormáks saga (Iceland, thirteenth century)[16]
Longes Mac nUislenn 'The Exile of the Sons of Uisliu' (eighth century)[17]
The Woman without Laughter (Chinese)[18]
(*Tochmarc Emire* 'The Courtship of Emer'; eleventh century)[19]

Carney believed that these tales not only share motifs with *Tristan*, but also seem to be related to each other on a thematic level, most noticeably by featuring the tragic love-triangle element.

TRISTAN – SOURCES FOR COMPARISON

Any comparison between the romance of Tristan and other texts is complicated by the fact that there is no single original Tristan text but numerous versions, and that each version (complete or fragmentary) seems to have been based on an anterior model of some sort. The earliest Tristan texts are written in Old French, Middle High German, and Old Norse and date from the second half of the twelfth century up to the beginning of the thirteenth. On the French side are the fragmentary accounts of the Norman poet Béroul, and of the Anglo-Norman poet Thomas of Britain, a lay called *Chèvrefeuille* ('Goatleaf') by Marie de France, two so-called *Folies Tristan*, as well as the short extracts *Tristan Rossignol* and *Tristan Menestrel*.[20] While Béroul's text did not find any imitators as far as we know, Thomas's

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text. The title *Iartaige na hIngine Colaige do Grécaib*, used by previous editors of the tale, is taken from the last line of the text which states, *rop é trá iartaige na hingine colaige do Grécaib in sin* 'that, then, was the fate of the wicked daughter of the Greeks'. See the diplomatic edition of the sole witness, TCD Ms H 2. 18 (the Book of Leinster), in Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, v, 1224-6. The tale was also edited on its own, first with a translation into French in d'Arbois de Jubainville, 'Mélanges: *Ind ingen colach*' (where the editor also refers to an unpublished German translation by Rudolf Thurneysen); and a second time, without translation, in O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, i, 413-15. An English translation is still wanting. The tale's inclusion in the Book of Leinster supplies a *terminus ante quem* of c. 1150 for this tale, but no proper linguistic study has yet been published. Note further, the French translation and brief comparative discussion in Koehler, 'II. Le conte de la reine qui tua son senechal'.

[16] Referred to as *Kormákr and Steingerd* throughout the chapter. This saga was written prior to or around 1220. See Jónsson, *Íslendinga sögur*, viii. While *Kormákr* may be indebted to Irish literature in a more general fashion, its relationship to *Tristan*, and therefore to any putative *ur-Tristan*, appears very weak. Carney states that '[t]his story has most points of comparison with *Liadan and Cuirithir*' (*Studies*, 228). This saga will not be discussed any further here.

[17] Edited in Hull, *Longes Mac nUislenn*.

[18] See Carney, *Studies*, 237-40. Carney states that he included this story because it 'may prove useful for comparative purposes' (ibid., 236). But the points of comparison really only apply to the Deirdriu story, not to *Tristan*. Carney summarises these as follows: '[...] in each case a beautiful ill-starred girl born to a court servant is destined to bring evil to the kingdom; her death is sought at first but she eventually marries the ruler of the kingdom; circumstances bring her to the position where she is "the woman who does not laugh"; in each tale the heroine's melancholy is the feature that leads to the final tragedy—her falling into the hands of a man who in her eyes is a barbarian, and her consequent suicide' (ibid. 236-237). As, in my opinion, the Chinese example has no bearing on the *Tristan* comparisons, it will not be discussed any further here.

[19] This tale is discussed only in a so-called 'Additional note', which seems to be an *addendum* to the main argument, (see further below). For an edition of the Middle Irish recension of *Tochmarc Emire*, see van Hamel, *Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories*, 16-68.

[20] All of these have most recently been edited, with English translation, in Lacy, *Early French Tristan Poems*. *Tristan Rossignol* forms part of a poem called *Le Donnei des Amants*, and tells how Tristan imitates the song of birds. *Tristan Menestrel* forms part of Gerbert de Montreuil's Fourth Continuation of Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*. In this short extract, Tristan comes to the court of Mark and Iseut disguised as a minstrel. In my list, I have not included the lengthy work that is the Prose *Tristan*, the thirteenth-century prose reworking of the legend, which features Tristan as one of the knights of King Arthur, as well as many sub-plots and side quests. For an edition of this text, see Curtis, *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*.

poem was adapted, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, by an Anglo Norman monk by the name of Brother Robert, working at the court of the Norwegian king Hákon IV. This text, known as *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* (c. 1226), is the sole complete witness of Thomas's version of the story.[21] Thomas's poem was also the source of one of the German adaptations of the Tristan legend, namely Gottfried von Strassburg's unfinished metrical version *Tristan* (c. 1210).[22] The second German adaptation, which is of significance to Tristan studies in general, is Eilhart von Oberge's late-twelfth-century Middle High German poem *Tristrant*,[23] the earliest complete account of Tristan's story, and a work independent from Thomas's poem, but which seems to share some traits with the Béroul version. Carney nowhere discusses or even acknowledges this textual complexity, although he notes, at one point, that Eilhart's poem best represents the Continental material.[24]

While the Continental accounts differ with regard to detail, the basic storyline is the same: Tristan, the nephew of King Mark of Cornwall, frees Cornwall from a tribute levied by Ireland when he slays the Irish warrior Morholt. He subsequently goes to Ireland to obtain the hand of Iseut, the daughter of the King of Ireland (and the Morholt's niece), in marriage on Mark's behalf after ridding the country of a poisonous dragon. On the voyage to Cornwall, the young people consume a love potion and fall uncontrollably in love with one another. After arriving in Cornwall, they must not only hide their love affair from the King, but also from Tristan's enemies at the court. After their affair is finally discovered, the lovers flee to the forest until – through the intervention of a hermit – the king agrees to take Iseut back and banishes Tristan. After a further few trysting episodes between the lovers, Tristan leaves Cornwall and settles in Brittany where he marries another woman named Iseut but does not consummate the marriage. One day, Tristan is fatally injured following a battle and only Iseut of Cornwall can heal him. He sends for her and she travels to Brittany. Because of the jealousy of the second Iseut, however, Tristan is led to believe that Iseut of Cornwall has forsaken him and he dies of his wounds. The first Iseut, hearing that her lover has died, also dies of grief.

BÉDIER, SCHOEPPERLE AND CARNEY

Carney was not the first scholar to investigate the Celtic origins of the Tristan legend, nor was he even the first Celticist to do so.[25] Two seminal studies which need to be mentioned in this context are Joseph Bédier's reconstruction of what he thought to be the original version of the Tristan romance, a text he called the *estoire*;[26] and Gertrude Schoepperle's two-volume study of Tristan, in which she revises many of Bédier's statements and engages at length with Celtic material which she thinks could underlie at least some part of the Continental sources.[27] While all studies later than Bédier and Schoepperle are, no doubt, to some extent

[21] Lacy, *Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 474. See also the most recent edition of the text in Kalinke, *Norse Romance I: The Tristan Legend*.
[22] Lacy, *Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 206-11.
[23] See edition in Bußmann, *Eilhart von Oberg*.
[24] Carney, *Studies*, 190. For Schoepperle's work, see below.
[25] See, for example, Thurneysen, 'Eine irische Parallele zur *Tristan*-sage'; Deutschbein, 'Eine irische Variante der *Tristan*-sage'.
[26] Bédier, *Le roman de Tristan par Thomas*.
[27] Schoepperle, *Tristan and Isolt*.

