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OLD-IRISH VERSE FRAGMENTS
ATTRIBUTED TO FER MUMAN MAC ECHTAIN

THE COMPOSITION OF SECULAR POETRY BY KNOWN PROFESSIONAL POETS of the Old and Middle Irish periods (ca. 600-1200) is not well represented in extant manuscripts – or at least not when compared to the vast amount of surviving verse in Classical Modern Irish. Much of what remains is to be found in an eclectic range of sources: annals, glossaries, legal commentaries, poetic commentaries, and bardic tracts. Unfortunately, the nature of these sources frequently leaves us with no context for a satisfactory interpretation of the verse they contain. In the case of glossaries, for example, a few lines – sometimes from a larger poem – are typically included to illustrate the use of an obscure word. The same applies to bardic tracts, in which the verse simply serves to provide an example of a metrical feature.

In this paper I have assembled ten verse fragments attributed to a poet of this early period, Fer Muman mac Echtain, who appears to have been highly regarded by the medieval scholars who

assembled these sources[1]. Included also are two additional items (Nos. XI and XII) which, while not attributed to Fer Muman himself, are contained in anecdotes about him.

Of Fer Muman himself we know very little indeed. His name, 'Man of Munster', probably indicates that he came from that province, and the personal names in two of the items, Máel Umai (see the discussion in No. VIII) and Milchú mac Onchon (No. X) suggest a southern focus or his activities. The anecdotes in Nos. XI and XII appear to be set near the northern border of East Munster, and the subject of the verse in No. IX appears to have been from the Munster-Leinster border. Kuno Meyer claimed, without presenting an argument, that it was Fer Muman (rather than Mór Muman as stated in the source) who composed a quatrain on the death of Cathal mac Findguine in 742, and on this basis he would assign him to the eighth or ninth centuries[2]. On other grounds, however, this broad range for his floruit is reasonable enough. There is nothing in the verse itself that compels us to seek a dates of composition in the seventh or eighth centuries. Later poets were quite skilled in the use of old and obscure vocabulary and in the cultivation of an 'archaic' style with regards to syntax[3].

Additional biographical information might be extracted from the varied character of the verse itself. The etymological punning in No. 1 – a verse cited in a legal commentary – might indicate

1. For a discussion of his patronymic, see No. I. Other poets whose work survives in similar compilations include Fland mac Lonáin (d. 896), Mac Da Cherda (mid ninth century?), Rechtgal úa Siadail (ca. 750-815), Oengus mac Oibleni (fl. 800). For the remnants of Rechtgal úa Síadail's verse, see D. Ó HAODHA, *Rechtgal úa Síadail: a Famous Poet of the Old Irish Period*, in A.P. SMYTH (ed), *Seanchas, Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology, History and Literature in Honour of Francis J. Byrne*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2000, p. 193.

2. K. MEYER, *Bruckstücke der Ältern Lyrik Irlands*, Berlin, 1919, p. 63.

3. For a very good example of this skill at work, see L. BREATNACH, *An Edition of Amra Senáin*, in D. Ó CORRÁIN - L. BREATNACH - K. McCONE (ed), *Sages, Saints, and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney*, Maynooth, An Sagart, 1989, pp. 7-31.

that Fer Muman was associated with a particular 'poetico-legal' school of Munster scholars[4]. In No. VI, the peculiar description of fire and the boiling of soft foods might actually be a metaphorical reference to bardic training or processes of inspiration (see note 41). The anecdotes in Nos. XI and XII suggest that he was known for travelling along the Munster-Leinster-Connacht borderland, an area that was thick with monasteries. No. VIII alludes to the poet-patron relationship and the expectation of recompense. And not least of all, in the meagre two lines of No. III we have powerful, compact, and elaborate versifying which compares well with the best of Old Irish poetry.

Another aspect of this corpus which merits some investigation is the extent to which it represents – at least in part – the 'in-house' oral tradition of the medieval Irish literati. In this respect it is reminiscent of the anecdotes and snatches of verse that were until recent times associated with Irish poets of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, such as Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, Conchubhair Máistir Ó Ríordáin, and Antaine Ó Raiftearaí[5]. In Fer Muman's case, his fame as a poet and scholar had probably evaporated by the end of the Middle Irish period. Nevertheless, it is not entirely unfitting that his name – even if only that – was remembered in later centuries in a Fenian ballad listing the members of Fionn's mac Cumhaill's household in Almha[6].

Having touched on the sources for the Fer Muman material in a general way, it might prove helpful at this point to illustrate their range by presenting a comprehensive list of them along

4. This commentary is on *Bretha Étgid*, one of the legal texts belonging to the Munster-based *Nemed* ('holy, privileged') collection; see F. Kelly, *Early Irish Farming, A Study Based Mainly on the Law-Texts of the 7ᵗʰ and 8ᵗʰ Centuries AD*, Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1997, p. 246.

5. For a fine collection of incidental verse and anecdotes relating to folk poets of the modern period, see S. Ó Cróinín - D. Ó Cróinín (ed), *Seanachas Phádraig Í Chrualaoi*, Baile Átha Cliath, Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 1982.

6. E. MacNeill (ed), *Duanaire Finn [Part 1]*, London, Irish Texts Society, 1908, poem XII, quatrain 21.

with the abbreviations that will be used to designate them in the presentation of each verse item.

(A) **Corm.** *Sanas Cormaic* ('Cormac's Glossary'), a glossary attributed to Cormac mac Cuillenáin, the cleric, poet, and king of Cashel who was slain in 908[7]. This compilation appears to have been closely connected with the bardic milieu and it is particularly noteworthy for containing several articles dealing with poetry and legendary poets. Copies cited in this collection include:

> **Corm Y.** Trinity College Dublin (hereafter, TCD) MS 1318 (formerly H 2 16, 'The Yellow Book of Lecan'), pp. 255ᵃ — 283ᵃ; 16th century; edited by K. MEYER in *Sanas Cormaic* [1912], Felinfach, Llanerch, 1994). Glossary articles in this copy will be cited hereafter by their number in Meyer's edition.

> **Corm LB.** Royal Irish Academy (hereafter, RIA) MS 23 P 16 (An Leabhar Breac), pp. 263–72; 15th century; ed. W. STOKES, *Three Irish Glossaries* [1862], Felinfach, Llanerch, 2000, pp. 1-46. Glossary articles in this copy will be cited hereafter by their page number and headword in Stokes's edition.

> **Corm M.** RIA MS D.ii.1 (Book of Uí Maine), fo. 119--126r; 14th century; edited by K. MEYER as *Cormacs Glossar nach der Handschrift des Buches der Ui Maine*, «Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften», XIX, 1919. Glossary articles in this copy will be cited hereafter by their number in Meyer's edition.

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7. *Sanas* (cognate with Welsh *hanes*) means 'whisper' or 'private communication', and in the title of this glossary would refer to the arcane information and revelatory etymologies contained therein. See P. RUSSELL, *The Sounds of Silence: the Growth of Cormac's Glossary*, «Cambrian Medieval and Celtic Studies», XV, 1988, pp. 1-30.

(B) **O'Mulc.** 'O'Mulconry's Glossary', an early glossary whose earliest stratum ('Descriptio de origine Scoticae linguae') may belong to the seventh century[8]. The only complete copy is contained in the Yellow Book of Lecan (see Corm Y above), cols. 88-122 (= pp. 421-31); edited by W Stokes as *O'Mulconry's Glossary* in «Archiv fur celtische Lexicographie», I, 1900, pp. 232-324. Glossary articles in this copy will be cited hereafter by their number in Stokes's edition.

