CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Singing in the rain on Hinba? Archaeology and liturgical fictions, ancient and modern (Adomnán, ita columbae 3.17)
Authors	Carragáin, Éamonn O.;Carragáin, Tomás O.
Publication date	2011
Original Citation	Carragáin, É O & Carragáin, T O 2011, Singing in the rain on Hinba? Archaeology and liturgical fictions, ancient and modern (Adomnán, ita columbae 3.17). in E Mullins (ed.), Listen, O Isles, Unto Me : Studies in Medieval Word and Image in honour of Jennifer O'Reilly. Cork University Press, pp. 204-215.
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	https://www.scopus.com/pages/publications/84898246385
Rights	© 2011, the authors and contributors; Cork University Press
Download date	2026-11-17 12:15:18
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/18647

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Singing in the Rain on Hinba?
Archaeology and Liturgical Fictions, Ancient and Modern
(Adomnán, *Vita Columbae* 3.17)

ÉAMONN Ó CARRAGÁIN and TOMÁS Ó CARRAGÁIN

In two major articles, Jennifer O'Reilly has taught us to read Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* in convincing new ways.[1] The essence of her approach is to take seriously Adomnán's spirituality, and hence the literary integrity of his text. Much dominated by nineteenth-century positivism, modern scholarship has all too often fragmented the *Vita Columbae*. All too often, scholars have been reluctant to discuss the signs and miracles, as though they saw them as embarrassing reflections of primitive superstition. Other parts of the text are mined, at times naively, for 'facts' about social and political history, topography, archaeology and whatever else may be of interest to modern scholars. Such fragmentation of the *Vita* is not good scholarly practice. As Jennifer O'Reilly comments in 'The Wisdom of the Scribe':

> However, the same stories which have provided modem historians with glimpses of contemporary book production and have set archaeologists discussing the likely form and location on Iona of Columba's writing-hut, disconcertingly show that Columba's pen, his inkhorn, the vellum on which he wrote, generated marvels and prophecies, and that from his writing-hut he commanded both demons and angels … Such wonders are not presented as an editorial comment on historical episodes but are conveyed through the very narrative; the scribal equipment and activities which Adomnán describes are charged with an other-worldly significance whose precise meaning, it seems, is never spelled out.[2]

Her approach has already been properly influential.[3] We shall apply her approach to a single short chapter of the *Vita*, the concise narrative of how four visiting Irish saints found Columba, not at Iona, but on Hinba, an unidentified island on which there was a monastery dependent on Iona. Adomnán specifies that each of the visitors had, like Columba, founded one or more monasteries: thus we will refer to them as the 'four founders' or, including Columba, the 'five founders'. We quote the Latin text of the chapter from the standard Anderson edition:

> *De columna luminosa sancti viri de vertice ardere visa*
> ALIO IN TEMPORE iiii. ad sanctum visitandum Columbam monasteriorum sancti fundatores de Scotia transmeantes in Hinba

> eum invenerunt insula; quorum inlustrium vocabula Comgellus mocu-Aridi, Cainnechus mocu-Dalon, Brendenus mocu-Alti, Cormac nepos Leathain. Hi uno eodemque consensu elegerunt ut sanctus Colum coram ipsis in ecclesia sacra eucharistiae consecraret misteria. Qui eorum obsecundans jusioni simul cum eis die dominica ex more post evangelii lectionem eclesiam ingreditur. Ibidemque dum misarum sollemnia celebrarentur sanctus Brendenus mocu-Alti, sicut post Comgello et Cainnecho intimavit, quendam criniosum igneum globum et valde luminosum de vertice sancti Columbae ante altare stantis et sacram oblationem consecrantis tamdiu ardentem et instar alicujus columnae sursum ascendentem vidit donec eadem perficerentur sacrosancta ministeria.[4]

We give the English translation by Richard Sharpe, because we will refer throughout the present paper to his excellent introduction to, and commentary on, the *Vita Columbae*:

> *How a column of light seemed to shine from St Columba's head*
> Once, four saints who had founded monasteries in Ireland came to visit St Columba. When they arrived at *Hinba*, they found him there. The names of these famous men were Comgall moccu Araidi, Cainnech moccu Dalann, Brendan moccu Altae and Cormac Ua Liatháin. When the sacred mysteries of the Eucharist were to take place, with one accord they chose St Columba to act as celebrant. He obeyed their command, and with them he entered the church as usual on the Lord's day after the Gospel had been read. There, while the sacrament of the mass was celebrated, St Brendan moccu Altae saw a radiant ball of fire shining very brightly from St Columba's head as he stood in front of the altar and consecrated the sacred oblation. It shone upwards like a column of light and lasted until the mysteries were completed. Afterwards St Brendan disclosed what he had seen to St Comgall and St Cainnech.[5]