indebted to these two scholars,[28] Carney's contribution to the subject makes a vital addition to the entire Celtic-Tristan hypothesis.[29] Carney believed that, given that a certain number of Irish tales show a striking similarity with the Continental Tristan material, these Irish tales must themselves be derived from an *ur-Tristan* version, a text at a further remove even than Bédier's reconstructed *estoire* – a Celtic *estoire*, so to speak. This proto-Tristan he believed to have been 'originally produced at a time and in an area where Irish and British culture met, in other words southern Scotland, between the years 700 and 800 A.D.'.[30] He further stated that this 'tale was highly complex and represented the full cultural background of the author: it was at the same time Gaelic, British, Classical, and Oriental'.[31] As for the traces it has left behind, Carney argued that 'it survives, on the one hand, in forms in which it was adapted in the twelfth and thirteenth century for French- and German-speaking audiences; on the other hand it survives in several adaptations which were made in Ireland, or at any rate in the Gaelic area, between 800 and 1150 or 1200 A.D.'[32] Carney summarised the content of the *ur-Tristan* as follows:

> The original story told of an old king, Mark, who had a young and beautiful wife, Isolde. Isolde fell in love with Tristan, a young man who was a favourite, or a near relative of the king. She urged her love upon him but he refused to betray the king. Eventually, by some form of coercion, involving his honour, she induced him to fly to the forest with her. But although he fled with her, for a long time he resisted that act which could connote his final betrayal of Mark. When they sleep he puts his sword between them. One day, water splashes on her thigh and Isolde makes a bitter comparison between the splash of water and her companion. Tristan's honour is compromised and he yields to her. The king pursues them. The hermit, Ogrin, intervenes and convinces Mark of their innocence. Isolde is taken back and forgiven but Tristan must leave the court. Now there is a long period of intrigue in which the lovers deceive the king. They are discovered and Tristan is banished overseas. Before they part, Isolde gives Tristan a ring, which, if he ever needs her he is to send to her. Tristan is wounded in combat by a poisoned spear, and it is apparent that none can cure him but Isolde. He sends her the ring reminding her of their love: he is wounded and will come to her. If he has survived the voyage the ship will show white sails, but if he dies the sails will be black. The boat is sighted and Mark comes to Isolde with the news. In an access of jealousy he tell her that the sails are black. When she receives this message she commits suicide by throwing herself from the rocks and her head is smashed into small pieces.

[28] Carney only makes a fleeting reference to Schoepperle's study, saying that he used her synopsis of Eilhart's *Tristrant* for his comparison (189 n. 1); no mention is made of Bédier.
[29] For the most recent treatment of this subject, with a focus on Fenian material, see Nagy, 'The Celtic "Love Triangle" Revisited'.
[30] Carney, *Studies*, 196.
[31] Ibid., 197.
[32] Ibid.

> When Tristan finds her dead he immediately dies of his wounds and of grief. The lovers are buried in adjacent graves and their union in death is symbolised by a vine that grows from Tristan's grave and intertwines with a rose-bush growing from Isolde's.

It may be stating the obvious to say that there are methodological concerns with this reconstruction and that Carney's *ur*-text, as it stands, probably never existed in either oral or written tradition. Moreover, while Carney seemingly fit as many *Tristan* motifs as possible into the above synopsis, there are further motifs which he did not include. A quick run-through of motif overlap (Tristan *vs* Irish tales; Irish tales *vs* Irish tales) follows:

Tochmarc Treblainne is not directly connected to *Tristan,* as Carney admits himself, but it is connected to *Scéla Cano* by means of what Carney variously called 'the deliberate suppression of a favourable sign', or the 'death of the lovers through interference of a third party',[33] or, in a more specific manifestation, 'the External-Life-Principle' motif.[34] Treblann receives from Fróech a coffer which contains his *cloch comshaeguil* 'Stone of Equal Life', which breaks when Fróech dies. When Midir casts a spell on the coffer so that the stone appears to be broken, Treblann dies of grief. In *Scéla Cano*, Créd sees a wounded Cano and thinks him dead. She then smashes her head against a rock thereby breaking the stone of life which Cano had given her and killing herself in the process. Cano dies as a result of the stone breaking.[35] The interference of a third party further occurs in *Baile Binnbérlach* : the Ulsterman Baile and the Leinster woman Aillenn fall in love with each other despite never having met. They agree to meet at Ros na Ríg, but on Baile's journey there, he meets a mysterious figure called an *elpait*,[36] who tells him that Aillenn has died. Baile dies upon hearing the news and the *elpait* then rushes to Aillenn to inform her of Baile's fate. At that, she, too, expires. What connects the accounts of the death of both lovers in these texts, and in turn connects them to *Tristan*, is a two-step pattern: 1. the death of the first lover is brought about through the interference of a third party, or in Créd's case, the misinterpretation of a situation (i.e. Cano is wounded, not dead, when she sees him): Midir interferes with the coffer and Treblann dies, Créd believes Cano is dead, the *elpait* tells Baile that Ailenn has died; 2. the death of the second lover is the direct result of the death of the first: this is absent in *Tochmarc Treblainne* since Fróech dies in a fight with Cú Chulainn (as told in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*), not in a fight with Midir, Cano strictly speaking dies as a result of his life stone breaking, not because he learns that Créd has died, the *elpait* proceeds to Aillenn and tells her that Baile has died. Carney believed that this motif, that is, the External-Life principle, and the interference of a third party are manifested in *Tristan* in the motif of the black and white sails: when Tristan is wounded and only Iseut of Cornwall can heal him, the ship which returns from Cornwall is to hoist white sails if she is aboard, but black sails if she is not. Through the jealousy of the wife Iseut, Tristan believes that the sails are black and dies. Iseut of Cornwall dies when she sees that Tristan is dead.

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[33] Carney, *Studies*, 204.
[34] Ibid., 204; 206; 214.
[35] Ibid., 215.
[36] This word seems otherwise unattested in Irish; it has been translated in Quin et al., *Dictionary of the Irish Language* as 'phantom, apparition, hobgoblin'.

Tochmarc Becḟola shares with *Scéla Cano* the postponement of a union: Cano promises to marry Créd once he has assumed the Scottish throne; the warrior Flann promises to make Becḟola his wife once he has attained the kingship. In turn, there is a parallel between *Scéla Cano* and the *Tóruigheacht* in the use of a sleeping potion by both heroines to gain access to the hero. This sleeping potion was, according to Carney, replaced by the love potion in the Continental *Tristan*: 'In *Diarmaid* and *Cano*, the heroine urges her suit when she has put all the company, except the hero, asleep with a sleeping draught. For this the Continental adapter substituted a potion *which made the lovers love each other equally*'.[37] He therefore attributes the same function to the sleeping draughts in *Scéla Cano* and in the *Tóruigheacht* as to the love potion in *Tristan*. I do not find this example very convincing. The sleeping potion in the *Tóruigheacht* and *Scéla Cano* and the love potion in *Tristan* do not have anything in common apart from the obvious fact that they are both potions. But the function of the potion in the first two is very different *vis-à-vis* the third. In the *Tóruigheacht*, Gráinne uses the potion to make possible her and Diarmaid's escape. The potion has no aphrodisiac effect on Diarmaid; indeed he continues to resist Gráinne's advances for some time out of loyalty to and fear for Finn. Similarly, in *Scéla Cano*, the sleeping potion does not stop Cano from delaying the union with Créd until he has accomplished his political goals.