(C) **DDC**. Dúil Dromma Cetta, a glossary sharing much material with (A) and (B) above.[9] In a tenth-century syllabus for the education of poets, it was prescribed for students in their eighth year of study[10]. The use of the place-name *Druimm Cett* in its title appears to be an attempt to associate it with the Council of Dromm Cetta at which Colum Cille purportedly defended the bards against a threat to suppress them[11]. Copies include:

> **DDC[1].** TCD ms 1337 (formerly H 318), pp. 63a -75c; 16th century; edited by D. Binchy in *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Hereafter, C*IH*) 604.39-622.12. Glossary articles in this copy are cited below by their location in *CIH*.

> **DDC[2].** idem, pp. 633a-638b (*CIH* 1069.21-1078.14). Glossary articles in this copy are cited below by their location in *CIH*.

8.   E. MacNeill, *Descriptio de origine Scoticae Linguae*, «Ériu», II, 1932, pp. 112-29.

9.   The term *dúil* is used to refer to an authorized list or compilation of glossarial or genealogical material; see *DIL* s.v. [3]*dúil*; also P. Russell, *Dúil Dromma Cetta and Cormac's Glossary*, «Études celtiques», XXII, 1996, pp. 147-174.

10. R. Thurneysen, *Mittelirischen Verslehren*, in W. Stokes - E. Windisch (ed), *Irische Texte mit Übersetzungen und Wörterbuch*, Dritte Serie, 1, Leipzig, 1891, 1-182.

11. J. Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press, 1974, pp. 157-170.

DDC³. British Library L (hereafter, British Library) MS Egerton 1782, fol. 15 (a fragment); 16ᵗʰ century. Glossary articles in this copy are cited below by their location in the manuscript.

DDC⁴. TCD MS 1288 (formerly H.1.13), pp. 361-62 (a fragment). Glossary articles in this copy are cited below by their location in the manuscript.

(D) **ACC (comm)**. Middle-Irish glosses and commentary on *Amra Choluim Chille*, the 'Eulogy of Colum Cille' attributed to Dallán Fogaill at the time of the saint's death in 597.

ACC (comm) Eg. BL MS Egerton 1782, ff. 1ª-14ᵇ. Articles cited below by their location in the manuscript.

ACC (comm) G, National Library of Ireland (hereafter, NLI) MS G50, pp. 1–105.12; 17ᵗʰ century. Articles cited below by their location in the manuscript.

ACC (comm) LB. An Leabhar Breac (see Corm LB under (A) above), 238ᶜ-248. Articles cited below by their location in the manuscript.

ACC (comm) B. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B. 502, ff. 54ª1-59ᵇ2; edited by W. Stokes, *The Bodleian Amra Choluimb Chille*, «Revue celtique», XX, 1899, pp. 31-55, 152-83, 248-89; XXI, 1900, pp.133-36. Articles cited below by their location in Stoke's edition.

ACC (comm) H. Collected glosses in TCD MS 1337 (see DDC¹ above), pp. 610b21 ff.). Articles cited below by their location in the manuscript.

(E) **Fél LB (*anfhót*)**. A gloss (with verse) on the word *anfhót* 'incaution' in a copy of *Félire Óengusso* ('the Martyrology of Óengus') in the Leabhar Breac (see Corm LB under above), p. 92 (30

July). Two versions of the gloss occur in the manuscript, one after another[12]; these are:

> **Fél LB (*anfhót*)**[1]. Page 92, lines *m-n* (with *z* being the last line of the page).

> **Fél LB (*anfhót*)**[2]. Page 92, lines *n-o*.

(F) **Tre**. The *Trefhocul* tract, a Middle-Irish tract on metrical faults.

> **Tre LL.** TCD ms 1339 (formerly H 2 18, 'The Book of Leinster'), fol. 37a ff.; ed. G.G. CALDER, *Auraicept na n-Éces / The Scholars' Primer* [1917], Blackrock, Four Courts Press, 1995, pp. 258-269. Items below are cited by their line numbers in Calder's edition (hereafter referred to as *Auraic.*).

> **Tre M.** RIA ms D.ii.1 (Book of Uí Maine), fo. 143r ff.; ed. Calder, ibidem. Items below are cited by their line numbers in Calder's edition.

(G) **MV II**. A ninth- or tenth-century tract on the metrical syllabus for students of bardic poetry. RIA ms 23 P 12 (Book of Ballymote), pp. 301b 24 − 305b; late 14th century. Edited by R. THURNEYSEN, *Die Mittelirischen Verslehren*, in W. STOKES and E. WINDISCH (ed), *Irische Texte mit Übersetzungen und Wörterbuch*, Dritte Serie (Leipzig, 1891), 1-182; reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band II [Keltische Sprachen und Litteraturen], Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1991, pp. 340-521. Articles cited below by their location in Thurneysen's edition.

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12. W. STOKES published these two versions of the gloss in *On the Calendar of Oengus*, «Transactions of the R.I.A. Manuscript Series», I [Part 1], 1880, p. CXIV.

(H) **H(*mó*)**. A gloss on the word *mó* ('soon') in a collection of legal anecdotes related to the eighth-century Munster law-tracts, *Bretha Nemed*. It is found in TCD ᴍꜱ 1339 (formerly H 2 17), p. 362 (*CIH* 2112.36-39). These anecdotes, along with the gloss, were published in M. Dɪʟʟᴏɴ, *Stories from the Law-tracts*, «Ériu», ɪɪ, 1930, pp. 42-65 (with the gloss on pp. 43-4).

(I) **D**. A copy of *Bretha Éitgid*, the laws concerning accidental injury, along with commentary, in RIA ᴍꜱ 670 (= ᴅ ᴠ 2); 14ᵗʰ century (?)[13]. Cited below by location in manuscript.

The following twelve items, then, comprise the known corpus of verse associated with Fer Muman.

The sources and selected (i.e significant) variants are given in the footnotes. I have attempted to provide translations, but given the inherent difficulties of the material with regard to context and, in several instances, its studied obscurity, these must be taken with a grain of salt.

No. ɪ: Bid cách i faitchius i fóit

There are three basic versions of this quatrain. The first and probably the earliest version (see version A) is represented in the first instance by D, fo.64vb, where the it in a gloss on the word ᴀɴꜰōᴛ 'lack of caution, heedlessness' and is attributed to 'the poet', Fer Muman mac Echtain.[14] This is the only in-

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13. K. Mᴜʟᴄʜʀᴏɴᴇ (ed), *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, fasc. xᴠɪ, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 1936.

14. This copy was brought to my notice by in a reference to the ᴍꜱ in Jᴏʜɴ O'Dᴏɴᴏᴠᴀɴ's edition of *Cormac's Glossary*, Calcutta, 1868, p. 11; he had this information in turn from Dr. Charles O'Conor's *Bibliotheca MS. Stowensis*, Vol. 1, 1818, p. 288, in the latter's description of Stowe 'MS 37', a fourteenth-century vellum fragment. Prof. Liam Breatnach has since identified 'ᴍꜱ 37' with the present-day ʀɪᴀ ᴍꜱ ᴅ ᴠ 2. I wish to thank Prof. Breatnach for providing me with this information along with a transcription of the fragment: « … am*al* adubairt ín fil*i* .i. Fer Muman

stance in which Fer Muman is identified by a patronymic.[15] In the footnotes I have supplied variant readings from the two other copies (Fél LB[2], Corm LB, p. 21) only in such cases as they are of any interest or significance. (In one instance, for example, the reading *is cian imthigit innóic* in Corm LB appears to have been generated by oral transmission). Otherwise I have normalized the spellings. In the case of TEXT 2, the text is given as in Stoke's transcription. The three copies of TEXT 3 are all found in a commentary on the phrase *cuil deim de éot* (line 105 in Stoke's edition) of *Amra Choluim Chille.* The sources present no significant variants and I have provided a normalized version.

