

WORLDS OF WORDS:  
Complexity, Creativity,  
and Conventionality  
in English Language,  
Literature and Culture

*Literature Section edited by  
Roberta Ferrari and Sara Soncini*

*Culture Section edited by  
Fausto Ciompi and Laura Giovannelli*

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MANUSCRIPT TRANSMISSION AND EDITING IN  
MEREDITH HANMER'S *CHRONICLE OF IRELAND*

*Abstract*

This paper surveys the extant sources of the *Chronicle of Ireland*, a work written by the Church of England clergyman Meredith Hanmer between 1594 and 1604 and published posthumously in 1633 by the Irish scholar and antiquarian Sir James Ware. The author's copy of the *Chronicle* is not known to survive, nor do any early manuscript versions appear to be extant; yet, the specific circumstances of the 1633 publication and the survival of Hanmer's papers in the archives make the study of this text a particularly relevant test case for new philology. While we might not have sufficient textual evidence to assess the degree of intervention by the later editors of Hanmer's *Chronicle*, manuscript evidence can significantly advance our knowledge of the development of this work and expand our understanding of the "mechanics" of early modern scholarship.

*Keywords:* Meredith Hanmer; *Chronicle of Ireland*; new philology; manuscript tradition; editing.

The *Chronicle of Ireland* is the first history of Ireland written by a Church of England clergyman around the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The work covers the mythical origins of the Irish people, their language and history up to 1284<sup>1</sup>. It was published in 1633 as part of Sir James Ware's *The Historie of Ireland*, where it appeared side by side with Edmund Spenser's *View of the present state of Ireland* and Edmund Campion's *Historie of Ireland*. The author, Meredith Hanmer (ca. 1545-1604), was himself a highly educated man with a Doctoral degree in Divinity from

<sup>1</sup> Hanmer's *Chronicle* begins with the mythical arrival of the first inhabitants in Ireland and a discussion of the origins of the Irish language. It then follows the history of invasions, wars and divisions of the land into kingdoms until the birth of Christ. With the arrival of Saint Patrick in 430 begins the Christian history of Ireland, which is chronicled until 1284.

Oxford, a translator of ecclesiastical histories<sup>2</sup>, a preacher and religious converter<sup>3</sup>, and an erstwhile opponent of Edmund Campion<sup>4</sup>.

Hanmer's connection with Ireland dates to the early 1590s, when the Elizabethan government enlisted him to preach and convert in the newly established Munster plantation. Hanmer was one of a small cadre of English reformed clergymen who left England to join the circles of officials, soldiers and adventurers settling in Ireland, and when the war broke out in 1594, he became a military preacher. In a little over ten years Hanmer held several benefices in Dublin and Munster, and whilst serving in the army he pursued research into the antiquities of Ireland. These studies would later become the *Chronicle*, a work of great cultural and political import, and the first Protestant history of Ireland.

The *Chronicle* must have taken shape and been developed during the years of Hanmer's service in Ireland, between 1593 and 1604 (the year of his death), but it was only published thirty years later and no manuscript version is known to survive. This poses the editor the difficult question of how best to deal with a text lying at an unknown number of removes from the author's original. While we have no integral copy to assess the degree of editorial intervention on the text, the specific circumstances of its early seventeenth-century publication and the exceptional survival of archival materials make the study of Hanmer's *Chronicle* a particularly relevant test case for the possibilities of new philology.

<sup>2</sup> He translated three early Church histories which were published as *The Auncient Ecclesiasticall Histories* in London by Thomas Vautrollier, 1577 (first edition). Hanmer was reportedly the author of an ephemeris of the saints of Ireland that is no longer extant (Wood 1691: 279).

<sup>3</sup> He published a sermon on the baptism of a Turk in London in 1586.