The fate of the handmaiden, then, connects *Tristan* with both *Tochmarc Becḟola* and *Ingen Ríg Gréc*: in the first, *Becḟola*'s handmaid is devoured by wolves, but is later found alive, much to Becḟola's joy. In *Tristan* (in both Thomas and Eilhart), Iseut fears that Brangien, who sacrificed her own virginity to the king on Iseut's wedding night, may disclose her lady's secret, and decides to have her slain. But the two serfs she tasks with the murder show mercy and spare the young woman. When Iseut, now regretting her decision, hears of this, she is overjoyed. In *Ingen Ríg Gréc*, the Greek king's daughter, having been betrothed at birth, sleeps with another man, and asks her maid to assume her role in the nuptial bed in order to cover up that the fact she had already lost her virginity. She later has the maid slain.[38] For Carney, there was no doubt 'that a tale such as *Ingen Ríg Gréc* lies behind the Brangien episode'.[39] But apart from this motif, there is not much that *Ingen Ríg Gréc* has in common with *Tristan*: the love triangle is defunct since the princess is not yet married when she sleeps with one of the male servants in the household (*gilla cáem ro baí issin tegluch*).[40] There is no old king; the Greek princess is betrothed do a young man born on the very same knight as herself (*mac berar i n-oenaidchi fri ingin*). The affair with the *gilla* does not seem to mean much to her, since she suffocates him under her bedding (*marb in fer buí fon cholcaid*) in order to conceal the truth from her father. She then hires a churl (*bachlach mór*) to dispose of the body, and ends up pushing that man off a cliff along with the dead body. After her handmaiden has taken her place in the nuptial bed, and has successfully duped her husband, the princess wants to take her rightful place, but the handmaid refuses, saying that everyone should see the man she has slept with (*co n-accara cách in fer condranic frim*). At that, the princess tries to set the house on fire (*coro lassa a tech*). When this fails, she sends the handmaid to fetch water from a well and drowns her in it. This tale is very different in

[37] Carney, *Studies*, 202.
[38] Ibid., 231.
[39] Ibid., 189 n. 1
[40] *Ros carastar-si didiu gilla cáem ro baí issin tegluch* 'a man of the household, then, loved her' (*LL* 36337).

sentiment from *Tristan*. Although Iseut fears that Brangien may betray her, she feels remorse for her actions later. Meanwhile, the Greek princess is simply getting rid of *any* witness of her wrong-doing, essentially committing three murders and attempting a fourth. She confesses her actions to a cleric, and the new king (after her father's death) has her locked in a wooden house without doors and only small windows for seven years, after which she is given a church and lives out her life in piety.

The ending of Carney's *ur*-Tristan is obviously lifted from *Scéla Cano* and the Deirdriu story, since each of the heroines commits suicide—after either knowing or believing that her lover has died—by smashing her head against a rock. While this is a strong argument for connecting Cano with Deirdriu, there is no connection to *Tristan*. Connections between the Deirdriu story and *Tristan* seem rather superficial on the whole. Carney thought that their resemblance consisted in what he called 'the basic situation', namely that an 'old king has a beautiful young wife who forces her love on a young man who is bound in loyalty to her husband',[41] but the same 'basic situation' is also present in, for instance, the plot of *Fingal Rónain*.[42] Carney further cites the lover's 'flight to the forest' as one of the Tristan motifs, but at Raymond Cormier has shown, the exile of Noísiu and his brothers with their whole entourage, is hardly comparable to the lovers' sylvan exile in *Tristan*.[43]

While the Deirdriu example may indeed seem rather vague, a more specific parallel is afforded by the ending of *Baile Binnbérlach* and Marie de France's *Chèvrefeuille*. When Baile and Ailenn are buried far apart, a yew tree grows out of Baile's grave, and an apple tree out of Ailenn's. A poet's tablet was then made from each of the trees, and at the feast of Samain in Tara, both tablets sprang together *amail fet[h]lind im urslait* 'like honeysuckle around a green branch'.[44] In Marie's lay, the same metaphor is used for how inseparable Tristan and Iseut are: *D'eus deus fu il tot autresi/comme du chievrefueil estoit qui a la coudre se prenoit,* 'It was quite the same for the two of them as it was with the honeysuckle that clung to the hazel tree'.[45]

The Irish tale which has received the most attention with regard to its possible connection to *Tristan* is the fourteenth-century *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*. Carney believed that, though the extant text is late, the actual story dated to as early as the year 900 and he therefore grouped it with *Scéla Cano*, *Liadan and Cuirithir*, *Tochmarc Becḟola*, and *Scél Baili*.[46] That the story of the love affair between Diarmaid and Gráinne, and their flight from Finn, was known since the tenth or the eleventh century, is evident from the medieval Irish tale lists, as well as from texts like *Tochmarc Ailbe* 'The Courtship of Ailbe',[47] the commentary to *Amra Choluim Chille*, and *Úath Beinne Étair*, which relates how Diarmaid and Gráinne were hiding in a cave, when an old woman tries to betray them to

[41] Carney, *Studies*, 235.
[42] Greene, *Fingal Rónáin*, 3-12. The most recent translation of the tale can be found in Koch & Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age*, 274-82.
[43] Cormier, 'Remarks', 312-13.
[44] Meyer, '*Scél Baili Binnbérlaig*', 223.
[45] O'Gorman, 'Marie de France, *Chèvrefeuille*', 190-1. Likewise, the ending of the romance in Eilhart's version has a rose bush growing out of Iseut's grave and a vine out of Tristan's. See Schoepperle, *Tristan and Isolt*, 65.
[46] Carney, *Studies*, 195.
[47] See edition in Thurneysen, '*Tochmarc Ailbe*'.

Finn.[48] Nessa Ní Shéaghdha believed that this short text originally formed part of what the tale lists call *Aithed Grainne re Diarmaid* 'The Elopement of Gráinne with Diarmaid' (list A), or *Aithed Grainne ingine Corbmaic la Diarmaid ua nDuibne* 'The Elopement of Gráinne Daughter of Cormac with Diarmaid ua Duibne' (list B).[49] While this proves that the love triangle story of Diarmaid, Gráinne, and Finn was known at a date anterior to the earliest Continental Tristan texts, we cannot automatically assume that the *Aithed Grainne* told the story in exactly the same way as the *Tóruigheacht* does.[50]

It is true that there exists a particularly close resemblance of motifs between the *Tóruigheacht* and *Tristan*.[51] Not only does the former feature a period of exile in the woods, such as was experienced by Tristan and Iseut, but two further motifs resemble the Continental material very closely. The first is the 'proof of chastity' motif, which occurs in Béroul, Eilhart, and Gottfried:[52] during Tristan's and Iseut's exile in the forest, Tristan places a sword between himself and Iseut while they are sleeping. They are found in this position by Mark, who takes the separating sword as a sign of their chastity and innocence. While the sword does not actually represent the lovers' chastity in *Tristan*, but merely makes the King *believe* that they had not slept together, Diarmaid tries to prove his *actual* innocence in the *Tóruigheacht*. On at least two occasions, Diarmaid leaves cooked meat and fish behind *gan aon-ghreim do bhuain as* 'without a single bite taken out of it', so that Finn may know that he has not sinned with Gráinne.[53] The reluctance on Diarmaid's part to betray Finn lasts until the splash-of-water incident—the second motif which finds a close parallel in *Tristan*. When water splashes on Gráinne's thigh one day, she remarks that the water is bolder than Diarmaid himself, and the young man finally gives in to her.[54] Practically the same incident is related in *Tristan*: When water splashes on her thigh during a horseride, Tristan's wife (the second Iseut), states that the water is bolder than her husband, implying that Tristan has not consummated their marriage. While this incident occurs in both Thomas and Eilhart,[55] we cannot know whether it also occurs in Béroul, since the fragment of text breaks off long before this scene.

Herein, then, lies the difficulty in comparing the story of Diarmaid and Gráinne to the Tristan legend. Which version of *Tristan* are we comparing the *Tóruigheacht* to? Likewise,

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[48] Most recently edited in Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht*, 130-37. While Ní Shéaghdha states that this text stems from the eleventh century in her introduction to the *Tóruigheacht* (ibid., xii), it is given as tenth century in her appendix. This was also the dating of Meyer, *Fiannaigecht*, xxiv.