TEXT (VERSION A)[16]

Bid cách i faitchius i fóit
is brecht cía imtíagat óic
conid de atá fót faitech
agus anfhót anfhaitech

TRANSLATION

All who are vigilance are on the alert (*i fóit*) –
a doubtful proposition, even though warriors roam about –
and so there is *fót* ('alertness') meaning 'vigilant'
and *anfhót* ('lack of alertness') meaning 'unvigilant'.

m*ac* Echtain: Bidh cach ca aitchus i foit / is brecht cia imtiagait óig / conidh de ata fot fait*ech* / 7 anfhot anfait*ech*». For the canonical text see *CIH* 1066.22.

15. The name *Echtan* does not appear to be particularly common in Old Irish. A stone cross from Rathdrum, par. Ballinacor North, Co. Wexford,, (Macalister 1949: 86 [no. 885] OROIT DO ECHTAN. See R. MACALISTER, (1949) *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* II, Dublin, Stationery Office, p. 86 [no. 885].

16. SOURCES: D, fo.64vb; Fél LB (*anfhót*)[2], p. 92 (*n-o*); Corm LB, p. 21. VARIANTS: ca fhaitchus i foit *D*, afaitchius afóit *Fél LB*, ifaitces a fóit *Corm LB*; becht *Fél LB*; is cian imthigit innóic *Corm LB*.

TEXT (VERSION B)[17]

Bíd cách ac faircsin ac fót
i mbelaib ātha na n-óc;
is de ata fót faitech
ocus anfhót anfaitech

TRANSLATION

Everyone is watching at a lookout (*fót*)
in front of the ford of the warriors;
that is why there is *fót* ('watchfulness') meaning 'vigilant'
and *anfhót* ('un-watchfulness') meaning 'unvigilant'.

TEXT (VERSION C)[18]

Ferr duib faitchius ocus fót
ocus airichill na n-óc,
daig is fír cach fót faitech
ocus anfhot anfhaitech.

TRANSLATION

Better for you are vigilance and watchfulness (*fót*)
and preparing against the warriors,
for it is true that every *fót* ('watchfulness') is vigilant
and every *anfhót* ('un-watchfulness') 'unvigilant'.

Discussion

The word *fót* means 'watchfulness, vigilance, caution' (*Dictionary of the Irish Language* (hereafter, *DIL*) s.v. ²*fót*). I know of no etymology for it, and it is not unlikely that it derives from the figurative use of ¹*fót*.[19] This may, in fact, be the grounds for an intentional pun in this etymological quatrain. The phrase *i fout* (dative) is elsewhere attested as meaning «on the alert»

17. SOURCE: Fél LB (anfhót)¹, p. 92 (*l-n*).

18. SOURCES: ACC (comm) B, §105; ACC (comm) M, p. 614ᵇ.15-20; ACC (comm) G, p. 102.

19. In Middle Irish *fót* is sometimes used for a *place* where something is examined: *ar fhód fĕagtha fátha* (ML 98.27, cited in *DIL* s.v. ¹*fót*); *ar fhód scrután gaísse* (*Acallamh na Seanórach* 6191, cited ibidem).

(*Annals of the Four Masters,* AD 590, cited in *DIL s.v.* ²*fót*).[20] In VERSION A, however, the manuscript form *fóit* could be taken as a genitive (rather than a late dative) in which case the preceding word would be a 3 sg. or pl. possessive. Under this interpretation we might have something like *bíd cách i bhfaitchius a fóit* 'everyone is anxious about his own place'.

No. II: Cochall coss ngall[21]

<div align="center">TEXT</div>
<div align="center">(from Corm Y 683)</div>

Gall i. e. corthe cloiche, ut est: nīs coma(i)thaig comathar selba co co-brannaib gall. Gall cetharda fordingair .i. gall cluichi cētimus, ut prediximus. Is aire asberar gall de suidiu, fobīth is Gaill ceta-rosāithset nó rosuidigset i nĒre. Gaill .i. Frainc. Gaill da*no* ainm do sainc[h]landaib nō do saerc[h]landaib Franc .i. tribus [tres *MS*] Gallie, 7 is candoire corporis ro-hainmniged dōib. Gall enim graece [*grǣco MS*], lac latine dicitur, inde Galliae .i. indastai. Síc do*no* gall is ainm do ela. Inde Fer Muman dixit:

> **Cochall coss ngall, gamin brain**.

Gall *dono* ainm do chailiuch dindī is gallus. 7 is a galia capitis rohainmniged .i. cathbarr a c[h]ind.

<div align="center">TRANSLATION</div>

Gall, i.e. a standing stone, as it is read: 'They were not another's property until they were marked off by pillar-stones'. *Gall* signifies four things i.e. 'pillar of stone', first of all (as we have said). It is called a *gall* because the Gauls were the first to erect or set them up in Ireland. Gauls, i.e. Franks. Gauls, therefore, is a name for the native or noble kindreds of the Franks, i.e. the tribes of Gaul; and they were named for the whiteness of their bodies. For *gall* [*gā́la*] in Greek is 'milk' [*lac*] in Latin, whence 'Gauls'. i.e. the 'milky ones'. And so, therefore, *gall* is a name for 'swan'. Whence Fer Muman said:

> the plumage(?) of swans' legs, a raven's hide

Gall, therefore, is a name for a 'cock', from [Lat.] *gallus*. And it was given its name from [Lat.] *galea capitis*, i.e. its headgear.

20. In later language, the declension of ¹*fót* varies.

21. SOURCES: Corm Y 683, Corm LB. (s.v. *gall*), Corm M. (no. 70, s.v. *gall*); ed. K. MEYER, *Bruchstücke*, p. 68 (no. 158). VARIANTS: Cocholl chos ngall gem*e*n brain *LB*, Cochuill c[h]oss ngall gamin bran *M*.

Discussion

Meyer translates the line as follows: «Die Fussbekleidung der Schwäne, die Winterröcke der Raben» («The foot-covering of the swans, the winter-coats of the ravens»). Influenced, perhaps, by the etymology of *gaimen* in Corm Y 242, he considers this line to be from a «Winterlied»[22]. There is a fundamental problem, however, in regards to *cochull choss*: the lack of plumage on the legs and feet of swans. Neither, for that matter, is *gaimen* (see *DIL s.v. gemen*) 'skin, hide' likely to denote, in any normal circumstances, a cloak of feathers. This difficulty may, in fact, be the very point of the line: the rhetorical presentation of two nonexistents.

Another possibility – and one that presumes *gall* to mean 'cock' (from Lat. *gallus*), a usage uniquely attested in the *Sanas Cormaic* article – is that *cochall* here refers to some kind of hobble used to restrain poultry. *DIL* cites this usage in the commentary on *Bretha Comaithchesa* ('The Judgements of Neighbourhood'; *CIH* 73.28) where the fines for trespass by poultry are listed: *an coimet adeir dliged orro .i. cochaill impa* 'the restraining which the law stipulates for them, i.e. that *cochaill* be put on them'. In this case *cochall* (which, in the plural, O'Donovan translates as 'boots of rag') might refer to a hood- or net-like device, made of skin, which could be placed over the legs of the bird and tied[23].

As obscure as it is, the line is nicely constructed, with two

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22. Corm Y 242 has: *gaimen .i. gaimfinn* '*gaimen* i.e. *gaim* ('winter') + *finna* ('hairs, fleece')'. If we follow the earlier portion of our text and take *gall* to mean 'Gauls' or 'Franks', then the verse might refer to a supposition that those people, like the Inuit, wore leggings of bird-skin. Admittedly, this is a bit far-fetched.