Modern scholarship on this narrative exemplifies that fragmentation to which Jennifer O'Reilly refers.[6] Scholars pay little or no attention to the miracle or its function in the narrative. Instead, most of the commentary on the chapter, apart from identifying the four founders,[7] has focused on Adomnán's statement that Columba entered the church at Hinba 'after the Gospel had been read' ('post evangelii lectionem'). Since the nineteenth century it has become traditional to take this statement out of its narrative context and use it to construct what we will suggest is a romantic archaeological-cum-liturgical fiction. For reasons of brevity, we will concentrate on the best synthesis of the modern scholarly tradition, found

in Sharpe's Penguin translation of the *Vita Columbae*. Our disagreement with the scholarly consensus summarized by Sharpe in no way alters our opinion of the importance and usefulness of his work. Since Sharpe's book appeared, Rev. John W. Hunwicke has published a learned article, independently arguing along the same, by now traditional, scholarly lines.[8] However, Michael Ryan has already expressed unease with the consensus: as he reasonably points out, a monastery like Hinba needed a church big enough 'to enable the entire community of monks to assemble within it for divine office'.[9] We share Ryan's misgivings, and wish particularly to challenge the way in which, in the modem scholarly consensus, Adomnán's narrative has been fragmented and misunderstood.

Sharpe comments as follows on Adomnán's statement that Columba 'obeyed their command, and with them he entered the church as usual on the Lord's day after the Gospel had been read':

> As Fowler, p. 147n., observed, this passage shows that the Gospel was read outside the church — 'to persons in the position of catechumens', he suggests. Warren, *Liturgy and Ritual*, p. 99, thought Adomnán referred to an additional Gospel reading immediately before the liturgy itself. I suspect it merely means that there was no sermon between the Gospel and the commencement of the liturgy.[10]

Sharpe then goes on to discuss the architectural reflections of early Christian concepts of the Mass as a mystery: for example, the rood screen, constructed to separate the celebrant from the people. Sharpe then writes as follows of Irish and Scottish churches:

> In many places, including Ireland and Scotland, it was convenient to build churches of very small size in which the priest could perform the liturgy while the faithful remained outside. Under such circumstances it appears that the early stages of the service took place outside, and that for the celebration itself the priest entered the building as he would otherwise enter the sanctuary.[11]

On the other hand, Sharpe acknowledges that we have evidence from Iona, Armagh and Kildare of large churches in which 'a large number of the faithful entered the church'.[12] Of these large churches, Kildare, at least, had a separate screened sanctuary, into which only the clergy and nuns entered.[13] Sharpe concludes his discussion as follows:

> The great majority of churches in Ireland, Scotland and England, however, in the sixth and seventh centuries must have been like that on *Hinba*. Adomnán here provides the evidence for

> how the tiny churches known from archaeological evidence functioned; what is surprising is the implication that the brethren remained outside. This would have been less surprising if this were a church in a pastoral context with only the laity remaining outside.[14]

How true is it the Irish built churches so small that they were intended to serve as sanctuaries, into which only the celebrants entered? How likely is it that at Sunday Mass the liturgical litany, readings and chants, down to and including the Gospel, were intoned in the open air, before the clergy entered the church alone for the Offertory and the Eucharistic action?[15] The view that congregations must have worshipped in the open air has been encouraged by the tendency of scholars to focus on churches which, because they were built at relatively minor sites that often did not achieve parish status in the high medieval period (such as Gallarus, Co. Kerry, and St MacDara's, Co. Galway), have survived in good condition. As a result, such tiny churches have come to be seen as typical, while larger churches at more important sites, which often survive only as vestiges incorporated into parish churches, tend to be overlooked. But early medieval churches in Ireland vary greatly in size, from tiny structures that could house no more than a handful of people to cathedrals of 200 square metres or more internally. The average size of the principal church at sites that went on to be parish centres is 60 square metres, and only a quarter of these are less than 40 square metres. This compares well with the naves of contemporary proto-parish churches in England that, according to Morris, averaged 20–30 square metres in the tenth century and 60–80 square metres from the later eleventh century.[16]