[49] Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht*, 130. See also Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, 46, 56.

[50] This is also the opinion of Ó Cathaisaigh, '*Tóraíocht*', 32: 'Scéal atá luaite san dá liosta, glactar leis gurbh ann dó c. 1000 A.D. [...], rud nach ionann agus a rá, i gcás *Aithed Gráinne le Diarmait*, go raibh sé ar aon dul leis an *Tóraíocht*.'

[51] More recently, Joseph Nagy has refined some of Schoepperle's arguments on the connection between *Tristan* and *fianaíocht* is general, by investigating hero's and lover's leap. For example, he has compared Tristan's leap from the chapel in the Béroul text (Lacy, 'Béroul's *Tristan*', 50-1) to Finn's leap in *Feis Tighe Chonáin*. See Nagy, 'Tristanic, Fenian, and Lovers' Leaps', 163.

[52] Although Gottfried states several times that he is faithfully representing Thomas's *Tristan*, the scene of the forest is not contained in Brother Robert's *saga*, which is also based on Thomas's work. It therefore may, or may not have featured in Thomas's *Tristan*. For this scene, compare Lacy, 'Béroul's *Tristan*', 86-7, 94-5; Schoepperle, *Tristan and Isolt*, 33; 430.

[53] Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht*, 32-3. Schoepperle notes that, in a Modern folktale version of the story, Diarmaid put a cold stone between himself and Gráinne. See Schoepperle, *Tristan and Isolt*, 430.

[54] Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht*, 46-7.

[55] Gregory, 'Thomas's *Tristan*', 64-5; Schoepperle, *Tristan and Isolt*, 41.

which version of the *Tóruigheacht* are we comparing *Tristan* to? Both Schoepperle and Carney, though independently from one another, seem to have been guilty of a fair amount of motival cherry-picking in their Tristan discussions:

> 'Indeed, Gertrude Schoepperle succeeded in offering a Celtic analogue for nearly every incident found in the French Tristan stories, all of which sheds light on the fact that similar motifs existed in early legends of various countries. Not unmindful of Tristan's own resourcefulness, Miss Schoepperle seems often to have chosen her version of the *Tristan* according to her need for the source of a particular incident.'[56]

Carney was equally liberal with regard to his sources since he operated on the premise that the version of the 'Diarmaid and Gráinne' story which is anterior to *Tristan*, namely the lost *Aithed Grainne re Diarmaid*, faithfully reflects the content of the Early Modern *Tóruigheacht*. But herein lies the issue: we cannot know anything of the *Aithed* beyond what the title suggests, namely that Gráinne eloped with Diarmaid. This may be the reason, then, that Carney—at least as far as the *Tóruigheacht* is concerned—actually disproved his own theory in the end.[57] See the following statements:

> (1) *Diarmait* and *Baile* are so close to the primitive *Tristan* that it is unnecessary to assume any intermediary version.[58]
>
> (2) *Diarmait*—next to Tristan the fullest version of this triangular drama—cannot, to my mind, be the source, direct or indirect of the Continental *Tristan*. Underlying this latter is the primitive British *Tristan* […][59]
>
> (3) The manner in which the patterns closely follow each other, and the common 'splash of water' feature, suggest immediate derivation of one from the other rather than a more distant relationship.'[60]

These statements contradict one another. If *Diarmait* (using Carney's designation) is based directly on the primitive British *Tristan* (1), and the Continental *Tristan* is also based on the primitive British *Tristan* (2), then one of the two stories cannot be based on one the other (3). But if (3) is true, and *Diarmait* is based on *Tristan*, then (1) cannot be true. And if (3) is true and *Tristan* is based on *Diarmait*, then (2) cannot be true. And in line with Carney's third statement, the occurrence of the 'splash-of-water' incident in the *Tóruigheacht* can more easily be explained as having been borrowed from the Continental *Tristan* (as it occurs in

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[56] Cormier, 'Open Contrast', 591.

[57] Another disadvantage to Carney was that he made use of the edition of the *Tóruigheacht* by O'Grady's who, unfortunately, took certain liberties with the text, most notably with the ending. On this compare Cormier, 'Open Contrast', 594: 'The conclusion (in which Gráinne marries Fionn) of O'Grady's text is an aberrant one, with no support from Irish manuscript or oral tradition.' This mistake was then adopted by Carney (*Studies*, 218: 'Gráinne mourned Diarmait. But later she becomes reconciled to Finn and remained with him until she died.'), and also impacted his subsequent analysis: 'But here we are treated to the anti-climax of Gráinne going back to Finn as his wife. The whole ending of the tale is probably a good example of a failure to resolve the conflict between the story-pattern and the background material [....] The adapter of the *Tristan* to a Fenian background was faced with the problem: how am I to make Diarmait die as a result of the machinations of the jealous king (Finn) when everybody knows that he was slain by the Wild Boar of Ben Gulban? This is solved by making Finn and Diarmait hunt the Wild Boar together and by inventing for Finn a magic property, failure to use which makes him *morally* guilty of Diarmait's death. Some pre-existing tradition (possibly genealogical) may have made it impossible for Gráinne to die without living some years with Finn' (ibid., 219-20).

[58] Carney, *Studies*, 195.

[59] Ibid., 193.

[60] Ibid., 219.

Thomas and Eilhart),[61] rather than from any putative British source. While it may be tempting to focus on the similarities which exist between the *Tóruigheacht* and *Tristan*, this focus has tended to lead to an over-simplification of the nature of the source material, and has therefore distorted our perception of the interrelationship between these texts. While the *Tóruigheacht* and *Tristan* are very much alike in theme, they are often very different in execution or intent, and any future investigations into their relationship would do well to bear those differences in mind.[62]

As an afterthought to his chapter, Carney added an 'Additional Note', in which he discussed one further text as part of his Tristan hypothesis.[63] Initially, in his reconstructed text, Carney had left out the account of Tristan's origin and his combats with the Morholt, and with the dragon, since '[n]one of the Irish tales under consideration offer any critical material for the early part of the Tristan story'.[64] Carney believed this to be because 'the Irish material has borrowed from the primitive Tristan story only the elements of the love story and the early part was ignored'.[65] But within the same paragraph he conceded that 'there is incontrovertible evidence that even this part of the story was known in Ireland, and an adaptation of Tristan's dragon fight is found in *Tochmarc Emire*'.[66] The episode in question occurs in the second recension of *Tochmarc Emire*, the story of Cú Chulainn's courtship of Emer, in which Cú Chulainn rescues a Hebridean princess from three Fomoire. This princess, simply known as *ingen Rúaid*, was to be given to the Fomoire as tribute, when Cú Chulainn arrived. After fighting all three attackers in single combat, Cú Chulainn is wounded and leaves the scene without identifying himself to the girl. Later, at the fort of Rúad, many others boast of having killed the Fomoire, but Cú Chulainn is recognized by the girl and is offered her hand in marriage. The *ingen Rúaid* episode bears structural resemblance Tristan's fight with the Morholt (when he stops of tribute of young boys and girls exacted on Cornwall), and the fight with the dragon (when the Iseut's hand in marriage is the reward for the deed).[67] It also features an otherwise unknown character called Drust mac Seirb whose name is at least etymologically connected to that of Tristan.[68] Carney (and after him Rachel Bromwich) saw in the episode in *Tochmarc Emire* a reflex of what they called 'The Dragon Slayer' and the legend of Perseus and Andromeda respectively.

