

CORRIGENDA and ADDENDA
for
THE ESSENTIAL TÁIN BÓ CÚAILNGE
AND OTHER STORIES FROM THE ULSTER CYCLE (2025)

Last updated: 15 September 2026

During the copyediting and proof stages for *The Essential Táin Bó Cúailnge and Other Stories from the Ulster Cycle*, starting in late 2024, it became less and less possible to add new notes and citations while also making sure that the text was correct and ready to publish. Although my editor Max Uphaus (thank you again!) was incredibly gracious about my many last-minute requests, for some things it was just too late—and anyway, scholarship is always marching on.

Here are corrections and additions I would make if I were free to edit the book today. This list will be updated periodically but I’m not sure if I plan to continue past 2026 (trying to maintain a comprehensive bibliography on the Ulster Cycle is beyond the scope!), although these changes would be made in a second edition of the book if there is one. If you notice any other issues or become aware of anything I should add, please email me at mwboyd@fdu.edu.

<u>Page</u>	<u>Correction/addition</u>
22	“Although we have names for some of the scribes who worked on the manuscripts” could obviously have been much expanded. In particular, I don’t mention the role of “Interpolator H,” who made significant edits to <i>Lebor na hUidre</i> , relevant not only to the <i>Táin</i> but to “The Birth of Cú Chulainn” and other texts. I considered this a complication too far for readers new to early Irish literature who might also not be familiar with medieval scribal practices. But if this topic interests you, see, for example, Kevin Murray, “H and the First Recension of the <i>Táin</i> ,” <i>Studia Celtica Fennica</i> 14 (2017), 129–140, online at https://journal.fi/scf/article/download/60857/38325/108740 .
30–32	For more detail on the “many authors of the Revival” mentioned here, try the bibliography for Joseph Dunn’s 1914 translation, conveniently available at https://mythopedia.com/library/tain-bo-cuailnge-dunn-1914/works-on-the-tain-bo-cuailnge/ .
32	For the murals in Belfast, see also https://extramuralactivity.com/in-the-shadow-of-cu-chulainn/ and https://petermoloneycollection.com .

- 33 Among recent adaptations of the *Táin*, I might have also mentioned Alan Titley's *The Táin: The Great Irish Battle Epic*, illustrated by Eoin Coveney (Dublin: Little Island, 2023).
- There are also reports of an Irish-language *Táin* film in development, e.g. <https://nos.ie/cultur/scannain/obair-tosaithe-ar-scannan-beochana-tain-bo-cuailnge/>. The latest update, at <https://dearcanmedia.org/latest-projects/>, states that this will be “a 26[-minute] animation produced for TG4 and the BBC with the support of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund, Coimisiún na Meán and the BFI tax credit” with a planned release in March 2026: “an ambitious animated rendering [...] based on Darach Ó Scoláí’s approach to the original Irish language text, alongside the animation skills of John McCloskey, the multiple award-winning author and illustrator.”
- 41–42 The history and archaeology of Bruig na Bóinne and Temair (Tara) are now discussed in wonderful detail by Patrick Gleeson, *Landscapes of Kingship in Early Medieval Ireland AD 400–1500* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2025).
- 45 While *Ulidia 5* still doesn’t seem to be advertised or offered for sale on the publisher’s website, <https://www.curach-bhan.com/>, you can now download the entire book, under a Creative Commons license, from <https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/id/eprint/21811/1/Malone%20-%20Stifter%20-%20Boyle%20-%20ULIDIA%205%20-%202024.pdf> (linked at <https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/id/eprint/21811/>). (The book gives 2024 as the year of publication, but this seems disingenuous to me.) The book is full of exciting contributions relevant to many points in my introduction and commentary.
- 70, note While Fergus Kelly’s *Guide to Early Irish Law* is generally authoritative and Charlene Eska made mostly-compatible statements in her introduction to *Cáin Lánamna* (see pp. 8, 22, 23n89, 72), the quoted position on the prevalence of polygyny as a historical matter has been questioned in the last decade. See Liam Breatnach, “On old Irish collective and abstract nouns, the meaning of *cétmuintir*, and marriage in early mediaeval Ireland,” *Ériu* 66 (2016), 1–29. But in the note on p. 163 I think I am still correctly representing Toner’s argument.
- 91 Katherine Scheidt, presenting on “Abortion in *Compert Con Culainn*” at the 2025 Harvard Celtic Colloquium, found that previous scholars and translators seemed less than willing to identify the outcome of Dechtine’s first pregnancy (Cú Chulainn’s second conception) as a deliberate abortion. She didn’t have access to my translation; but since I don’t actually use the word “abortion,” I should clarify