A substantial proportion of these churches are very small. However, this is to be understood, not as evidence that the congregation stood outside, but in the context of the wide variety of ecclesiastical sites in early medieval Ireland. In this period the density of ecclesiastical sites was fur higher than in the high medieval period: by then, many of the minor sites had fallen out of use.[17] These churches were built to serve relatively small communities, which varied considerably in character, from lay to religious to various combinations of the two. The correlation between church size and cemetery size at these sites is very instructive: minor sites with small churches invariably have very small numbers of interments around them despite the fact that some were used for a number of generations. In the case of Illaunloughan, Co. Kerry, all the burials were male, indicating perhaps a tiny monastic community. In most cases, though, these cemeteries are mixed: their small size indicates that they represent one or two families.[18] In early medieval Ireland, a significant proportion of the population was buried in family cemeteries and worshipped in family churches; this practice is in sharp contrast with what prevailed in the later Middle Ages. It is hard to

imagine that the families who built these churches, or the secular patrons of churches at more important sites, would have been happy to stand outside when they were well aware that their peers abroad were protected from the elements. Even if it may possibly, on occasion, have been expedient for part of the congregation to stand outside, there is no reason to believe that Irish churches were designed with this in mind.

The altars in Irish pre-Romanesque churches rarely survive, but their positions seem to be indicated by the position of the south window (there is usually only one south window).[19] An analysis of surviving examples has shown that at major monastic and/or episcopal sites the altars tended to be positioned between half and two-thirds of the way from the west end. This left plenty of room east of the altar, and such spaces may have accommodated a number of assisting priests at Mass and other ceremonies. In contrast, in somewhat less important churches, altars tended to be positioned further east, at least three-quarters of the way along the south wall. This indicates that the liturgies performed in such churches were less complex, and required less room for the cleric(s): instead, as much as possible of the interior was made available to the congregation. In the case of an average-sized pastoral church of 60 square metres, the part of the church west of the altar could have accommodated 90 people quite comfortably (at 2 per square metre) and 135 if necessary (at 3 per square metre): not as many as in high medieval parish churches, but a sizeable congregation nonetheless.

The model of tiny sanctuary-churches, used exclusively by the clergy, would have been alien to early medieval populations. Those scholars who adhere to this model usually proceed on the basis of a mistaken notion that Eastern Christianity provided a precedent for this degree of exclusion: that, in early medieval Byzantium, the iconostasis completely separated nave from sanctuary.[20] But in a recent article, Robert Taft has shown conclusively that, on the contrary, in Byzantium opaque cancelli were unknown prior to the eleventh century and that, in the early medieval period, ‘the chancel enclosure was intended to set off and reserve space, not to hide it’.[21] In the West, notwithstanding the diversity of arrangements that existed, early medieval congregations were usually able to see the celebrant and the sacrament clearly and, more often than not, the sanctuary screen was only waist high. What little evidence we have suggests that congregational churches in Ireland conformed to this pattern.[22]

The idea that congregational churches had opaque divisions between clergy and congregation is, therefore, simply mistaken. Furthermore, it is a huge and dangerous leap to propose, on the basis of this notion, an architectural tradition centred on the idea that the congregation was entirely excluded from the church building. Such a tradition, if it had ever existed, would have gone against the fundamental Christian idea of a church: that the building itself is a metaphor for

the Christian community, gathered by, and centred on, the Eucharist. In contrast to Roman temples, and indeed the Jerusalem Temple, the church was, of its essence, a meeting house, a space for the gathered people, i.e. for the *ecclesia*.[23] This idea is clearly expressed in a number of Irish sources, including the seventh-century Second Synod of Patrick:

> Of the sacrifice. On the even of Easter, whether it is possible to carry it outside. *It is not to be carried outside*, but to be brought down to the faithful. What else signifies it that the Lamb is taken *in one house*, but that Christ is believed and communicated *under one roof* of faith?
>
> [De Sacrificio. In nocte Paschae, si fas et ferre foras. *Non foras fertur*, sed fidelibus deferatur. Quid aliud significant quod *in una domo* sumitur agnus quam: sub uno fidei culmine creditor et communicatur Christus?][24]

Whatever about rustic priests serving at secular family churches in Co. Kerry, a sophisticated ecclesiastic like Adomnán, with his deep interest in the form and meaning of church buildings, not only in Ireland but abroad, is unlikely to have his paragon of orthodoxy, Columba, celebrate Mass in such an unorthodox architectural setting.