Carney believed that *Tochmarc Emire* should, in the end, be considered alongside those Irish texts which borrowed from the British *ur-Tristan*. He even went so far as to suggest that it is the only Irish text which reflects the early part of the Tristan legend –

[61] See Cormier, 'Open Contrast', 593: 'Given, then, the relative lateness of the surviving Early Modern Irish versions, Arthurian scholars must be ever careful of possible back influence from the French *Tristan* stories.'
[62] Cormier ('Open Contrast') has all but systematically refuted many of the perceived connections between the *Tóruigheacht* and *Tristan*, and has cautioned that '[f]uture scholars will ignore at their peril the substantial differences between Tristan and Diarmaid. Misguided simplicity has tended to obscure the internal complexities of the Irish story' (ibid., 600).
[63] Carney, *Studies*, 240-2.
[64] Ibid., 197 n. 1.
[65] Ibid., 240.
[66] Ibid. He later added that this theme 'has undoubtedly been borrowed from the legend of Perseus and Andromeda' (ibid., 241). I consider the story of Perseus and Andromeda to be a potential model for the rescue episode in *Tochmarc Emire.*
[67] For these scenes in *Tristan*, see Eilhart's, Gottfried's, and Brother Robert's work. This part of the story does not survive in Béroul or Thomas.
[68] Newstead, 'The Origin and Growth of the Tristan Legend', 125.

namely, Tristan's winning of Isolt. He further concluded, in a footnote, that 'the whole complex story of *Tristan* belongs to the primitive stage and that there was comparatively little addition of incident by the continental adapters'.[69] But a more likely possibility – and Gaston Paris made this suggestion many years before even Bédier published his study of the *estoire*[70] – is that the part of the Tristan story which deals with Tristan's fight with the Morholt and the dragon was more likely to have been attached to the Tristan legend on the Continent. In my own research into the occurrence of the Dragon Slayer tale-type (known as AT 300 or ATU 300), I have not found any evidence for its existence and dissemination in the British Isles before the year 1100. [71] This means that at least as far as the Dragon Slayer episode is concerned, British evidence is insufficient to corroborate Carney's assertion.[72]

The above analysis has served to show that the Irish (and Icelandic) tales which Carney uses for comparison either could not, or were extremely unlikely to, have stemmed from a putative British *ur-Tristan*. It would have been necessary to show that a text such as the one he postulated not only existed in the eighth century, and independently of the texts said to have borrowed from it, but also contained all the *motifs* present in the Irish texts. The Tristan of this putative text, following Carney, would have to have been at the same time a Cano, a Fráech, a Diarmaid, a Noísiu, a Baile, a Cuirithir, a Cú Chulainn (or Drust), etc. But when we look at the various parts of the reconstruction it is noticeable that the whole seems to be no more than a pastiche of Tristan motifs overlapping with the same or similar motifs found in Old and Middle Irish texts, and arranged in a sequence so as to create what looks like a Tristan narrative.

The question which remains is, could such a primitive text still have underlain the Continental *Tristan* sources? Although he does not discuss the Continental sources in any way, Carney's theory not only relies on the existence of a putative British *ur-Tristan*, but also on a unified text which reconciles all the early French and/or German versions of the story, much like the idea of the *estoire* as developed by Bédier. But even the medieval authors themselves, like Béroul,[73] Marie de France,[74] and Gottfried[75] stress that, at the time when they were composing their own Tristan texts, there already existed many versions both written and oral, and in different languages. This means that it is equally possible that there never existed a single unified Tristan account, either in oral tradition or in writing. And if the concept of a *single* Continental (including Anglo-Norman) *Tristan* is already problematic, how can anyone argue that there was a single unified *Tristan* text at an even further remove?

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[69] Ibid., 240 n. 1.
[70] Paris, 'Romans en vers du cycle de la Table ronde', 116; cited in Bédier, *Le roman de Tristan par Thomas*, ii, 181.
[71] Theuerkauf, *The Celtic Dragon Slayer*, 180-212.
[72] That *Tochmarc Emire* is an adaptation of Tristan's dragon fight was an idea ultimately based on Deutschbein, 'Eine irische Variante'.
[73] See the following quote from Lacy, 'Béroul's *Tristan*', 64-5: *Li contor dïent que Yvain/Firent nïer, qui sont vilain;/ N'en sevent mie bien l'estoire, Berox l'a mex en sen memoire*, 'Some common storytellers say that they drowned Yvain, but they do no know the true story, and Béroul remembers it better than they.'
[74] O'Gorman, 'Marie de France, *Chèvrefeuille*', 188-9: *Plusor le m'ont conté et dit/et je l'ai trové en escrit/de Tristan et de la roïne,* 'Many have told and recounted it to me and I have found in writing accounts of Tristan and the queen, [...]'
[75] See Jackson, 'Gottfried von Strassburg', 146.

The absence of evidence for the Dragon Slayer story pattern in Britain and Ireland before the Modern period, raises another important question with regard to the *ur-Tristan*. If the Irish evidence Carney cites cannot confirm the existence of this putative British *Tristan*-prototype, is there any British evidence, which can? While Carney did not involve Welsh sources in his attempt to prove the existence of British *Tristan*, a look at the Welsh Tristan evidence will shed light on this matter.

THE *AITHED* STORY TYPE AND POSSIBLE WELSH EVIDENCE

Daniel Binchy, in the introduction to his 1963 edition of *Scéla Cano*, could not quite resist the temptation to make a pointed remark in Carney's direction, saying that '[t]he hunt for the *Ur*-Tristan goes merrily on, and […] there does not seem to be the remotest likelihood of his ever being caught, […]'.[76] His opinion has been seconded more recently by Kevin Murray in his discussion of *Baile Binnbérlach*, where he casts doubt on whether the 'relationship between *BBmB* and an unattested "Ur-Tristan" […] can be investigated in any meaningful way'.[77] We know that Carney's reconstruction of the *ur*-Tristan is based on the *aithed* or 'elopement' story type, on which he thought the Continental *Tristan* was ultimately based. While there is ample evidence for the *aithed* story in Ireland, do we also find such evidence in Wales? In advocating a Cornish background for the Tristan legend, Oliver Padel has indirectly engaged with Carney's Tristan theory:

> As for the presence of Irish tale-types and 'atmosphere' in the Tristan stories, the point remains unproven. Many of Schoepperle's parallels in Irish literature are only approximate, or can also be found in other literatures, or are later in date than the Tristan stories so that any loan could have been the other way around. *Aitheda*, 'elopements', constituted a category of early Irish storytelling, but an elopement could well have occurred in native Brittonic folklore as well. [78]

This suggests that Padel dismisses the evidence of the Irish *aitheda* as having any bearing on the Continental *Tristan*, but—not unlike Carney—he is open to the possibility that a Brittonic *Tristan* could have underlain the Continental romances. This means that the burden of proof remains in Wales.[79]

The list of Welsh texts featuring a character named Tristan, in any shape or form of the name, is short. And the list of those sources within that group which can be said to be – if not earlier than – at least contemporary with the Continental Tristan material is even shorter. Our earliest piece of evidence is found in a thirteenth-century manuscript, the Black Book of Carmarthen, in which there have survived a few fragmentary verses on Tristan. These verses have been dated to around the year 1100, or possibly earlier, by Rachel Bromwich; but Oliver Padel thinks that they need not be earlier than the twelfth century.[80] It is unclear from the

[76] Binchy, *Scéla Cano*, xvii.
[77] Murray, 'Some Thoughts', 90. For a summary of Celtic Tristan studies, see McCann, 'Tristan'.
[78] Padel, 'Cornish Background', 57.
[79] See, however, Carey, *Ireland and the Grail*. Carey's study of the Celtic and specifically Irish background of the Grail romance has shown that Wales can act as a literary receptacle, digesting Irish motifs and relaying them, in altered form, to the Continent. Of course, the same need not be true for the Tristan romance.
[80] Bromwich, 'The Tristan of the Welsh', 214; cf. Jarman, *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*, lix, lxii. Padel has stated that the poem can 'reasonably be dated to the twelfth [century]; it may be earlier, but need not be' ('Cornish Background', 58 n. 18).

poem who the speaker is and to whom the words are addressed. This person speaks of being cast out and of 'betraying' March. The speaker also addresses a certain dwarf who has caused him or her misfortune. Bromwich suggested that – since the context speaks of the 'betrayal' of March (the Welsh form of the name 'Mark'), and mentions the hostile intentions of a dwarf – this fragment may reflect the 'tryst under the tree' episode, as known from the Béroul fragment, in which the malevolent dwarf Frocin advises Mark on how to trick the lovers into revealing their affair.