23. *DIL s.v. cochall*). In another version of the same commentary (*CIH* 578.34-6) *cochaill* is replaced by *imdibe a netaigh 7 urcomla foraib* «the clipping of their wings and [the placing of] short spancels on them». We may note also the existence of a noun *gémen*, possibly *geimen* (v. *DIL s.v. gébend* 'a fetter, a bond'). Could this be the word intended in the second half of our line?

alliterating pairs (one of which spans the caesura) and asso-nance in *cochuill : choss* and in the last three words *ngall gamin bran.*

No. III. As-béra fíach goblom grág[24]

<div align="center">TEXT</div>

Nát .i. tón, ut dixit Fer Muman:

> As-béra fiach goblom grác
> ic creim nát námat anocht

<div align="center">TRANSLATION</div>

Nát, i.e. hindquarters, as Fer Muman said:

> A bare-beaked raven will say 'caw'
> while gnawing an enemy's rump tonight.

Discussion

The headword of this glossary article, *nát*, appears to be borrowed from Lat. *nates* 'buttocks'. The lack of hiatus (i.e. *fíach* for OIr. *fiäch*) in the first line might suggest that this is a composition of the Middle-Irish period. On the other hand, both the hiatus and the 7^1 syllable count could be restored by the emendation of *as-béra* to pres. *as-beir* (as in the manuscript of DDC², where *asb* is followed by the *-er* siglum).

A striking feature of these two grim lines is the masterful use of complex alliteration and assonance: As-béra fíach **g**ob-lom **gr**Ác / i**c cr**eim **n**Át **n**Ámat anocht[25].

No. IV: Ulcha dobrach i ndomhnach (from *Dúan in Meirlig*)[26]

24. SOURCES: O'Mulc. 836; DDC¹ (*CIH* 618.26-7); DDC². (*CIH* 1076a.33-5).

25. For the phenomenon of 'complex alliteration' (cf. Welsh *cynghanedd*) in early Irish verse, see D. SPROULE, *Complex Alliteration*, «Ériu», XXXVIII, 1987, pp. 185-200.

26. SOURCES: DDC¹ (*CIH* 612.29-31); DDC² (*CIH* 1073a.7-12); Corm Y 498. VARIANTS (both in DDC²): feirnech *(line 2)*, soimlech *(line 3)*.

TEXT
(from Corm ʏ 498)

Dobrach .i. fliuchaide, ut est Fer Muman a ndúain an merligh:

> Ulcha dobrach i ndomhnach,
> i lúan, i mairt mac meirnech,
> Fo bratach senrech sroiglech
> srúamach maignech, míl meirlech

TRANSLATION

Dobrach .i. 'moist', as Fer Muman (says) in the 'Poem of the Brigand':

> A moist beard on Sunday,
> on Monday, on Tuesday — a treacherous(?) youth;
> under a spreading, flapping
> banner, streaming and immense, — a plundering soldier.

Discussion

This item from *Sanas Cormaic* and *Dúil Dromma Cetta* is actually cited by its source's title: *Dúan in Meirlig* ('The Poem of the Brigand'). The quatrain appears to be pointing out the contradiction between the brigand's dominical piety and his weekday plundering.

Soimlech (in place of *sroiglech*) in the DDC copies appears to mean 'nicely bordered' (from *so-* + *imlech)*. I take *meirnech* to be a form of *mairnech* 'treacherous; destructive (?)' (from *mairn* 'betrayal'. Both DDC copies have *feirnech*, for which I can offer no interpretation. *Maignech* is frequently used as an epithet of horses and may derive from *maigne* 'big, great' (*DIL s.v. maignech).*

No. v: Rucht fothuind fithend fói [27]

Fothond .i. muclaithe īarsindī bīs fo thuind amail in cerndubhān, ut dixit Fer Muman:

> Rucht fothuind fithend fói,
> andord ela, inmhuin ōi [aui *MS*],
> osnad echtge, ālaind lūad,
> līn muc mūad, mend medras cōi.

Fothond, i.e. pig-rooting (?), from that which is under the surface of the ground like the beetle, as Fer Muman said:

> The sound of chomping, a chief's boar,
> the song of a swan, pleasing to the ear,
> the cry of an owl, a lovely call,
> a herd of great swine, clear sings the cuckoo.

Textual notes and discussion

Rucht fothuind. *Rucht* is well-attested as signifying a noise produced by living creatures and in several instances it is related to swine (*DIL* s.vv. ²*rucht*, ¹*ruchtach*). The following word is a problem, however, and was obviously a problem when the glossary was compiled. *Fothond* – presumably its basic form – is glossed by *muclaithe*, which Meyer took to stand for *muclaige 'Schweinelager' ('pig-lair'). The verbal noun *lige* '(the act of) lying down' is used in some instances to describe the perching of birds, and in other contexts, by transferral, it can

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27.   SOURCE: Corm Y 662, s.v. *Fothond*; see also K. MEYER, *Bruchstücke*, p. 68 (no. 157).

28.   Meyer translated: «Das Grunzen aus dem Sauenlager ..., der Schwäne Gesang, dem Ohre lieb, der Schrei des Käuzchens, ein lieblicher Ton, die Zahl der wilden Schweine, klar erschalt des Kuckucks Ruf».

denote 'couch' or 'bed'. The closest attested parallel to Meyer's suggested reading is a single occurrence of the phrase *lighe chon* which refers to the place where dogs lie, i.e. a 'dog kennel'(*DIL s.v.* ¹*lige*, II (a)). Unfortunately, a compound of animal-word + *lige* is nowhere attested, not even in the voluminous legal material dealing with animal husbandry.

Another possibility, and again with a slight emendation, is that *muclaithe* represents a compound *mucclaide 'pig-rooting' (< *muc* + *claide* 'digging'). There is in fact a close semantic parallel in the compound *mucclass* 'a trench or furrow made by a pig rooting(?)'(< *muc* + *clas* 'ditch, trench, furrow'; *DIL s.v. mucc*)[29]. The gloss proceeds to make an association between *muclaithe* − whatever it actually means − and the creature known as a *cerndubán* which resides just under the 'skin' of the earth (*fo thuind*). *Cerndubán* can mean 'hornet' in the older language, but another meaning, 'beetle', is sufficiently well attested in Modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic for us to take it as a more likely possibility in this text, especially as the beetle does in fact make its nest in an underground burrow.[30]

Following this understanding of the gloss, I suspect that we have here an old, primary meaning of the Celtic root **tend-* 'cut, split, rend'(< IE. **temə-*) with a corresponding substantive *fothond* (cf. *fo-teinn* 'nibbles, gnaws') meaning either 'nibbling/gnawing' or perhaps even the place where the 'nibbling/gnawing' is or has been done[31]. The same explanation

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29. *DIL* gives several examples of the verb *claidid* being used for the rooting of swine: cf. *torcc ic claide in talman* «a boar digging the ground»; cf. also *claidhit muca co grian* «pigs dig down to the gravel» (*CIH* 788.11), cited in KELLY, *Early Irish Farming*, p. 142.

30. Cf. *cearnamhan* 'droning beetle, cockchafer' (Ó Dón.); *cearneabhán* 'beetle' (Dinneen); *cèarr-dubhan* 'the sacred beetle' (Dwelly). There is no evidence in the later language that *cerndubán* refers to an aquatic animal.