In the light of this cautionary archaeological evidence, let us return to Adomnán's narrative. Adomnán creates a 'liturgical fiction'. He invents a unique fictional synaxis (liturgical gathering, coming together) which almost certainly is unhistorical, in the most basic sense that it never took place: four major Irish monastic founders come to visit St C lumba and find him, not on Iona itself, but on Hinba.[25] Adomnán places this imaginary event towards the end of his third book, which, he has explicitly stated, 'is concerned with angelic apparitions that were revealed to others about the saint, and to him about others, and also those that were visible to both though in different measure' ('de angelicis apparitionibus quae vel aliis de beato viro, vel ipsi de aliis, revelatae sunt; et de his quae utroque quamlibet disparii modo … sunt manifestae').[26] The four founders unanimously affirm Columba's spiritual status by requesting him to celebrate the community Mass on Sunday. Their choice reversed the normal Iona custom by which a visitor, when a priest, was given the honour of celebrating the community Mass.[27] Columba 'obeyed their command' ('eorum obsecundans'): that the abbot should obey his visitors indicates his courtesy and his humility. Adomnán then imagines all five saints entering the church together after the gospel, thus just before the 'sacred mysteries of the Eucharist' ('sacra eucharistiae consecraret misteria').

During the course of 'the ceremonies of the Mass' ('misarum sollemnia') just

one of the four, St Brendan of Ardfert (from the extreme southwest of Ireland, as far away from Iona as it is possible to be within Irish territory: a telling, even if fictional, image of how far Columba's fame was thought to have reached within Ireland during his lifetime), perceives a radiance above St Columba's head. It 'shone upwards like a column of light' ('instar alicujus columnae'). This statement clearly refers to Exodus 13:21–22's 'a column of fire' ('columna ignis') and similar scriptural passages: it implies that St Brendan discerned, in St Columba, a new Moses who would lead Irish monasticism on its desert journey.[28]

Brendan tells just two of his co-founders what he had seen; it is not mentioned that he told the third (Cormac Ua Liatháin). To adapt the words of Adomnán's Preface to the third book of the *Vita Columbae*, this miracle is visible to others 'in different measure' ('disparili modo').[29] Only Brendan saw the miracle, and the narrative concentrates on what he saw and whom he told. Adomnán does not tell us whether Columba himself was aware of his own apotheosis. While Adomnán does not mention whether a larger congregation was present at the Sunday Mass, his laconic narrative does not exclude that possibility. The narrative is tightly organized: every word counts, and its dense texture is woven from scriptural and liturgical reminiscence. Its structure is powerfully coherent: first, the four Irish monastic founders, gathered for the Eucharist, find a liturgical way to recognize Colomba as first among equals; then, during the course of the liturgy, Brendan perceives, and tells two of the others, that heaven itself has ratified their choice.

Nowhere does Adomnán's narrative state that the preliminary prayers, chants and readings of the Mass, culminating in the Gospel, were performed outside (where they would, on occasion, have had to be performed in rain, snow, ice or storm); nor would any of his original monastic readers (whether on Iona, in Ireland, Gaul or further afield) have understood the narrative to imply this. On the contrary, they are more likely to have understood the narrative to imply (even though it did not state) that at Hinba the Sunday liturgical readings, culminating in the Gospel, had been intoned (chanted, not just read) in Latin within the church, in the presence of a congregation; and that, after the Gospel had been chanted, Columba and the four founders had left the church to go to a *secretarium* (reception hall or sacristy), situated at, or outside, the liturgical 'west end' or entrance of the church, from which the gifts (bread and wine) to be consecrated would be brought into the church.[30] The original readers might even have thought the narrative to imply (though, again, it did not state) that it was in the *secretarium*, and not before, that the four founders prevailed on Columba to be the celebrant of this Sunday Mass. Adomnán gave just enough detail to encourage his clerical readership, familiar with Gallican liturgies, to 'place' his fictional 'entrance of the five founders' tableau at a major turning-point of the Mass: the moment when the liturgy of readings had just finished, and when the 'sacra

eucharistiae misteria', the central action of the Mass, was about to begin.

Among surviving documents of the Gallican liturgies, *Ordo Romanus XV* is the most elaborate surviving account of this turning-point, the transfer of gifts to the altar. Although, to lend authority to its account, this document claims to describe Roman usage, Michel Andrieu demonstrated that its account of the transfer of gifts was Gallican, and of the eighth century.[31] The relevant part of the *Ordo* describes a Mass celebrated by a priest (not a bishop), on Sundays and Holidays, and particularly envisages a monastic setting; its setting is therefore analogous to that of Adomnán's narrative. In the *Ordo*, the offerings are prepared in the *secretarium* before the service of antiphons and readings (naturally intoned within the church) with which the Mass has begun.[32] The loaves of bread are placed in one or more 'towers' or, if the church does not have 'towers', on the paten itself.[33]