that that is exactly what I think the Irish is describing, Lambert's idea notwithstanding.

- 117 *Énchenn*, in the name *Éis Énchenn*, is more complicated than it looks. It seems to mean “Bird-head(ed),” by analogy with terms like *Co(i)nchenn* and *Ca(i)tchenn*, which are clearly understood to mean “Dog-headed” and “Cat-headed” especially in reference to monstrous races: see Michael Clarke, “The lore of the monstrous races in the developing text of the Irish *Sex Aetates Mundi*,” *CMCS* 63 (2012), 15–49. But Clarke has argued more recently that in *énchennach*, the *-cenn* element is etymologically “not the familiar *cenn* ‘head’ but the rarer *cenn* or *ceinn* meaning ‘skin, surface’”: see his “*Énchennach*: a study in the terminology of shape-changing,” *Celtica* 33 (2021), 35–58, <https://journals.dias.ie/index.php/celtica/article/view/53/54>. So *Éis* here might have originally been “Birdskin” instead of “Birdhead,” although we can’t be sure what audiences at various times would have understood her epithet to mean.
- 140 The way Deirdre grabs Noísiu by the ears has been explored in more detail by Emmet Taylor in “Love under threat: reconsidering the experiences of Noísiu and Diarmaid,” in *Reconsidering Consent and Coercion: Power, Vulnerability, and Sexual Violence in Medieval Literature*, ed. Jane Bonsall and Hannah Piercy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2025), 147–161, online at <https://www.brepolonline.net/doi/full/10.1484/M.GMS-EB.5.144732>. I could also have specifically cited Sharon J. Arbuthnot, “‘*Da n-ó mele 7 cuitbiuada and so*’: what did Deirdriu say to Noísiu?”, in *Ulidia* 3, 221–230.
- 148 I have a study of “The Wooing of Lúaine and the Death of Athairne” forthcoming in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 44 (for calendar year 2025), under the title “Athirne and the politics of coercion.”
- 154 I don’t know what kind of mental fog I was in or what malign spirit possessed me, but the title “The Raid on Regamon’s Cattle” and the plot summary here are accurate for *Táin Bó Regamain* (Ó Corráin #1107, ninth century). *Táin Bó Regamna* (Ó Corráin #1108, eighth or ninth century) is a different text. Ó Corráin’s summary of *Táin Bó Regamna*:
- Cú Chulainn, awakened by a fearful roar from the north, goes with his charioteer to find its source. He encounters a chariot drawn by a single red one-legged horse in which sits a red woman, with red brows, and a red mantle. She names herself mysteriously. As Cú Chulainn is about to spring into the chariot, she and the chariot vanish, and she re-appears as a black crow. She is Badb, the goddess of death, and she warns Cú Chulainn that, in many shapes, she will bring about his doom.

The note on p. 234 is correct in referring to *Táin Bó Regamna*.