31. See Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique d'Irlandais ancien* (hereafter *LEIA*) T-108 (s.v. ¹*tonn*); P. DE BERNARDO-STEMPEL, *Nominale Wortbildung des Älteren Irischen: Stammbildung und Derivation*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1999, p. 60, n.94. I wish to express my thanks to Dr Alexander Fali-

might be adduced for the phrase *focal fothuind* – referring to the lamentation of Colum Cille's followers after his death – in *Amra Choluim Chille*[32]. Although it is glossed by the relative form of *fo-theind* in the ensuing commentary (*.i. is focul fot[h]ein[d]* 'it is a word that nibbles'), the glossator does not take *fothuind* in the text to be a poor spelling for that form[33]. (If the explanation were so simple, why would he have bothered with the gloss in the first place?). In our text, the fact that the compiler of the glossary restores the form *fothond* as a head-word clearly shows that he considers it a noun. I am inclined to take the phrase *rucht fothuind* to mean 'the sound of chomping' (in reference to swine rooting for acorns and shoots). In this case *fothond* would be an o-stem noun. If , on the other hand, we read it as a feminine ā-stem referring to the *place* of this activity, the form *fothuind* would be either a preposition-less dative or – with emendation to *fothuinde* – a genitive singular[34].

fitheann fói. In addition to this text, the only other instance of *fithend* 'boar' cited in *DIL* is in O'Clery's glossary: *fitheann .i. muc fireann*, an article which might have originated with O'Clery's reading of our text. If this definition is a pure conjecture, it might have been based on an analysis of *fithend* as *fíthe* 'woven, thickly growing' or *fid* 'tree, wood, woods (grove)' + *-end* as in the pair *firend* 'male (of animals)' and *boin-enn* 'fe-

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leyev for his generous advice and suggestions with regards to the linguistic problems dealt with here. Of course, any errors in these lines of argument are purely my own responsibility.

32. W. STOKES, W., *The Bodleian Amra Choluimb Chille*, «*Revue celtique*», XXI, 1900, p. 412 (§138).

33. In the more extensive commentaries contained in LB (p. 240) and RIA G.50 (p. 102), FOTHUIND is glossed father by relative forms of *loiscid* 'burns, stings, afflict; *teinnid* 'cuts', and *gonaid* 'wounds'; cf. Sc. Gaelic *fuithein* (n.) 'galling, taking off the skin by riding'; 'trifling s.ore'(Dwelly). I would take *focul fothuind* in the *Amra* to mean literally 'a word of gnawing' (with the full range of figurative meanings as supplied by the glossators).

34. This emendation is not out of the question, as the line appears to be short a syllable.

male'. On the other hand, the history of the suffix in that pair is unclear, and it would be rash to discount the possibility that we are dealing with a genuine word[35]. If we follow O'Clery and take *fithend* to mean 'boar', it could be either a genitive plural (governed by the preceding phrase) or else nominative singular (syntactically independent of the preceding phrase). *Fói* might be the genitive singular of *²fó* 'chief, lord' – an attested word in the obscure poetic lexicon (*Bérla na Filed*) – or else a poetic name (see *DIL s.v. ²Fói*) for *Cnámchoill* (in Tipperary?)[36].

No. VI: Is dána drech daimíni[37]

<div align="center">TEXT (normalized)[38]</div>

Duillén .i. gái, ut dixit Fer Muman:

> Is dána drech Daimíni
> iter ócu érechtai;
> Is a síthmruig suidigthi
> léicith duillén ndeiligthi

<div align="center">TRANSLATION</div>

Duillén .i. a spear, as Fer Muman said:

> Bold is Daimíne's aspect
> among risen warriors;
> from an established *síd*-dwelling
> he lets fly a barbed spear.

35. P. DE BERNARDO-STEMPEL, *Nominale Wortbildung*, pp. 459-60

36. For the name *Cnámhchoill*, see E. HOGAN, *Onomasticon Goedelicum* [1910], Blackrock, Four Courts Press, 1993, p. 272a.

37. SOURCES: Corm Y 488 (s.v. *duillén*), DDC¹ (*CIH* 613.4-5 s.v. *duilenn*), DDC² (CIH 1073a.30-2 s.v. *duilleán*).

38. MS READINGS AND VARIANTS: Doimine *Corm Y*, Daimine *DDC*, Daimine *DDC*; ōc- erigthi *Corm Y*, ócaib eirechtae *DDC¹*, ocaib eirichtae *DDC²*; sc thbrug suidigthi *Corm Y*, sithmbrugh suidithe *DDC¹*, sithmbruigh suidithe *DDC²*; lēigthi duillēn deilighthe *Corm Y*, leicith duillen ndeilithe *DDC¹*, leicidh duilleán ndeilighthi *DDC²* .

Discussion

In general, the DDC versions preserve older forms; these include: the past participle forms *eirechtae* and *eirichtae* (for acc. pl. *érechtai*) based on OIr. *at-reig* (rather than later *éirgid*); *sithmbruigh* and *sithmbrugh*, reflecting OIr. *mruig* (rather than later *bruig*); and nasalization of accusative *deiligthi*. For *suidigthi* and *suidithe* in the extant copies, Old Irish would have a dative singular accusative in *-iu* (*GOI* §§354, 714), but there is at least one early attested example of dative *-i* for *-iu* (from the ninth-century Milan glosses; see *GOI* §354).

I am unable to identify this Daimíne. Perhaps he was the son of Cairpre Dam Argait, king of Argialla, whose death in 564 is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* (hereafter, AU).[39] According to *Senchas Dáil Fhiatach* (LL 330[b]43), a 'Daimíne' is said to have given hospitality to Eochu Rígéices, a 'royal poet' and grandson of the Ulster king Dallán mac Dubthaig. Eochu – who would have flourished towards the end of the sixth century – is one of the *ur*-poets of Irish bardic tradition.

The metre of the poem appears to be a loose form of *casbairdne* (7³ 7³ 7³ 7³).

No. VII: **Nemain dega deirge** [40]

TEXT

Nemain dega .i. oíble tened, ut dixit Fer Muman:

> Nemain dega deirge
> Ar-rethat [airethait *DDC*] berbtha bíad ndéoil

39. S. Mac Airt - G. Mac Niocaill (ed), *The Annals of Ulster [Part 1]*, Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983, p. 86 (for the year AD 574.3).

40. SURCES: DDC¹ (*CIH* 618.28-9); DDC² (*CIH* 1076a.36-8); O'Mulc. 839. The copy in O'Mulc. 839 has one line only: *Nemain dega .i. áible tened, ut dicitur: nemain dega derci et reliqua.*

Nemain ('fury') of fire .i. flames of fire, as Fer Muman said:

> The fury of red-hot fire,
> ⌈whereby?⌉ boilings apprehend sucking food.

Discussion

The DDC copies are in complete agreement and, with the exception of the verbal form *airethait*, present no significant variants to the normalized version above. The form *airethait* would appear to require emendation. Taking it as an independent 3 pl. *ar-rethat* 'captures, overtakes' makes reasonable sense. It could, however, be a nasalizing relative *ara-rethat* with syncope of the relative marker *-a-*: «whereby boilings overtake sucking food».

These lines offer another example of complex alliteration and assonance: «N*e*main D*e***g**a D*eir***c**e / a*r*-*r*e**th**at B*e*r*b***th**a B*í*ad ndéoil». The subject matter presents a mystery. Perhaps this is an example of the cooking and cauldron imagery which is sometimes used in reference to poetic inspiration.[41]

No. VIII: Mo shon ó mac Máile hUmai[42]

Ocus in sétrad dano, 7 Fer Muman cecinit:

> Mo shon ó mac Máili hUmai.

And the *sétrad* then, and Fer Muman sang:

> My prosperity from the son of Máel Umai.

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41.   See L. Breatnach (ed, trans.) *In Coire Érmai, 'The Caldron of Poesy'*, «Ériu», XXXII,1981, pp. 45-93.

42.   SOURCE: MV II §10, p. 34.

Discussion

Meyer read the line as containing *Moshono*, a hypochoristic form of an otherwise unattested name *Sonid*.[43] In the manuscript, however, there is clearly a space between *moshon* and *om*ac*mailí humaí*. I take *son* to be the adjective *son²*, used here as a substantive meaning 'prosperity, well-being, advantage' (*DIL s.v. son*). There is another example of this substantive use in a legal commentary (*CIH* 351.13-4) where is used to provide an etymological gloss for *almsan* 'alms': *ailim son* 'I deserve prosperity'. It is also rather appropriate that line is cited as an example of *sétrath* (= s*étnath* 'treasure poetry'< *sét + nath*), a metre used in a genre in which a poet seeks recompense from his patron[44].