After the Gospel one or two priests, or as many as are needed. go out of the church and, with the deacons, enter the *secretarium*. Each priest receives a 'tower' or paten with the loaves; each deacon receives a chalice. and raises it to the level of his head: it will be carried aloft, in this manner (in the chaotic Latin of the *Ordo*, 'contra capita sua' ['againt their heads']), in the procession to the altar (par. 134).[34] Before they enter the church they intone the antiphon 'Laudate dominum de celis· ('Praise the Lord from the heavens'; cf. Psalm 148.1); the clergy who have remained within the church respond to the antiphon (par. 135). As soon as they hear the response, the priests and deacons enter the church with their 'towers' or paten, and with the chalices raised aloft (par. 136). At the altar, the celebrant, who has been standing behind the altar (he clearly was not among those priests who went to the *secretarium*), comes around before the altar, solemnly receives the gifts which have been carried in procession and places them on the altar (pars. 137–41). Only the chalice remains on the altar: the towers, when the loaves have been taken from them, are sent back to the *secretarium* until the breaking of bread for communion at the end of Mass (par. 142).

The most interesting aspect of the surviving accounts of the transfer of gifts is their variety.[35] Gregory of Tours describes elaborate processions, but these were possibly performed by deacons alone, not priests and deacons together.[36] Pseudo-Germanus emphasizes the solemnity of the procession. The congregation are called to silence, and look in expectation towards the *ostium* (the entrance from the *secretarium* to the church) before the chant (*sonus*) begins and the procession appears. The reason why the procession was so elaborate and solemn becomes clearer when we read that the 'towers', and their contents, signified to this author the tomb of Christ. Though not yet consecrated, the bread and wine was already considered, by prolepsis, to signify the body and blood of the Lord:

> Indeed the body of the Lord is carried in towers because the tomb of the Lord was cut into the rock, and within there was the bier where the Lord's body rested; or from which the King of Glory rose in triumph.
>
> [Corpus uero domini idea defertur in turribus quia monumentum domini in similitudinem turris fuit scissum in petra, et intus lectum ubi pansauit corpus dominicum . uel unde surrexit rex gloriae in triumphum.][37]

The Penitential of Cummean (early seventh century, Munster) seems to envisage a single deacon transferring the gifts to the altar, without elaborate ceremony and without chants.[38] The Stowe Missal, and its liturgical commentary, envisage that the gifts were prepared before Mass on the altar of the church: Le. Stowe does not imply any exit from, or entry into, the church after the Gospel[39] It is reasonable to suppose that Adomnán, author of *De Locis Sanctis*, had heard of the liturgy of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople, where the transfer of gifts had been developed into a very elaborate ceremony, the 'Great Entrance'.[40]

In the context of these rich and varied Gallican and Byzantine traditions, it is clear that no early medieval audience would have understood Adomnán's reference to Columba and the four founders entering the church after the Gospel to imply that they had just intoned the Gospel, and the other liturgical readings and chants, in the open air. When composing his fictional synaxis, Adomnán was aware that various forms of a ceremony for the transfer of gifts were enacted wherever Gallican or Byzantine liturgies were celebrated. He therefore invented an original narrative which directed his readers' attention to that important moment, after the Gospel and before the 'misarum sollemnia'. It must be emphasized that his narrative was a liturgical fiction, making an oblique, not direct, reference to the variety of current Gallican liturgical practices. Adomnán does not tell us,for example, that the five founders were accompanied by a deacon bearing the gifts, nor that they bore the gifts themselves. He does not tell us whether the five founders entered in silence, or whether chants were sung. He does not mention that there was a congregation in the church, nor tell us how big it was. In this liturgical fiction, Columba enters the church as celebrant with the four founders, whereas in Gallican liturgies the celebrant stayed at the altar and deacons (usually), sometimes with other priests (*Ordo XV*), transfer the gifts from the *secretarium*. To sum up: Adomnán is not interested in transcribing for us any contemporary version of the 'transfer of gifts' ceremony, whether from Hinba or elsewhere. Instead, he creates an original fictional tableau, which directs his readers' attention to the moment in the Mass when the ceremony usually, but not invariably (see the discussion of the Stowe Missal above), took place. Adomnán's

imagined liturgical tableau, 'the entrance of the five founders', was intended to function in counterpoint to, or as a fictional variation upon, the varied Gallican and Byzantine liturgical 'transfer of gifts' traditions.