The second source containing Welsh Tristan evidence is *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* 'The Triads of the Island of Britain' (*TYP*), which forms part of a mass of triadic literature preserved in Medieval Welsh. While these texts were accumulated over several centuries and have survived in a number of manuscripts, they are usually regarded as going back to a much older oral tradition.[81] Within the Triads, we need to distinguish between the earlier items, and later accretions. Rachel Bromwich suggested that the earliest texts of *TYP* seem to go back to the mid- and later thirteenth century,[82] whereas other texts are only preserved in later manuscripts and may be dated to the fifteenth century. She further proposed that even the earliest Triads were put together at a time 'at which the possibility of external literary influence need be considered, [since] the name of Arthur was already beginning to act as a luminary into whose orbit were drawn the heroes of a number of independent cycles of Welsh narrative: characters both of mythology, and of heroic tradition who may have belonged to different periods and perhaps also to different parts of Britain [...]'.[83]

Altogether seven triads refer to a character named Drystan son of Tallwch or simply Drystan. Out of these seven, Triads 19, 21, and 26 belong to what Bromwich calls the 'Early Version', which is the version contained in the late thirteenth-century manuscript Peniarth 16 in the National Library of Wales. Triads 71, 73, and 80, which also contain references to Drystan, are evidently later and are preserved in the fifteenth-century manuscripts Peniarth 47 and Peniarth 50.[84] Triad 19 names Drystan as one of *Tri Galouyd Enys Prydein* 'Three Enemy-Subduers of the Island of Britain'; the word *galouyd* is also used for Trystan (as he is there called) in a description of his battle-fury in a sixteenth-century prose text, discussed below, in a description of his battle-fury. No separate story survives to describe the battle feats of the other two heroes, despite frequent reference to them by medieval Welsh poets. The Tristan of the Continental romances is also known for various feats in battle, although a battle-fury as such is not described. Drystan's martial prowess is also reflected in Triad 2, which refers to him as one of the *Tri Thaleithyawc Cat Enys Prydein* 'Three Diademed Battle-leaders of the Island of Britain', but no further information is given. Perhaps the most intriguing of the Triads mentioning Drystan in the Early Version[85] is Triad 26, which tells us that Drystan was one of the 'Three Powerful Swineherds of the Island of Britain'. This is the first Triad which also mentions March and Essyllt (as Iseut is known in Welsh), and although their exact relationship is not clarified, we learn that Drystan has arranged a secret meeting

[81] Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, lv.
[82] Ibid., xc.
[83] Ibid., lviii.
[84] Ibid., xxv; xxvii.
[85] However, Bromwich noted (ibid.) that 'this triad is exceptional in that it is unlikely to be wholly independent of influence from the Continental Tristan romances.'

with Essyllt: he pretends to be a swineherd while sending the actual swineherd to deliver his message. This is the earliest text in which Drystan is mentioned as the secret lover of Essyllt, echoing the various trysts and secret meetings between Tristan and Iseut in the Continental sources, specifically those episodes in which Tristan comes to Iseut in disguise.[86] In one of the later Triads, number 71, Tristan is named as one of the *Tri Serchawc Ynys Brydein* 'Three Lovers of the Island of Britain', as he is the lover of Essyllt, wife of his uncle March. But since this Triad, according to Bromwich, could be as late as the fifteenth century, we have to suspect that it was influenced by the Continental sources.

Though many Triads contain further snippets of information referencing characters and tales which have not survived, there is no reference to a particular story about Drystan and Essyllt. The earliest Welsh source which explicitly deals with the affair between Drystan and his uncle's wife, and also involves Arthur as a mediator, is the Late Medieval or Early Modern *Ystoria Tristan*: this is preserved in manuscripts no earlier than the sixteenth century, although it has been suggested that some of the text's verse sections date from up to two centuries earlier.[87] In this short account, Tristan and Essyllt are hiding in the forest from March, who has enlisted the help of his cousin Arthur in settling the affair. But since neither Trystan nor March is willing to give up Essyllt, Arthur proposes that one shall have her while there are leaves on the trees, and the other while there are no leaves on the trees. As the husband, March gets first choice. March chooses Essyllt while there are no leaves on the trees, but as Esyllt points out, some trees are ever-green, and Trystan therefore gets to stay with Essyllt all year around. This story, with its suggestions of seasonal myth, seems very different from the Continental Tristan material, especially since the outcome is a happy one for the couple.[88]

What transpires from the preceding discussion is that the Welsh Tristan evidence does not reflect any part of Carney's *ur*-Tristan, and that there hardly exist any similarities between the Irish material which Carney used for comparison and the Welsh Tristan evidence. Of course, we need to take into account that other material may have been lost. But a second issue is that Carney's *ur*-Tristan is heavily based on the *aithed* story type, and although medieval Welsh literature affords several examples of (tragic) love triangles which can reasonably be argued to be free from Continental influence, even these do not reflect the tone and sentiment of either the Irish stories or the Continental Tristan material. We may note, for instance, the affair of Lleu's wife Blodeuedd with Gronw in the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi* which results in the punishment of the woman and the death of the adulterer, whereas the wronged husband Lleu is restored to full health in the end; or the story of Creiddylad embedded in *Culhwch and Olwen*, in which the heroine married Gwythyr son of Greidyawl, but was abducted by Gwythyr's rival Gwynn son of Nudd on her wedding knight. Arthur settles the account and Creiddylad remains with her father, while her two suitors fight

[86] For examples of such episodes, see Rosenberg, '*Les Folies Tristan*', and Fresco, '*Tristan Rossignol, Tristan Menestrel*'.
[87] See edition and translation in Cross, 'A Welsh Tristan Episode'; also Bromwich, 'The Tristan of the Welsh', 217.
[88] More recently, Jenny Rowland has commented that the final part of the story is reminiscent of 'the *fabliaux* tradition of the *mal mariés*' (Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, 253).

every May Eve, and the one to conquer on Judgement Day is given the girl.[89] While there are two male contestants for a woman in each of these examples, they do not seem to have anything in common with either the Irish *aitheda* or the Continental *Tristan*.

Love triangle stories *per se* occur too commonly in European literature, for it to be possible to argue for any particular point of origin; and in the absence of Welsh evidence reflecting even a part of Carney's reconstructed text, it becomes doubtful whether an area which – at least so far as we know – did not feature story types of the *aithed* kind such as we find in Ireland, could have produced a Tristan *ur*-text with a basic structure following the elopement paradigm. The chiasmic truism that absence of evidence does not constitute evidence of absence should always be borne in mind, but with the addendum that current absence of evidence cannot be used to argue for erstwhile presence of evidence. If we forget this, the argument becomes circular and we run the danger of falling into the metaphorical rabbit hole of spurious *Quellenforschung*, which, in the best-case scenario, might simply lead us back to our point of departure. In light of all of these considerations, I would be inclined to reject the idea of Carney's primitive British *ur-Tristan* completely.[90]

BÁS CHEARBHAILL AGUS FHEARBHLAIDHE

While seeking the Celtic origins of *Tristan* in lost oral or written tales from Britain or Ireland will surely prove to be a fruitless and ultimately disappointing expedition, this does not mean that Ireland never had its own *Tristan*.[91] Although the literary *Tristan* wave which swept across Europe from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries did not seem to have left in its backwash a medieval Irish translation or adaptation,[92] its later ripples may yet have been felt in Ireland in the form of an Early Modern romance (other than the *Tóruigheacht*). This romance is *Bás Chearbhaill agus Fhearbhlaidhe* (*BCF*) 'The Death of Cearbhall and Fearblaidh',[93] which recounts the tragic love affair between the Scottish princess Fearbhlaidh, daughter of Séamus king of Scotland,[94] and the Irish poet Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh.[95] The text has

[89] See the edition of this tale in Bromwich and Evans, *Culhwch ac Olwen*, 35-6. A translation of this passage can be found in Gantz, *Mabinogion*, 168.