<sup>4</sup> Hanmer was presumably enlisted by the government against the first Jesuit mission to England and engaged in an incendiary disputation with Edmund Campion in 1581: M. Hanmer, *The great bragge and challenge of M. Champion a Jesuite co[m]monlye called Edmund Campion, latelye arriued in Englande, contayninge nyne articles here seuerallye laide downe, directed by him to the lordes of the Counsaile / co[n]futed & aunswered by Meredith Hanmer*, London, Thomas Marsh, 1581 and *The Iesuites Banner. Displaying their original and successe: their vow and othe: their hypocrisie and superstition: their doctrine and positions: with A Confutation of a late Pamphlet secretly imprinted and entituled: A Briefe Censure vpon two booke written in answere to M. Campions offer of disputation &c. Compiled by Meredith Hanmer M. of Arte, and Student in Diuinity*, London, Thomas Dawson and Richard Vernon, 1581.



### *Extant versions of the Chronicle*

The printed versions of the *Chronicle* include the first edition printed by Ware in 1633 (STC 25067) and reissued with a cancel title page (STC 25067a) and an 1809 reprint of the STC 25067 edition<sup>5</sup>. In extant copies of Ware's edition the three texts by Spenser, Campion and Hanmer appear in different orders. A variant has Hanmer's *Chronicle* bound first and a cancel dedication by Matthew Manwaring replacing that of James Ware. According to R.B. Gottfried the texts were printed separately: Spenser's *View* was first published as a single volume, then Campion's *History* was added to the *View*, and next Hanmer's work was added and a separate title-page was supplied for the Campion and Hanmer section; finally, a general title-page for the three works was added (Gottfried 1977: vii). Bart Van Es argued that Spenser's *View* had no place in the original collection conceived by Ware and observed that Ware's earliest title-page listed only Campion followed by Hanmer (2002: 81-2). This order was reversed in a later version (the variant with cancel dedication) due to the intervention of Hanmer's son in law, the Matthew Manwaring of the cancel title page, who seemingly objected to the precedence that had been given to Edmund Campion, the Jesuit martyr and Hanmer's opponent (Johnson 1933: 51-3).

If the archives preserve extensive evidence of both Spenser's *View* and Campion's *Historie* complex textual histories, the same cannot be said for Hanmer's *Chronicle*, which is not known to survive in copies other than Ware's 1633 edition. Yet, a collection of papers once owned by Meredith Hanmer and now preserved at The National Archives, Kew, bears strong connections with the *Chronicle* that call for closer scholarly scrutiny.

The collection SP 63/214 is a miscellany of 321 folia, and the only evidence of what once must have been a much larger library. Significant variation in the size and quality of paper, in scripts, ink, and hands clearly suggests that what now appears as a volume is in fact a compilation of heterogeneous texts that were produced at different stages and collected from various sources. In fact, the binding and the sequence of papers as they appear today in the SP notes are the product of the work of Victorian archivists<sup>6</sup>. The first clear indication that these materials

<sup>5</sup> Ware's edition was reprinted as *Ancient Irish Histories. The Works of Spenser, Campion, Hanmer, and Marleborough*. Dublin, 1633 (Reprint, Dublin 1809).

<sup>6</sup> The Victorian re-organisation caused partial dismemberment and incorporation of single documents and enclosures that had previously formed part of Hanmer's notes into separate volumes. The editorial notes accompanying replaced documents in the Calendars allow us to reconstruct the original extent of Hanmer's historical notes, at

were not originally meant as a single volume comes from paper: large folia sit alongside several smaller papers and atypical paper formats, probably the result of trimming. In addition, in the collection we find papers in the hand of Hanmer conjoined with papers of different origin and in different hands.

Often what has survived are only fragments; yet, the papers in Hanmer's hand demand attention. Indeed, the several notes on Irish saints, genealogies and legends establish close textual links with the *Chronicle* in print; moreover, the heterogeneous nature of the collection makes the analysis of its relationship with the printed text a particularly interesting case study, since it calls for an approach capable of accounting for both textual and material details.