- 155 There is a new edition and translation of *Táin Bó Flíodhaise/The Cattle Raid of Flíodhais* by Lára Ní Mhaoláin (Irish Texts Society, 2025), and also a new edition by Johan Corthals of “The oldest version of *Táin bó Flidais*,” in *Craobh Eolais: a Festschrift for Ruairí Ó hUiginn*, ed. Gregory Toner, Lára Ní Mhaoláin, and Fionntán de Brún (An Sagart, 2025), 23–33.
- 155–156 There is a new edition and translation of *Táin Bó Dartada* by Gregory Toner in *Celtica* 37 (2025), 174–213, <https://journals.dias.ie/index.php/celtica/article/view/96/99>.
- 169 The phrase translated “a tall man” is *fer mór*. I follow O’Rahilly here but take Finn Longman’s point that, given the evidence across different texts that Cú Chulainn is relatively short (at least when not in his distorting *ríastrad*), Fedelm’s intended meaning might have been “a great man”—a small man who casts a long shadow, as it were. Still, Maeve hasn’t met Cú Chulainn yet, so she doesn’t know that, and “a tall (or otherwise physically imposing) man” is almost certainly what she would understand Fedelm to be saying here.
- 180 The pronoun is missing in “When he was six, **he** received his adult weapons.”
- 198, note 1 For the use of *cert*, perhaps instead of “play fair with me” I should have translated “do right by me,” although there isn’t much of a difference in meaning.
- 237, note 2 Finn Longman has a comment on what Cú Chulainn means by *daltán* here: “maybe the use of *daltán* is sarcastic, because he’s pointing out something that seems obvious to him. Or it’s genuine – he’s explaining something (Otherworld beings are only visible to the people they choose to show themselves to and/or you’re a freak with the ability to see through their illusions, Láeg), so he’s positioning himself as a teacher. Watch and learn, kid!” (<https://finnlongman.tumblr.com/post/712794815238209536/an-t%C3%A1in-bot-prompted-some-off-the-cuff-tbc>)
- 237, note 4 Borsje’s “A spell called *éle*” is archived online at https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1766245/127342_Borsje_Ulidia.pdf.
- 284, note 1 Wolfgang Meid’s interpretation of *Correcad lochta & fulachta* (which he proposes to amend to *Con-recat lochtae ocus folochtae*) has actually been published in two places.

The other one is “How not to interpret Old Irish texts: *Táin Bó Cúailnge*: the final verbal exchange between Medb and Fergus,” in *Vácāmśi miśrā kṛṇavāmahai. Proceedings of the international conference of the Society for Indo-European Studies and IWoBA XII, Ljubljana 4–7 June 2019*, ed. Luka Repanšek, Harald Bichlmeier, and Velizar Sadovski (Hamburg: Baar, 2020), 481–486.

286, note 3

“The Stowe version” refers to *The Stowe Version of Táin Bó Cuailnge*, edited by Cecile O’Rahilly (DIAS, 1961).

293

Bettina Kimpton has self-published a revised edition of her work: *Cú Chulainn’s Death: A Critical Edition of Brislech Mór Maige Murthemni* (2024, ISBN 979-8-9896763-1-6, available on Amazon). To the extent that her Irish text may now be different, my translation may not entirely match it. Daniel James Watson’s contribution to *Ulidia 5*, “The ends of the earth: *Brislech Mór Maige Muirthemni* and Augustinian hagiography,” 73–107, online in the full book (see for p. 45 above) and also at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/395267733_The_Ends_of_the_Earth_Brislech_Mor_Maige_Muirthemni_and_Augustinian_Historiography, goes into wonderful detail on *Cú Chulainn* as a type of Christ, and argues “that even *Cú Chulainn*’s violence, in all its exuberance, is only a dim shadow of that greater, more perfect (and successful) violence which the author locates in Christ” (83–84) at the end of days, which would explain *Cú Chulainn*’s apocalyptic prophecies.

293, note

“The Death of *Cú Roí*” has now also been translated in two versions by Anna Pagé at <https://ulstercycle.hcommons.org/2024/11/04/version-1-of-aided-chon-roi-the-violent-death-of-cu-roi-a-translation/> and <https://ulstercycle.hcommons.org/2024/12/09/version-2-of-aided-chon-roi-the-violent-death-of-cu-roi-a-translation/>.

294, note 1

The “later version” referenced is *Oidheadh Con Culainn*. For a general discussion, see Julia Kühns, “The pre-19th-century manuscript tradition and textual transmission of the Early Modern Irish tale *Oidheadh Con Culainn*: a preliminary study” (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008, online at <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/1236/>). Finn Longman is writing a PhD thesis on this text and comments on it regularly at <https://finnlongman.tumblr.com/tagged/oidheadh%20con%20culainn>, recently stating that “*Lára Ní Mhaoláin* is working on publishing a translation of the earliest full MS, but not for a few years as she’s doing something else first, and I also intend to publish further on it, hopefully including a translation of one or more of the later Cork MSS.” (Also see below for p. 362.)