[90] I am, however, inclined to follow Carney in thinking that the Irish tales which he brings to bear in the *Tristan*-comparison seem to be related to each other on some level.

[91] To my knowledge, the first translation into Irish of the Tristan story was that by Donn Sigerson Piatt, published in 1935 as *Scéal Fileamhanta Thristan agus Iseut*. Rather than using any of the medieval sources, Piatt based his translation on Joseph Bédier's reconstructed (i.e. artificial) romance *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut*. In the preceding year, Piatt had published a translation of a play based on the story, written by Bédier in collaboration with Louis Artus. See Bédier and Artus, *Tristan et Iseut*.

[92] There seems to be only one example of a direct translation into Irish of a French romance, namely from the Old French *Queste del Seint Graal*. This was translated into Irish as the Early Modern *Lorgaireacht an tSoidhigh Naomhtha*. For a more recent discussion of the Irish *Queste*, see Chapter Two in this volume.

[93] Other titles found in the manuscript sources are *Eachtra ⁊ Bas Cerbaill Uí Dhálaigh ⁊ Farbhlaidhe inghine riogh Alban* ('The Adventure of and Death of Cerball Ó Dálaigh and of Farbhlaidh, the Daughter of the King of Scotland'), or simply *Tochmharc Fhearbhlaidhe* ('The Wooing of Fearbhlaidh'). The text has been edited three times, see Ó Neachtain, '*Tochmarc Fearbhlaidhe*', 47-67, based on Royal Irish Academy MS 24 P 12; further Walsh, 'Bás Cearbhaill agus Farbhlaidhe'. The third and most recent edition, by Siobhán Ní Laoire, has been extensively criticised for errors of language and editorial policy, but provides the most detail with regard to the literary background, recensions, and reception of the romance. See Ní Laoire, *Bás Cearbhaill agus Farbhlaidhe*. And English translation of the text can be found in Doan, *The Romance*, 49-76.

[94] This character may have been based on James I, king of Scotland from 1401-1437. See Doan, *The Romance*, 34.

survived in twenty-four manuscripts from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, but was probably composed by an Ó Dálaigh poet between 1406 and 1555.[96] In his discussion of the romance, James Doan identified various Irish themes (like *tochmharc*, *aisling*, *gealtacht*, *searg*, as well as the *eachtra*) primarily connected with love and love sickness. Indeed, various passages have strong connections to specific Old and Middle Irish tales. Direct reference is made to *Tochmarc Étaíne* 'The Courtship of Étaín', as the titular heroine (Fearbhlaidh) is able to trace her ancestry through the kings of Scotland to Conaire Már, and through Conaire and his mother Mess Búachalla back to Étaín.[97]

Since this text has not received any critical attention recently,[98] and has, to my knowledge, never been discussed in Tristan scholarship, I give a detailed synopsis here:

(i) Fearbhlaidh, daughter of Séamus, had previously been wooed by the kings and lords of Europe, but without success. Fearbhlaidh sees Cearbhall in a dream, falls in love with him and sets out to find the man in her vision. Fearbhlaidh and her nurse travel in the shape of doves to the Burren in Clare (considered an otherworldly dwelling in the story) to find Cearbhall. The lovers meet and spend three days together, after which Fearbhlaidh and her nurse return to Ireland.

(ii) News spread across Europe that Fearbhlaidh has returned from the Otherworld, but Cearbhall is left with many ills after her departure, which cannot be cured. Fearbhlaidh possesses a magic stone which can cure many illnesses, and asks her father to be allowed to send it to Ireland to cure Cearbhall. Cearbhall receives the stone and is cured.

(iii) When Cearbhall and his father Donnchadh, and a group of the best students of poetry, arrive at the court of the Scottish king, Cearbhall is asked to play the harp. He plays weeping music, laughing music, and sleeping music, and once the host is asleep, Cearbhall and Fearbhlaidhe spend time together and lament the fate which separates them.

(iv) Another time, the king asks Cearbhall to play chess, and Cearbhall wins without fail. Cearbhall's foot is extended below the table, and while he thinks that he is caressing Fearbhlaidh's foot on the other side, he is scratching the king's foot instead. At that point, Séamus realises what sort of relationship exists between Cearbhall and his daughter; he becomes enraged and decides to have the entire company of the poets executed. But Cearbhall's uncle tells the king that Cearbhall never plays a chess game without scratching someone's foot, thereby saving everyone's life. Cearbhall remains in the king's company for another month, at the end of which, we are told, the affair with the king's daughter is finally discovered and Cearbhall condemned to death.

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[95] Probably based on a poet of that name, who died in 1404. See Ní Laoire, *Bás Cearbhaill*, 22. And Doan, *The Romance*, 35.
[96] Ní Laoire, *Bás Cearbhaill*, 23. Doan, *The Romance*, 9, gives 1450 as a possible date of composition.
[97] See pedigree in Doan, *The Romance*, 17.
[98] An exception is Toner, 'An File in Bás Cearbhaill agus Farbhlaidhe'.

(v) Fearbhlaidh later bribes the prison guards and puts herself in Cearbhall's clothes, and he in hers. Thus Cearbhall escapes as Fearbhlaidh, and Fearbhlaidh stays behind in the prison in Cearbhall's place. Cearbhall escapes to Ireland just in time, and when Séamus sends for Cearbhall to be executed the next morning, he realises that it is Fearbhaidh who has taken his place. While the situation is resolved by laughter on all sides, Séamus lets Cearbhall know that the affair is not over: he sends a messenger to Ireland saying that Cearbhall will be executed, should he ever set foot on Scottish soil again. Cearbhall is given a drink of forgetfulness by his family so that he may not remember his love for Fearbhlaidh.

(vi) Then the Connachtmen advise him to marry, and Cearbhall marries Ailbhe, daughter of Conchobhar, king of the Uí Mhaine. These things are told to Fearbhlaidh, who loses no time and travels to Ireland with her nurse. She writes a poem on Cearbhall's harp with her own blood. When Cearbhall enters after his wedding feast, he reads the verses and remembers Fearbhlaidh, going into a frenzy. And he starts playing the verses on his harp all night, forgetting about his wife in the next room.

(vii) The next morning, Ailbhe arises and complains about Cearbhall neglecting her during her wedding night. People approach Cearbhall about this but he just keeps on playing the harp and reciting Fearbhlaidh's verses. When the men grab the harp, he stays silent and does not look at them. For a fortnight, his men try to get him to come to his senses, but to no avail. They finally leave him alone.

(viii) Fearbhlaidh and her nurse, however, stay with Cearbhall until this is discovered and a guard set on them. From then on, the lovers meet secretly by the shore of the river Suck, where Fearbhlaidh and her nurse come in the shape of two swans. One day, Cearbhall's herdsman sees the swans and hits one with a stone, so that he breaks its wing. At that, Cearbhall kills the herdsman and laments the injured swan – that is, Fearbhlaidh's nurse. Then Cearbhall has a magical ship made, which brings Fearbhlaidh and her nurse back to Scotland so that the nurse can recover.