A brief survey will give a taste of the kind of materials that can be found in the SP collection. A number are connected to the city of Waterford, where Hanmer held a benefice as treasurer of the Cathedral; these range from notes to the copies of historical documents, like a commission by Henry VIII to the Mayor of Waterford (SP 63/214, f. 5). There are a number of notes for sermons to be preached (SP 63/214, f. 113), and evidence of inquiries into the Irish language<sup>7</sup>. Interestingly, in the notes there are also copies of what is now known as the *Hatfield Compendium*, defined by Christopher Maginn and Steven G. Ellis as one of the key documents through which the Tudors and their administrators learnt of Ireland in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century (2015: 16)<sup>8</sup>.

Sketches of lives and legends of Irish saints and martyrs appear on scraps of paper that have been glued onto the pages of the SP volume by later archivists. In a number of instances, the lives appear in the *Chronicle*, but there is little correspondence between the stories in manuscript and print. For instance, five paper clippings salvaged from loss and included in the SP notes bear brief entries on St Fiacre, St Comgall, St Maeldok, St Cartak and St Catald (ff. 108 and 109). They are itemised by feast-day, suggesting that the original, integral document presented the full calendar of the saints for the month. As an example, the second clipping reads:

least in part. On some of the issues connected with the Calendars see Andreani 2015: 591-3.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, scattered among the notes there are samples of translation of toponyms from English into Irish.

<sup>8</sup> It was evidently not recognised as a discrete unit by the Victorian archivist who collated the collection, so that integral and fragmentary copies of the compendium are still bound with Hanmer's notes in SP 63/214.

- 10 maij Sct Congall an abbot whose birth was shewed unto Sct patrik lx yeres before & to an *other* bishop at whose baptisme sprung a well & a blind priest was restored to sight.
- 13 maij Sct Maeldoke a confessor Ireland
- 14 maij Sct Cartak \Ireland/ a b. of whome was had revelation before his birth. he went unto an *other contrey* & took *with* him eight hundred & forty monkes *which* he brought through a great water that by his blessinge was [dev]ided in maner of the childere of Israel through the read sea. (SP 63/214, f. 108)

The notes are interspersed with interlineal annotations and “vide” for further reference that point to the *Martyrolog*, Capgrave, and *Liber Houth*, among others<sup>9</sup>. In the *Chronicle* the lives of the saints are significantly expanded but the legends annotated in the SP notes are not mentioned; the references are expanded and fully incorporated in the text, as shown in the following extracts (bold mine, italic in the original), beginning with Saint Comgall:

Agilulphus King of Lombardie received him most honourably, and in Italie hee died, **saith Beda in his Martyrologe**, though **Capgrave write** it was in Almaine whose report of him I may not omit. (Hanmer 1633: 57)

Saint Maeldok:

The **martyrologe of Sarum** calleth him *Maeldock*; my Author yeeldeth the reason, writing how that his mother conceiving with childe of him, his father dreamed that he saw a starre fall from heaven upon his wife, the mother of this *Aedanus*, and therefore when he was borne, he was called in Latine, *filius stellae*, in Irish, *Moedog*, that is, the sonne of the starre. (Hanmer 1633: 64)

The version of Saint Catald in the notes tells the legend of a healing stone created by his touching a marble stone with his head (SP 63/214 f. 109). Following this story, in a few lines Hanmer tells of the king of Ireland Indrak and his sister Dominica who went to Rome and became beggars. The legend of the healing stone did not make it to print, though the *Chronicle* preserves the story of the royalty turned beggars (Hanmer 1633: 79).

<sup>9</sup> Hanmer’s sources range from authors like Venerable Bede, Gerald of Wales, John Capgrave and William Camden, and manuscripts like the *Sarum Martyrology* and the *Book of Houth*.