Why did Adomnán invent this fictional tableau? His spare narrative is designed to create the closest possible link between the four founders' choice of Columba as celebrant and St Brendan's perception that heaven had miraculously confirmed their choice. By not mentioning the bread and wine (the *sancta*, or 'holy things') and how they were carried, Adomnán enabled his readers to make an imaginative association between the implied *sancta* and the five *sancti fundatores* themselves. The representation of Christ entering into his Passion in the Book of Kells (fol. 114r, the so-called 'Arrest of Christ') provides an analogue for such an imaginative fusion. That artist incorporated the Gospel verse 'Ymno dicto exierunt in montem Oliveti' ('having said a hymn they went out into the mount of Olivet') into the design of his page. By doing so, he presented Christ as advancing to his Passion, flanked and sustained by two subordinate figures, in an image which visually recalls the tableau of a bishop advancing towards the altar, flanked by more junior clerics, to celebrate 'missarum solemnia'. By fusing Gospel text and stylized image, the Kells artist encourages his reader to remember that the Passion is made present in 'missarum solemnia' and that, entering into his Passion, Christ was not only the high priest entering the Holy of Holies, but also the victim to be sacrificed.[41] Adomnán's fictional tableau enables his readers to make a similar imaginative fusion. The five founders, who enter the church to consecrate the Eucharistic species, have already consecrated their lives to the service of Christ: the five *sancti* are themselves already living sacrifices.

Why did Adomnán specify that the four founders came upon Columba on Hinba, and not on Iona itself? We know that on Hinba penitents lived with the community.[42] For the association between repentance, penance and exodus across the desert, we need look no further than the ancient monastic Invitatory Psalm (Psalm 94 (95), 'Venite exultemus Domino'), sung every morning before Matins:

> Hodie si vocem eius audieritis
> nolite obdurare corda vestra
> sicut in inritatione
> secundum diem temptationis in deserto
> ubi temptaverunt me patres vestri
> probaverunt me: et viderunt opera mea
> (Vulgate Psalm 94 (95):8–9, iuxta LXX).

> Today if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts:
> As in the provocation, according to the day of temptation in the wilderness:
> where your fathers tempted me, they proved me, and saw my works.[43]

St Benedict of Nursia had prescribed that a monk's life should always be Lenten in character.[44] It was appropriate that his Irish equivalent, St Columba, should be 'found' by the visitors on Hinba, an island monastery which exemplified the centrality to Columban monasticism of ascetic penance: it was as an exemplar of humility, penitence and asceticism, above all, that Columba would prove a new Moses to his people.

To conclude: in his synthesis of what modern scholarship has established, or thinks it has established, about Hinba, Sharpe states that 'we … know that … the church at the monastery was very small'.[45] But our examination of chapter *Vita Columbae* 3.17, and its architectural background, suggests that we know nothing of the sort. From the same sentence in *Vita Columbae* 3.17 on which Sharpe bases his conclusion, one might just as easily argue that the church could have been a fairly elaborate structure, with a separate *secretarium* from which the five founders proceeded into the church to celebrate the sacred mysteries; and that there might have been a congregation present at the Mass that Sunday, as well as the five founders. But such an optimistic reconstruction of the monastic church-complex on Hinba would be a misguided project: it would involve the same naive literalism, all too common in modern scholarship, against which we have argued. Adomnán's fictional tableau communicates an impression of liturgical sophistication on Hinba precisely by eliminating such local archaeological details, of architecture or of liturgy, as are of interest to us: he subordinates everything to his laconic and allusive story. By specifying the moment just after the Gospel, he encourages his European monastic readers to associate his fictional 'entry of the five founders' tableau with whichever versions of the Gallican transfer of the gifts they were familiar with, or had (like Adomnán himself) heard or read about.

Adomnán could not have foreseen that some twelve hundred years later modern scholars would interpret his liturgical fiction, not against an international background of Gallican or Byzantine 'great entrances', but instead against a romantic primitivist model of 'Celtic spirituality'; and that from his spare allusive narrative they would construct a new Romantic liturgical fiction which, by implication at least, imagined the Hinba community singing, and reading, in the rain.[46] Such Romantic readings of *Vita Columbae* 3.17 should be abandoned; more generally, it is not good practice to tear Adomnán's tightly constructed narratives apart in an effort to supply archaeological and liturgical details which the author himself was, for his own good reasons, careful to avoid.

Notes

1 Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Reading the Scriptures in the Life of Columba', In Cormac Bourke (ed.), *Studies in the Cult of Saint Columba* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 80–106; and 'The Wisdom of the Scribe and the Fear of the Lord in the *Life of Columba*', in Dauvit Broun and Thomas Owen Clancy (eds.), *Spes Scotorum: Hope of Scots: Saint Columba, Iona and Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1999), 159–211.