The most renowned figure of that name is Máel Umai mac Báetáin +AU 610,[45] but there are at least seventeen other individuals of that name recorded in the annals and genealogies, most of whom belong to Leinster and Munster kindreds. There were also notable clerics with Máel Umai as a patronymic: *Obitus Suibne filii Maela Umai principis Corcoighi* (AU-682.3); *Suibne m. Maile hUmai, ancorita 7 scriba optimus Cluana Moccu Nois, dormiuit* (AU-891.8). The latter is a particularly enticing possibility, since Clonmacnoise lies in the Connacht/Southern Uí Néill/Laigin border district with which Fer Muman is associated in Nos. XI and XII.

43. K. Meyer, *Bruchstücke der Ältern Lyrik Irlands*, Berlin, 1919, p. 63.

44. Murphy, pp. 49, 54.

45. For the previous year (609), AU records the death of Conall s.o. Daiméine. Cf. Doimíne in No. VI.

No. IX: Ind hue issind ass gandfhir[46]

<div align="center">TEXT (from LL)</div>

Can dimbrig. Fer Muman c*ec*init.

> Ind hue issind ass gandfhir
> fo t⌐h⌐arrib taebleirg tuignech
> deoraid amal cech Laignech
> maignech amal cech Mumnech.

<div align="center">TRANSLATION</div>

Without want of emphasis. Fer Muman sang:

> The grandson in a needy man's shoe
> at the foot of grassy hillsides.
> An exile like every Leinsterman,
> having his own home like every Munster man.

Discussion

This quatrain from the *Trefhocul* tract is cited as an example of verse containing *dimbrig* 'want of emphasis'[47]. As the tract deals with metrical requirements and faults rather than faults of style, I suspect that the lack of emphasis referred to here is the want of alliteration in the third line. I take *maigneach* as an adjective derived from *maigen* 'a place belonging to (some one), stead, home' (*DIL s.v. maigen*). Here it could be used as substantive to mean 'one having his own place', an interpretation which works well in contrast to *deoraid* 'exile'.

As for the general meaning of the quatrain, I suspect that 'the grandson in a needy man's shoe' is someone whose patrimony is being withheld or who has fallen on hard times. The image of a golden shoe was a symbol associated with a claimant to chieftaincy (*DIL s.v. ²as*) so that *fer in ais óir* was used in

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46. SOURCES: Tre LL, p. 37^b27 (=*Auraic.* 5145-9); Tre M, fo. 143r^b 24-26 (= *Auraic.* 5150-54). LL has the better readings. The first line in M has: *Ind uea innd ras gaindair.*

47. CALDER, *Auraicept*, p. 330 (glossarial index s.v. *dim-bríg*). Calder suggests that *amal cech* 'like every' is the locus of the fault.

classical bardic poetry for a person of high rank. If this inter-
pretation is correct, this would be the earliest attestation of the
figure.

No. x:.Goth gruce golfad bréice [48]

<div align="center">TEXT (from LL)[49]</div>

A chotut ut Fer Muman dixit.

> Goth grūce, golfad bréice,
> baeth críche. crich co ndorthor.
> Íar mbeith siu saeb a thi[u]gthol,
> taistel Milchon m*eic* Onchon

<div align="center">TRANSLATION</div>

> A sting of displeasure, a false wailing,
> a wayward demise, a demise with outrage.
> After being here, perverse his last wish.
> the wayfaring of Milchú mac Onchon».

Discussion

In the *Trefhocul* tract this verse is given as an example of *cotut*
'hardening', a metrical fault whereby an accented syllable or a
final syllable is not given its proper value. The text in Tre M ac-
tually provides this information in a gloss: *A cotot .i. timorcain fri
aicnead no i cind* 'its hardening, i.e. reduction on an accent or at
the end of the word'. From the example, I take it to mean that
the form (*d*)*torthor* has undergone an invalid reduction of its
syllabic length in order to accommodate the 4×7^2 structure of
the metre. The reduced word could be *doróthar* 'a bad onrush'
(of an illness?) or, allowing for some emendation, *tor-othar* 'a

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48.   SOURCES: Tre LL (*Auraic.* 5292-97); Tre M (Auraic. 5294-7); Corm Y
      725.

49.   Significant VARIANTS in Tre M: gruige, gulfad mbreice, iar torthor,
      thiugthol.

sorrowful illness' (< ¹*tor* 'sorrow' + *othar* 'illness' or 'sick attendance')[50]. Still another possibility is *torathar* 'monstrosity, outrage'.

Goth (*DIL s.v.* ³*goth*) is attested as meaning both 'spear' and the 'sting (of a serpent)', the latter of which makes good sense. Corm Y 725, however (which has only one line of the text) has *guth* 'voice'[51].

In *baeth críche* we may have an instance of an adjective followed by a genitive complement (*GOI*, p. 159); thus, 'foolish, with respect to his final end'.

Ti(u)gthol clearly refer to the last wish of Milchú. On those grounds I take *crích* to refer to his final end. A connection appears to be made between his «false wailing» (*golfad bréice*) and «ill-advised (*saeb*) final wish». In turn, *taistel* 'wayfaring/visiting' ('after being here') probably refers to this final wish. Fer Muman, in any case, was clearly disappointed with him. The *Annals of Ulster* record the death of Mac Onchon, a scribe of Kildare, in 739.

No. XI: **In éssar dam to há?** ('*Imacallam na Déise*')[52]

The quatrain in this anecdote was edited and discussed some years ago by Calvert Watkins[53]. Its authorship is not attributed to Fer Muman in the text, but rather to some

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50. Cf. *dobás* 'hard or unfortunate death' (*DIL* s.v. *dobás*)

51. The line in Corm Y 725 reads: *Gruc .i. laoch nō garb, ut dicitur: guth gruice, cruth mbrége, et reliqua.* It may be noted also that in DDC¹ (*CIH* 615.4-5) the articles for *gruic* (*a cruciatu .i. pianeth, nó cúmgach*) and *guth* (*a gutore*) occur one after the other, an indication, perhaps, that this version was the source of those headwords.

52. SOURCES: Corm Y 70 (s.v. *á*); Corm LB, p. 5 (s.v. *á*); Corm M, no. 70 (s.v. *á*); DDC¹ (*CIH* 617.23, s.v. *mó*); H(*mó*). (*CIH* 2112.36-39); ACC (comm) Eg, f. 6ᵃ1 (glossing *á*); ACC (comm) G, p. 27.22-7 (glossing *á*). VARI-ANTS: a quibusdam plebilibus (*sic*) *LB*, a quib*us* flebilib*us M*.

53. C. Watkins, *Varia III, no. 2*, «Ériu», XXIX, 1978, pp. 161-65.

'wretched men' he encountered while journeying 'in the north'. The text is found in *Corm* under the headword *á*, a rare word for 'cart, war-chariot' (*DIL s.v. á*). In DDC² the verse is cited in abbreviated form – and without attribution to Fer Muman – under *mó* 'soon', a word found only in glosses or glossaries.⁵⁴ Fer Muman is not mentioned in the ACC (comm) versions either, and the quatrain is cited by what appears to be a title: *Imacallam na Déise* («the Dialogue of the Two Men»). In H(*mó*), the text is cited in a gloss on preverbal *mo-* 'soon' occurring in verse from a legal anecdote (which belongs in turn to a commentary on a *Bretha Nemed* text).⁵⁵ It is immediately followed by a second Fer Muman anecdote (item X below). This seems to indicate that the two anecdotes were originally a pair and were distributed differently in Corm and DDC.