In the transition from manuscript to print, therefore, the text of the *Chronicle* has undergone substantial emendation. Though notable are the correspondences, also notable is the pattern of alteration, which in the cases of the saints legends examined entails excision of part of the legendary material and incorporation of the quotation of the source into the main text in print. What this textual evidence potentially highlights is the process of research and elaboration of the scholar: from the manuscript sketch for personal use, complete with notes for reference, to the edited version for publication. Given the circumstances surrounding the publication of the *Chronicles*, however, it is difficult to disentangle the authorial developments from those that could have been made by the later editors.

There are in fact also examples of near complete transcriptions. It is the case of the lives of Saint Mumbolus and Saint Eloquius, which appear on folio 120 of the notes and page 77 of the *Chronicle*. The text was printed essentially complete, with the main alterations concerning the structure but not contents. It is interesting to observe that the manuscript text presents evidence of readership. Proper nouns are underlined in the SP notes and these appear in italic in the *Chronicle*. Tentatively, this is a reader's mark that could point at a stage of revision of the text. The hand of the main text is Hanmer's, and underlining might have served a purpose of reorganisation of his notes into a first draft of the *Chronicle*. However, given the number of hands in the SP manuscript, and its posthumous editorial vicissitudes, there is a number of later candidates who may have very well been active readers of this text. In fact, the passage also seems to have been crossed out. Could this be an editorial mark to indicate that the text should not be incorporated into the *Chronicle*? But such an hypothesis would seem to be disproved by the examples of crossed out passages that were printed.

Two final small pieces of evidence deserve mention. These are small fragments of a couple of inches that display the material and textual characteristics of letter addresses. In the one we read "To the worshipfull very assured lovinge friend doctor Hanmer at Waterford I geve these" and in the other "To his lovinge father doctor Hanmer at Waterford delivere this". They appear glued to f. 109v and 273v respectively, and traces of fold lines and discolouration suggest that they were written on an outer leaf, most likely used to wrap some kind of packet or letters<sup>10</sup>.

Hanmer became treasurer of Waterford Cathedral in 1593. In all likelihood this was one of his richest benefices, thus presumably the

<sup>10</sup> Outer leaves were in use as wrappers to protect privacy and indicate recipient before the introduction of envelopes.

one he elected as his chief residence, where he would receive his correspondence. Surely, the several notes on the history of Waterford included in the collection support the idea of a special connection with the cathedral town. But these fragments of letters most crucially prove Hanmer's participation in active networks of manuscript circulation. Certainly, at the time, the Irish antiquary Thady Dowling was also in Ireland, and another contemporary, the distinguished William Camden, is an author frequently cited among Hanmer's sources. Such evidence stands as a precious testimony of the intellectual labour of an individual part of a community of scholars, which makes these manuscript notes a key source for understanding our author's research, his language, as well as the textual and linguistic development of a work for publication.

### *Editing the Chronicle*

Thirty years after Hanmer's death, the publication of his *Chronicle* was a collaborative enterprise between figures of the standing of the historian and antiquarian Sir James Ware (1594-1666), the Church of England Bishop of St Asaph John Hanmer (1574-1629), nephew to our Hanmer, and the renowned Anglo-Irish scholar, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland James Ussher (1581-1656). An exceptional document of this collaboration survives. In a letter from Bishop Hanmer to Archbishop Ussher we learn that the edition of the *Chronicle* was in progress in 1627, and that at this date a manuscript existed "penned by my uncle, and perfected by Mr. Molineux", thus adding another eminent collaborator, the Ulster King at Arms Daniel Molineux (1568-1632), to our editorial team.

The author's manuscript of the *Chronicle* had crossed St George's Channel and reached Bishop Hanmer at St Asaph in Wales together with the *History of Ireland* compiled by Campion. They were both going to be sent to the printers in London for review. The letter also specifies that the printers' copy would be sent back to Bishop Hanmer who would "bring all passages to perfection, and agreement with the printer" (Elrington 1824: 378). The question of the distance of the *Chronicle* from this lost copy is hard to assess, but we can certainly work on what is known of the editorial practices of Sir James Ware thanks to a number of important studies on Campion's *History* and Spenser's *View*.