- 297, note The term translated “lamb-headed,” *úanchenn*, is actually even more complex than represented here, since the *úan-* element could also be ‘foam, froth’ (used to represent pure white, since lambs wouldn’t have been white in Ireland at the time) and the *-cenn* element could also be ‘skin, surface’ as Michael Clarke argues for *énchennach* as mentioned above—so potentially it could refer to heroically white skin, like Cú Chulainn’s on p. 246, as well as curly hair. I still think “lamb-headed” is how an early Irish audience would most likely have understood the word. I’m currently revising an article about this problem that I hope will be published in 2027.
- 312 and 320, notes The head and brain of Mes Gegrai are discussed in more detail by Anna Pagé in “Dangerous heads and posthumous revenge: some parallels for the death of Mess Gegra in *Talland Étair*,” *Celtica* 34 (2022), 7–38, online at <https://works.hcommons.org/records/8qx44-hc123> and referenced in her blog post at <https://ulstercycle.hcommons.org/2024/10/21/athirne-and-the-hoarding-of-resources-in-talland-etair/>.
- 342 The recent literature on **fosterage** includes an article by Kim McCone, “Bringing up boys: four Old Irish terms, Cú Chulainn’s two early birth-tales, and Celtic pederasty,” *ZCP* 70.1 (2023), 131–179, online at <https://kimmccone.org/bringing-up-boys-four-old-irish-terms-cu-chulainns-two-early-birth-tales-and-celtic-pederasty/>. This ultimately focuses on the term *mac-cóem*, which sometimes seems to be equivalent to *dalta*. The case for “pederasty” is worth a look considering the limited evidence for same-sex sexual relationships in early Ireland. (“Limited evidence” is not *no* evidence. The clearest examples are the early Irish lesbian sex case discussed by Dan Wiley, “Niall Frossach’s True Judgment,” *Ériu* 55 (2005), 19–36, and the “carnal love” of the priest Finnchán for the renegade Áed Dub in Adomnán’s *Life of Columba*: see *Coire Sois*, 14–15 and 104–106.) However, Patrick Sims-Williams has responded that “pederasty as an early Irish institution is a fantasy”: see his “Clipboards in paradise: comparative philologists and Proto-Indo-European institutions,” *Celtica* 37 (2025), 1–23 at 12, online at <https://journals.dias.ie/index.php/celtica/article/view/91/94>.
- 352 **Otherworld**: here is where I was able to squeeze in a reference to Joanne Findon’s new book *Bound and Free: Voices of Mortal and Otherworld Women in Medieval Irish Literature* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2024). But the “mortal” section of the book is equally worth looking at: Findon has chapters on “The role of Nes in *Compert Conchobuir*” (see “The Birth of Conchobor”), “Conchobor, Deirdriu, and Lúaine” (see “The Exile of the Sons of Uisliu”), and “Emer’s construction of the hero in *Brislech Mór Maige Muirthemni*” (see “The Death of Cú Chulainn”).
- uncle**: “POB”-uh > “POB-uh”

Leborcham: see now Anna Pagé's post at <https://ulstercycle.hcommons.org/2024/10/21/athirne-and-the-hoarding-of-resources-in-talland-etair/> for more about her, including how (according to "The Wooing of Lúaine and the Death of Athairne," mentioned on p. 148) she gives birth to nine children every year, and kills them so that they don't grow up to threaten her position as Conchobor's messenger.

Lóeg mac Riagabra: Finn Longman has an ongoing interest in this character, most recently represented in "'My only friend is my charioteer': Læg mac Riagabra in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*," *Studia Celtica Fennica* 20 (2024, though actually made public in 2025), online at <https://journal.fi/scf/article/view/125798>. An earlier publication is "Faithful to the end: the changing role of Læg mac Riagabra in *The Death of Cú Chulainn*," online at <https://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/publications/quaestio/back-issues/Quaestio-22.pdf>.