2 O'Reilly, 'Wisdom of the Scribe', p. 159.

3 See, for example, Deirdre O'Sullivan, 'Space, Silence and Shortage on Lindisfarne: The Archaeology of Asceticism', in Helena Hamerow and Arthur MacGregor (eds.), *Image and Power in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Britain: Essays in Honour of Rosemary Cramp* (Oxford, 2001).

4 3.17; A.O. Anderson and M.O. Anderson (ed. and trans.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (Oxford, 1991), p. 500.

5 3.17; Richard Sharpe (trans.), *Adomnán of Iona: Life of St Columba* (London. 1991), p. 219.

6 She herself has briefly discussed *Vita Columbae* 3.17 in Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: The Lucan Genealogy', in Felicity O'Mahony (ed.), *The Book of Kells: Proceedings of a Conference at Trinity College Dublin 6–9 September 1992* (Aldershot, 1994), pp.396–7.

7 See, for example, the exhaustive discussion in William Reeves (ea.), *The Life of St Columba, Founder of Hy* (Dublin, 1857), pp. 220–22.

8 Rev. John William Hunwicke, 'Kerry and Stowe Revisited', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. 102C, 2002, pp. 1–19.

9 Michael Ryan, 'Sacred Cities', in A. Minnis and J. Roberts (eds.), *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 18 (Turnhout, 2007), p. 520.

10 Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 368 n. 387.

11 Ibid., p. 369 n. 387.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Liturgical readings were not simply read out but intoned or chanted: see David Hiley, *Western Plainchant: A Handbook* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 54–8.

16 R Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), p. 287; T. Ó Carragáin, 'Cemetery Settlements and Local Churches in Pre-Viking Ireland in Light of Comparisons with England and Wales', in J. Graham-Campbell and M. Ryan (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon/Irish Relations before the Vikings*, Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 157 (London, 2009), pp. 329–59.

17 T. Ó Carragáin, 'Cemetery Settlements'.

18 See for example Thomas Fanning, 'Excavation of an Early Christian Cemete1y and Settlement at Reask, County Kerry', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*,vol. 81C, 1981, pp. 67–172; Jennifer W. Marshall and C. Walsh, *Illaunloughan Island: An Early Medieval Monastery in County Kerry* (Dublin, 2005); John Sheehan, 'A Peacock's Tale: Excavations at Caherlehillan, Iveragh, Ireland', in Nancy Edwards (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches* (Leeds, 2009), pp. 91–206..

19 T. Ó Carragáin, 'The Architectural Setting of the Mass in Early Medieval lreland'. *Medieval*

Archaeology, vol. 53, 2009, pp. 119–54; T. Ó Carragáin, Churches in Early Medieval Ireland: Architecture, Ritual and Memory (New Haven, CT, and London, 2010).

20 Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 368; 'Kerry and Stowe Revisited', p. 3.

21 Robert F. Taft, 'The Decline of Communion in Byzantium and the Distancing of the Congregation from the Liturgical Action: Cause, Effect or Neither', in S. Gerstel (ed.) *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West* (Washington, DC, 2006). pp. 40–9.

22 E.g. Theodor Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy* (Oxford, 1979), p. 66; Carol Neuman de Vegvar, 'Romanitas und Realpolitik in Cogitosus's Description of the Church of St Brigit, Kildare, in Martin Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 153–70 at p. 64; T. Ó Carragáin, 'The Architectural Setting of the Mass', pp. 121–28.

23 GeorgesYves M.-J. Congar, *L'Ecclésiologie du Haut Moyen-Âge: De Saint Grégoire le Grand à la désunion entre Bezance et Rome* (Paris, 1968), pp. 1–30; Josef Andreas Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)*, 2 vols., trans. Francis.A. Brunner (Dublin, 1951–5; repr. 1986), pp. 47–8.

24 Ludwig Bieler (ed.), *The Irish Penitentials*, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae 5 (Dublin, 1963), pp. 188–9, emphasis original. See N. O'Donoghue, 'The Eucharist in Pre-Norman Ireland: Liturgy, Practice and Society', Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, National University of Ireland, 2006, p. 351, who recognized the significance of this passage.

25 To have a saint's holiness and fame affirmed by symbolic encounters with other saints was a convention in Irish hagiography: see Sharpe, Introduction, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 24 and 368 n. 386.