<div align="center">TEXT A (from Corm)⁵⁶</div>

Á .i. fén nó carr nó carpat ut Fer Muman a quibusdam [flebilibus *add. M*] audiuit in aquilon[al]i parte .i. mar do cúalaid Fer Muman don taoib túaidh de ó dáinib trúaga ac óin(e):

> 'In essar dam do á?'
> 'Tó, mena má mo á.
> Ara taire mo á mó'.
> 'Mani má do á, tó'.

54. The article in DDC¹ (*CIH* 617.23) reads as follows: Mo .i. moch. ut dr-. I*n*d iasar da*m* do a 7rl-. The glossary word *mó* (with its lengthened vowel) may have been artificially derived from the adverbial prefix *mos-* 'soon, quick'.

55. Morann said to Neire: «The holdings [property, household, stock] of Bresal, he will not soon give [them] in surety» (*Treba Bresail, ni mo-béra i raith*).

56. The text given here is based on Meyer's edition of Corm Y, with the addition of *flebilibus* (corresponding to *ó dáinib trúaga* in the Irish prose) from Corm M and Corm LB [*plebilibus* sic] and the emendation of *a coine* in the MS to *ac óin*. Marks of length have been supplied. The other copies of Corm and the DDC versions do not contain the Irish gloss *.i. mar do cúalaid* etc. (here placed in square brackets).

TRANSLATION

Á i.e. cart or chariot, as Fer Muman heard from some [wretched] men in the north, i.e. as Fer Muman heard to the north of him from miserable men contracting a loan:

> 'Will you lend me your cart?'
> 'Yes, unless my cart breaks.
> May my cart come back soon'.
> 'Unless it breaks, it will'.

Discussion

In H(*mó*) the introduction to the verse explicitly refers to the matter of a loan: *Dia luid Fer Muman a tír Connacht, co cuala in fer fria c[h]eli ag an iasacht* («Fer Muman went into Connacht, and he heard the one man saying to the other while contracting a loan …»). This corresponds closely with the version («Imacallam na Déise») in ACC (comm) Eg and ACC (comm) G, for which the former has the following: *Á .i. ainm ele do charr amail as follus i n-Imaccalaim na dési thall .i. fer tánaicc do iarrad íasachta [carr add. G] ar a chéile* («Á, i.e. another word for cart, as is clear in 'the Conversation of the Two Men Yonder, i.e. a man who came to seek the loan of a cart from his fellow»). This agreement adds considerable weight to David Green's argument, reported by Watkins, that *a coine* in Corm Y could be emended to *oc ōin* 'contracting a loan, and I have translated accordingly[57].

Calvert Watkins described the quatrain as «a little tour de force in versification, of the sort that immediately appealed to the Irish listener». He claimed that certain features of language and style pointed to a seventh-century date of composition: these include the hapax *éssar*, which he took to be a sg. depo-

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57. C. WATKINS, *Varia III, No. 2*, p. 161, n. 1. Glosses in ACC (comm) Eg (6ª1) also provide a line-for-line translation of the quatrain into late Middle Irish: *An doastar dam do á (.i. in esci dam do charr) / tó maine ma (.i. dogebair mina maidhe) / ara taire mo á mo (.i. mo charr co moch) / maine má do a to (.i. mina maide do charr, ticfa)*; see K. MEYER, *Contributions to Irish Lexicography*, Dublin, 1912, s.v. ³*á*.

nent, strong future from *eis- 'lend' (cf. íasacht), and a complex pattern of rhyme and «concatenating alliteration» (unstressed *mo, to* alliterating with stressed *mó, tó*). None of these, however, necessarily supports an early date. The consensus now is that *essar* is the reduplicated s-future of *oidid* 'borrows, the same verb that gives us the verbal-noun form *óin*.[58] Finally, the alliteration between 2 sg. possessive *to* (*do* in the manuscripts) and *tó* does not constitute evidence that the verse was formulated when the initial dental of the possessive was unvoiced; as in Modern Irish, the initial *d* of possessive *do* was devoiced before vowels.

It is worth noting that the directional references which set the action in Connacht and 'the North' may imply that Fer Muman himself was based to the south of those regions, thought to have been based in Munster.

No. XII. **Cuilenn co mboin.**[59]

TEXT
(as edited by Dillon but restoring the manuscript
readings as noted in his apparatus)

Is forsan c[h]uairt sin rocuala Fer Muman in godra isin caill i coicrích Ua Néll ocus Laigen. Faídis Fer Muman Nóin̄n mac Becáin uad isin caill dús cid rombíd ann. 'Cia fairneac?' ol Fear M(h)uman. Cuileand co mboin coll

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58. For a recent and comprehensive discussion of this verb, see S. SCHUMACHER, *Die Keltischen Primärverben, Ein vergleichended, etymologisches und morphologisches Lexicon*, Innsbruck, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 2004, pp. 728-37 (and particularly 732-3). Variants: ind iasar, *DDC⁷ H(mó)*; INn esar *M;* An doastar dam do á ACC (comm) E 6ª1 (.i. in esci dam do charr?).

59. SOURCES: H(*mó*). (*CIH* 2113.1-5); DDC³ (s.v. *mó*); DDC⁴, p. 362 (s.v. *mó*). VARIANTS shared by DDC³ and DDC⁴ include: (a) for *in godra* : *in goora*, glossed in turn by *in beced* (= *in mbéicced* 'the shouting'); (b) for *isin caill* : *issin caillidh*; (c) for *cid ronbíd* : *cia romboth*; d) *do luid mo fris* before (e); (e) for *Cia fairneac* : *Cia fairnicc* (sic); (f) omission of *condla co n-uaidib co trib triar fear* (parenthesized in the text above); (g) for *con* : *chúana* in DDC⁴ (DDC³ being illegible here).

cona dib daur (condla co n-uaidib co trib triar fear) fearsait mol muil uas boin blosair con.

TRANSLATION
(preliminary)

It was on that trip that Fer Muman heard murmuring (?) in the forest on the border of Uí Néill and Leinster. Fer Muman sent Nóinn son of Becán into the forest to see what it might be. `What did you find?' said Fer Muman. 'Holly with …[60]

Discussion

In H(*mó*) this anecdote immediately follows the gloss on *mó* containing Item X above (*CIH* 2113.1-5). Note, however, that there is no occurrence of that word in the anecdote itself, either in the prose introduction or in the verse. In the DDC versions, however, the phrase *do-luid mo fris* («He soon came [back] to him[?]») is inserted before Fer Muman's question, *cia fairneac?* ('What did you find?'). This addition in the prose of a phrase using *mō* would appear to be a scholarly device used to justify the re-assignment of the article to the headword *mó*. It also constitutes further evidence that the two Fer Muman anecdotes belonged together as in H(*mó*). Still more features may be adduced in support of this: the DDC versions of this item both agree with the beginning of No. XI in specifying Connacht as the setting of the action; a rustic setting is common to both; in both cases the verse element is reported speech.

The implication that the wooded borderland between the Uí Neill and the Laigin lay in Connacht may point to an early date of composition, i.e. to a period (prior to the late sixth century) when the use of name Connachta had not yet been restricted to dynastic groups west of the Shannon.[61] The border

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60. The text of the verse is extremely obscure here, and I will reserve a suggestion for translation until some of the forms have been examinind.

61. F.J. BYRNE, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, London, 1973, p. 231.

between the southern Uí Neill and Leinster. Could be the area of the Cenél Fiachach (east of the Shannon but to the south of Lough Ree, a region which included the monasteries of Clonmacnoise and Durrow, and which bordered Clonfert on the Connacht side of the river). It may be that the wood referred to was that natural barrier of bog-land in Offaly and Kildare which may then have been forested[62].