(ix) When Séamus hears about his daughter and Cearbhall meeting in this wise, he plots the destruction of Cearbhall. One day, he asks two Irish messengers to tell Fearbhlaidh that Cearbhall has died of a wasting sickness. When Fearbhlaidh hears the news, she collapses dead over her chessboard. In his grief, the king threatens to hang the two Irishmen who brought the news, but they remind him that this act would violate the truth of the sovereign.[99] Séamus concedes, but asks the Irishmen to deliver news of his daughter's death to Cearbhall, so that he too may die of grief.

(x) The messengers travel back to Ireland and find Cearbhall at his father's house. When they deliver the news of Fearbhlaidh's death, Cearbhall collapses over

[99] This is the *fír flathemon* in Irish and already well attested in Old Irish literature. It dictates that a king must make true judgements in accordance with the laws at all times. Should he give a false judgement, his reign will end and – in most cases – so will his life.

his harp, and the Connachtmen do not consume any food or drink for three days to mourn him.

I think the synopsis makes it obvious that if only *BCF* had had Old and Middle Irish antecedents, it would surely have founds its way into Carney's discussion. Indeed, the story is not that much younger than the *Tóruigheacht*, especially if the date of composition can be said to be as early 1406. But unlike the *Tóruigheacht*, the main protagonist seems to be based on a historical figure.[100] This does not mean that a resemblance to *Tristan* was not noticed. Indeed, Proinsias Mac Cana was the first to make that connection. He saw in *BCF* a 'type of Early Modern composition which seeks to give an edifying twist to traditional themes', and that '[i]t tells, in a mixture of comedy and tragedy, of the love that Cearbhall and the daughter of the king of Scotland bore each other and how it was finally frustrated in a Tristan-style dénouement.'[101] In his discussion of the romance, James Doan has also noticed certain parallels to the Tristan legend. He notes that Cearbhall's frenzy ([vi] above), upon remembering his love for Fearbhlaidh is close in style to the *Folies Tristan*,[102] and that the death of the Cearbhall and Fearbhlaidh is like that of Tristan and Iseut.[103] Both of these examples led Doan to suspect that 'there has been non-Irish influence upon the development of this romance'.[104]

I think that Doan's fleeting references to *Tristan* can be expanded upon here. In fact, *Tristan* and *BCF* share more than the two examples noted: there are secret meetings between the lovers, eventual discovery, the threat of death, the musical abilities of the male protagonist, the healing abilities of the female protagonist, the marriage to another woman to forget the love and the torment caused by the relationship to the first, the failure to consummate the marriage because a sign or symbol reminds the protagonist of his first love, the death of the first lover through the malicious intervention of a third party, the resulting death of the second lover upon hearing the news of the death of the first.

All of these motifs combined give the skeleton of the Tristan legend. I think that the episode of the Cearbhall's unfulfilled marriage in particular is close to *Tristan*. In *BCS*, the Connachtmen advise Cearbhall to forget Fearbhlaidh and marry Ailbhe, daughter of the king of Uí Mhaine. Likewise, Tristan, trying to forget Iseut, marries Iseut of the White Hands of Brittany. But on his wedding night, he beholds the emerald ring which Iseut had given him and is seized by guilt and torment. Tristan, then, does not sleep with his wife. In *BCF*, when Fearbhlaidh hears that Cearbhall is to be wed to another, carves a poem on his harp. When Cearbhall sees the poem, he knows that it is Fearbhlaidh who wrote it, and, like Tristan, he does not sleep with his wife. Iseut of Brittany complains that her husband has neglected her and Tristan is reproached on that account. Similarly, Ailbhe complains to the Connachtmen about Cearbhall not consummating the marriage and they reproach him.

[100] On the figure of Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh in the Irish folk tradition, see Doan, 'Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh as Archetypal Poet', and Doan, 'Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh as Craftsman'.
[101] Mac Cana, 'The Sinless Otherworld of Immram Brain', 104; 105.
[102] Doan, *The Romance*, 12.
[103] Ibid., 13.
[104] Ibid., 31. But compare Bruford, *Gaelic Folk-tales*, 26.

While the particular scene just described finds no parallel elsewhere in Irish literature, many of the other episodes in *BCF* are deeply steeped in references, overt or implied, to early Irish tales in particular. And the fact that the reader was supposed to be reminded of Irish tales predominantly, is demonstrated through the genealogy which connects Fearbhlaidh with Étaín. In fact, Doan, has noted parallels not only with *Tochmarc Étaíne*, but also with *Cath Maige Tuired* 'The Battle of Mag Tuired', *Táin Bó Fraích* 'The Cattle Raid of Fróech', *Táin Bó Cúailnge* 'The Cattle Raid of Cooley', *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* 'The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel', *Serglige Con Culainn* 'The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn', *Aislinge Óengussa* 'Óengus's Dream-Vision', and *Tochmarc Emire* 'The Courtship of Emer' and *Aided Derbforgaill* 'The Violent Death of Derbforgaill'[105] For example, the scene of Fearbhlaidh and her nurse coming to Cearbhall in the shape of birds, and the nurse being hit by a herdsman ([i] and [viii]) is strongly reminiscent of a scene in *Tochmarc Emire* in which Derbforgaill and her handmaid come to Cú Chulainn in the shape of swans, and Cú Chulainn hits one of them with a stone from his sling.[106] But it also reminds the reader of a similar scene in *Serglige Con Culainn*, in which two Otherworld women come to Cú Chulainn in the shape of birds, and Cú Chulainn makes a similar cast at them.[107] Or again, when Cearbhall plays the harp for Séamus, he plays weeping music, laughing music, and sleeping music (point iii. above). In *Cath Maige Tuired*, Lug mac Ethlenn plays the same three kinds of music for the host at Tara.[108] And we can also note the Old Irish example from *Orgain Denna Ríg* 'The Destruction of Dind Ríg', in which Labraid Loingsech can only get past the guardians of his future wife (specifically her mother) through the *seinm súantraige* 'sleeping music' of the harper Craptine.[109]

While all these similarities between *BCF* and other Irish texts are striking, this need not mean that the author of *BCF* had all these tales in mind when composing his romance. Many of the similarities seem to be based on stock motifs found in many Irish texts. An exception here, no doubt, is *Tochmarc Étaíne*, since Fearbhlaidh is explicitly compared to her ancestress Étaín. Likewise, while certain parts of *BCF* are strongly reminiscent of the Continental *Tristan*, this need not mean that any particular Tristan text was used as a source for *BCF*. And if *Tristan* was an inspiration to the author of *BCF*, then perhaps no more than it was the author of the *Tóruigheacht* (most notably in the 'splash-of-water' incident). Indeed, at the time of composition of *BCF*, *Tristan* had become one of the most popular romances in medieval and early Modern European literature, and the character was now fully part of the Arthurian literary fabric. It is therefore not inconceivable that learned men in most parts of Europe, shy of having read a particular *Tristan*, at least knew the basic outline of the tale.

Carney, J., 'Early Irish Literature: The State of Research', in G. Mac Eoin, ed., *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Celtic Studies* (Dublin, 1983), 113-130.

[105] See Doan, *The Romance*, 19-29.
[106] The same scene is also recounted in *Aided Derbforgaill*. See Ingridsdotter, *Aided Derbforgaill*, 81-2. A similar scene also occurs in the *dindšenchas* of Snám Dá Én, see Gwynn, *MD*, iv, 350-1. My thanks to Joseph Nagy for this reference.
[107] See Dillon, *Serglige Con Culainn*, 2-3 (§§ 7-8).
[108] Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, 42-43.
[109] Greene, *Fingal Rónáin and other stories*, 21. My thanks to John Carey for this reference.