Campion's *History* enjoyed immediate manuscript circulation and is extant in several libraries (Kilroy 2015: 79, 113-115). According to a contemporary editor of Campion's *Historie* it is not known what was Ware's manuscript or printing copy, but, to be sure, he did not work on the best manuscript extant (Vossen 1963: 105). About twenty manu-

scripts of Spenser's *View* have been discovered, which demonstrate the wide circulation and influence of this work (Hadfield 2014: 336-339). According to Andrew Hadfield, Ware almost certainly worked on a manuscript that he had acquired from Archbishop Ussher, whose father had worked with Spenser in Dublin (520n1). There is no mention of a manuscript of the *View* alongside the ones of Campion and Hanmer in the 1627 letter from Bishop Hanmer, which would seem to support Van Es' claim that Spenser was a later addition to Ware's *Histories*.

In his preface in 1633 Ware expressed the hope that those "who have leisure, desire, and ability to erect and polish a lasting structure of our Irish affaires" lead the writing of an Irish history which might compare with the English histories of Camden and others (Ware 1633: ¶2v). Such are the editorial intentions, and the cultural underpinnings of the compilation. In Campion's work, Ware noted "many slips, through want of necessary instructions", but the work might still be turned to good account by historians (¶2). As observed by Vossen, the text was edited in about one thousand passages but Ware's method was not consistent (Vossen 1963: 105). With regards to the *View*, Ware famously argued that had it been written forty years later it would have been much more moderate. Ware felt free to edit the text accordingly and tone down the most extreme anti-Irish sentiments there expressed (Hadfield and Mailey 1997: 143 and table of variants).

The work printed in 1633 was therefore the brainchild of men who lived at a specific historical moment, had a cultural programme in mind, and held views about their role as editors<sup>11</sup>. The alterations to the text of Spenser's *View* and the edited passages in Campion's *History* prove that Ware's degree of elaboration could be extensive, and in the case of Hanmer's *Chronicle* we must both account for the role of his son-in-law in the structuring and organisation of the final work as well as for the involvement of Daniel Molineux in the editorial process. The *Chronicle* must then be understood as a collaborative product, in which the language, scholarship and worldview of two generations of intellectuals and clergymen came to be combined. Furthermore, as Bart van Es' critical insight reminds us "Ware's title-pages, like the annotations, both expose and obscure the underlying tensions that exist between the three works collected. While the final version of the general title-page sug-

<sup>11</sup> The essential reference for James Ussher and the historiography of the Church of Ireland is Alan Ford; see especially Ford 2007 and chapters in the recently co-edited collection Empey, Ford, Moffitt 2017. Illuminating research on the scholarly relationship between James Ussher and James Ware has been undertaken by Mark Empey, see especially his chapter "Creating a usable past: James and Robert Ware" in the same collection (Empey, Ford, Moffitt 2017, 36-56).

gests an inspired collective enterprise, an earlier state (which included only Campion and Hanmer) shows the fragility of that construct” (81-2).

From a preliminary philological and codicological examination, we can conclude that the SP notes are a compilation of materials evidently related to the *Chronicle*, but substantially varied in terms of hands, composition, purpose and physical outlook. The SP notes are predominantly a working manuscript not intended for outside viewing and most likely not the copy from which Ware worked. The letter endorsements and the papers in different hands alongside Hanmer’s make the volume an invaluable piece of evidence for the study of active networks of scholarship at the turn of the century in Ireland. Indeed, the notes are also a mine of precious materials for philological inquiry and an exemplar through which to explore the potential of “new” philology. In conclusion, the complex textual history of the *Chronicle* leaves us with two texts separated by about three decades and several illustrious names of intellectuals, but the material evidence of the SP notes can help us bridge this gap to arrive at a deeper understanding of scholarship and editing in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

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