Notes on the forms

godra (introduction). Fer Muman sends his companion Nóinn mac Becáin into the woods to determine the source of a peculiar murmuring noise. The word for this noise, *godra*, is a rare word, occurring only in this anecdote and in the oldest stratum (*De Origine Scoticae Linguae*) of 'O'Mulconry's Glossary' (O'Mulc. 666). *DOSL* glosses *godra* with *guthree* (*guth* 'voice' + *ré* 'period of time'). *DIL*, following a suggestion by Michael O'Brien (*Ériu* 11, p. 157), connects it with an adjective *got* 'stammering, lisping', 'commonly used as a contemptuous epithet of Norsemen or foreigners in general of *unintelligible speech*'. A peculiar feature of all three copies is the absence of an *n* indicating nasalization of the accusative noun *godra*. Both DDC copies have the form *in goora* (glossed by *in mbeced = in mbéicced* 'shouting, crying out') rather than *in godra* (with the second *o* of the former likely to be misreading of *d*). Another possibility, suggested by Dillon in his apparatus, is that *godra* and *goora* are both erroneous forms for nasalized *cobra(e)* 'talking, conversation'. Could this indicate oral transmission or oral recitation in the scriptorium?

Cuileand co mboin. Without emendation, this would appear to mean something like 'holly with a cow'. This might be explained by the fact that in medieval Ireland holly branches

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62.   Ibidem, p. 133.

were used as a winter feed for cattle[63]. In the commentary to the tree-list in *Bretha Comaithchesa*, holly is counted one of the *airig fedo* («noble ones of the forest» because it is used for chariot shafts (*feirtse*) and as «substitute for grass fodder» (*fér for araili*)[64]. The three trees listed here always begin the lists of the *airig fedo*, but in reverse order: i.e. *daur/dair* (oak), *coll* (hazel), and *cuilenn* (holly)[65]. With emendation we might also read *co mbun* 'with [its] trunk', referring to the use made of the thick, hard wood in the base of the holly tree (note its use in chariot shafts mentioned above). *DIL* (*s.v.* [1]*bun*) cites the phrase *glaisithir bun cuilind* «as green as a holly trunk»(« Revue celtique», XIII, p. 5.8).

coll cona dib. This phrase may contain the dative plural of the adjective *ada(e)* used as a substantive denoting things which are 'fitting', due', or 'beneficial'[66]. *DIL* (*s.v.* [1]*adae*) cites its use in reference to the dues in mast owed to the king of Leinster («Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy», LIV (c), p. 12.4). The same word may also refer to 'accoutrements' or 'appurtenances' suitable for an occasion (fighting, feasting) or season; hence, *ada na Samna* 'the (food-) appurtenances of summer' (*DIL*, citing K. Meyer, *Hibernica Minora*, p. 20) which include meat, ale, mast, and tripe. Hazel is counted as one of the *airig fedo* for its nuts and rods[67]. Hence, I would read *coll co n-adib* «hazel with [its] appurtenances».

daur co ndla co núaidib. These words introduce the more extensive reading of H(*mó*) and are to be retained on the grounds that they maintain the formal and figurative parallelism of the previous lines and complete the holly-hazel-oak triad. However, I can make no sense of *condla* without emenda-

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63. F. KELLY, *Early Irish Farming*, p.382, n.150.

64. Ibidem, p. 382, n.150.

65. Ibidem, p. 382.

66. Plural *ada* is glossed with *buada* 'benefits' in two glossaries: H.3.18, p. 416 (*CIH* 951.2-3) and the Stowe Glossary, 226.

67. KELLY, *Early Irish Farming*, p. 382.

tion. Perhaps its should be emended to *co n-dlaí*, with the figurative extension of *dlaí* 'wisp, tuft' to mean 'screen, shelter' (cf. *o chétt-samhain … go tteilc gach dos dlaoi da cluimh* «till the bushes cast their covering of foliage» and *fo dlaí* «under cover»; cited by *DIL s.v. dlaí*). I take *núaidib* (read *nóadaib*?) as the dat. pl. of *nóad* a 'Berla na Filed' word meaning '(the act of) covering' and, by transferral, 'dwelling' (see *DIL s.v.* ²*nóad*). Hence, I would read: *daur co n-dlaí co nóadaib* «oak with ⌜its⌝ shelter and coverings». Alternatively, it might be dat. pl. of *núaide* 'newish, rather new, novel' used substantively to mean 'new, renewed, fresh things' (referring to foliage, acorns, timber?).

co trib triar fear. I take *trib* as a dat. singular *treib* (from *treb* 'household, farm, holding') and would emend *triar* to gen. *tríir* in order to read 'of three (men)'. Hence: *co treib tríir fer* 'for the farm-holding of three men'. Alternatively, *triar fear* could be retained and taken as the topicalized subject of the following verb *fersait*.

fersait mol muil. I take *fersait* (*fersatt* in the DDC copies) 3 pl. s-preterite *fersait* < *feraid*. This verb is frequently used figuratively to indicate the 'pouring forth' of sounds, cries, lamentations, etc. (see *DIL* s.v. *feraid* II(b)); cf. *ná fer mol | frisin marb* 'pour not praise upon the dead', LL 275ᵃ9). *Mol* I take to be *mul* (also *mol*) 'a heap' (possibly from Lat. *moles* 'a pile, load'; and figuratively, 'a great amount'), followed by the genitive of mol (see *DIL s.v.* ²*mol* 'used of a constantly reiterated refrain or noise'). Hence: *fersait mol muil* «they made a great clamour». Alternatively, *mol* in the first instance could be taken as ²*mol*, and *muil* as the gen. sg. of ¹*mol* 'an axle or rotating shaft, esp. the shaft of a (horizontal?) mill-wheel' (*DIL*).

uas boin blosair con. Given that the preposition *úas* 'above' may be used figuratively to mean 'surpassing, superior to', I am inclined to follow a suggestion made by my colleague Dr Simon Rodway that dat. sg. *boin* (of *bó*) might here refer to the *sound* made by an ox or cow. There is an interesting parallel to this suggestion in *Sanas Cormaic* (Corm Y 134) where the etymology for *bó* derives the word from the sound made by the

animal: *Bó nomen de sono factum suae vocis .i. ainm arna dénam d'foghar in gotha uodéin* («*Bó*, a name made from the sound of its own voice»). *Blosair* is probably a form of *blúsar*, a rare word meaning 'loud cry, belling of a stag', and *con* 'of dogs' is clear enough[68]. The difficulty lies in relating the two words to the preceding phrase. I see two possibilities: *blosair* is either (a) a nominative plural or (b) a scribal error for dative singular *blo-sur* (governed by the preposition *úas*). In the case of (a) we might understand it to mean: «greater than [the sound of] a cow [are] the yelps of dogs»; or (b): «they made a great clam-our / surpassing [the sound of] a cow [and] the yelping of dogs». Of the two choices I am inclined to prefer the latter.

There seems to be an implied correspondence between the three trees and the three men. Perhaps the verse refers to the sound made in the woods by three men, each of them felling one of the three trees.

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REVISED TEXT AND TRANSLATION OF THE VERSE
(still highly tentative)

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Cuilend co mboin,	Holly with [its] cow (?),
coll co n-adib,	hazel with [its] appurtenances,
daur co ndla[í] co nóadaib,	oak with [its] shelter and coverings,
co trib tríir fer.	with a [farm-]holding of three men.
Fersait mol muil,	They poured out a 'pile' of noise,
úas boin blosur con.	greater than [the bellowing of] an ox, than the yelping of dogs

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68. The form *chúana* in DDC[4] appear to be the adjective *cúanna* 'belonging to a dog-pack' with expected lenition after nominative plural *blosair*.

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