26 Prologue to Book 3: Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 205.

27 See the episode of Bishop Crónán, in *Vita Columbae* 1.44: Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 147 and 306 n. 192. For a different interpretation of ch. 1.44, see Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the* Dream of the Rood *Tradition*, British Library Studies in Medieval Culture (London and Toronto, 2005), and Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'Ruthwell and Iona: The Meeting of St Paul and St Anthony Revisited', in Marion Meek (ed.), *The Modern Traveller to Our Past: Festschrift in Honour of Ann Hamlin* (Newtownards, 2006), pp. 138–44.

28 For similar images in Part 3 of the *Vita Columbae*, see chs 2, 3, 18–21, and 23.

29 Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 205.

30 For such reception balls and their functions (as sacristies and treasuries), in Gallican territory, see Thomas Sternberg, *Orientalium More Secutus: Räume und Institutionen der Caritas des 5. bis 7. Jahrhunderts in Gallien*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 16 (Münster, 1991), pp. 55–9, 79–86.

31 See the Introduction in Michel Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du haut moyen âge*, vol. 3, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 11, 23, 24, 28 and 29 (Louvain, 1931–61), pp. 73–9.

32 §133: Andrieu, III, *Les Ordines Romani*, p. 122.

33 On 'towers' in Gallican usage, see Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani*, vol. 3, p. 73 n. 3; Edward Craddock Ratcliff, *Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae*, Henry Bradshaw Society 98 (London, 1971), p. 11 n. l; Matthieu Smyth, *La Liturgie oubliée: la prière eucharistique en Gaule antique et dans l'Occident non romain* (Paris, 2003), p. 197 n. 3; Matthieu Smyth, *'Ante Altaria': Les rites antiques de la Messe dominicale en Gaule, en Espagne et en Italie du Nord*, Liturgie: Collection de Recherche du Centre National de Pastorale Liturgique 16 (Paris, 2007), p. 73 n. 3.

34 The practice of carrying chalices in procession ‘against the head’ was inspired by Byzantine liturgical custom: see Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani*, vol. 3, p. 75.

35 A much wider range of sources than can be surveyed here is synthesized in Smyth, *La Liturgie oubliée*, pp. 197–205; Smyth, *‘Ante Altaria’*, pp. 72–86.

36 Gregory of Tours, *De Gloria Martyrum*; eds. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Berlin, 1937–51), 85, p. 546; trans. R. Van Dam, *Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Martyrs*, Translated Texts for Historians, Latin Series, 3 (Liverpool, 1988), p. 110.

37 Ratcliff, *Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae*, p. 10, §8, and on such proleptic symbolism, see p. 11n.

38 Bieler (ed.), *The Irish Penitentials*, pp. 130–5l, XII, 11.

39 G.F. Warner (ed.), *The Stowe Missal: MS D.II.3 in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin*, 2 vols. (London, 1906–15), vol. 2, p. 8; W. Stokes and J. Strachan (eds.), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old Irish Glosses, Scholia, Prose and Verse*, 2 vols. (Cambridge), text of commentary, vol. 2, pp. 252–5.

40 For accounts of Constantinople in *De Locis Sandis*, see Denis Meehan (ed.), *Adamnan’s ‘De Locis Sanctis*’, Scriptores Latini Hibemiae 3 (Dublin, 1958), Bk 3, pp.106–21. On the Constantinople rite, see Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-Anaphoral Rites*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 200 (Rome, 1978), esp. pp. 178–215.

41 For discussion, see Éamonn Ó Carragáin, ‘“*Traditio evangeliorum*” and “*sustentatio*”: The Relevance of Liturgical Ceremonies to the Book of Kells’, in O’Mahony (ed.), *The Book of Kells*, pp. 398–449 at pp. 417–22.

42 *Vita Columbae* 1.21; Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 127–8 and 306–8 n. 194.

43 Psalm 94:8–9 (Douay version); for liturgical uses of the psalm, see Arocena and Goñi, vol. 1, p. 300, §§1981–88; Rule of St Benedict 9.3, in Timothy Fry et al (eds.), *The Rule of St Benedict in Latin and English, with notes* (Collegeville, Minn., 1981), pp. 202–3.

44 Rule of St Benedict 49.1, in Fry et al. (eds.), *The Rule of St Benedict*, pp. 252–3 with editorial discussion at p. 428.

45 Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 394.

46 For a readable survey and sensible criticism of such romantic notions of ‘Celtic Christianity’, see Thomas O’Loughlin, *Celtic Theology: Humanity, World and God in Early Irish Writings* (London and New York, 2000), pp.1–24.