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Satirical Narrative in Early Irish Literature

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When critics formerly considered satire in early Irish literature their main focus was *áer*. Satire in the more modern sense has received comparatively little attention. This thesis attempts to redress that balance by analysing a number of specific texts for satirical content as it is conventionally understood. By way of introduction *áer* itself will be examined with a view to ascertaining the origins of satire and how it developed as a literary art from magical curse to its more sophisticated form. The relevance of possible external influences will also be considered. Initially the *Mellgleó n-Iliach* episode from *TBC* I will be discussed in the light of alterations made to it by the author of Recension II and the way in which these underline its original satirical slant. Attention will then focus on three whole texts, namely *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó*, *Serlige Con Culainn* and the H Version of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*. Each of these will be analysed in detail, paying particular attention to satirical aspects. It will be argued that all three may be regarded as satires first and foremost, due allowance being made for appreciable differences in background and emphasis. On this basis it will be suggested that satirical narrative, whether as individual episodes or whole texts, formed a significant element of early Irish literature from at least the tenth century onwards and that further research along these lines may well pay dividends.

I. Introduction.

1. *Áer* and its literary development.

I.1.1. *Áer* is traditionally translated as ‘satire’ and has been the focus of a certain amount of attention in medieval Irish studies in recent times. *DIL* (10) defines *áer* as ‘(a) cutting, incising; (b) act of satirising, lampooning, defaming’. It also refers to the word *rind/rindad* ‘cut, cutting’ for comparison, and this Dillon (1953a, 82, note on l.10) translates as ‘point’ which in turn equates with the modern Irish word *rinn*, meaning ‘point, tip’, i.e. *rinn sleá*, *rinn claímh* ‘point of spear, point of sword’ (Ó Dónaill, 1977, 1001). Thus *áer* has affinities with *rind(ad)*. Binchy (1941, 69) describes *áer* as a ‘formidable weapon with which members of the poetic orders (*grád fhiled*) enforced claims either on their own behalf or on behalf of other persons who employed them... To satirize a person without lawful ground is a delict which entitles the victim to recover the full amount of his honour-price as a penalty’. According to the first century AD Greek author Strabo (IV.4.4), the pagan Gauls had three classes of men who were honoured for their divinatory powers i.e. *bardoi*, *vātes* and *druides*. These would correspond formally to Old Irish *bard*, *fáith* and *druí* respectively (McCone, 1990, 165). Diodorus Siculus (V.31) also writing about the Gauls, states: ‘they frequently speak exaggeratedly in order to increase themselves and reduce the others...there are also among them lyric poets, whom they call *bardoi*. These, singing instruments similar to lyres, praise (*hymnousi*) some and defame (*blasphēmousi*) others’ (trans. McCone). These two activities obviously correspond to the two basic functions of medieval Irish poets namely praise (*molad*) and defamatory satire (*áer*), which, like their Irish counterparts was probably used by these poets to advance their own or their employers’ claims. The basic function of the Gaulish bards seems to have been thus close to that of the Irish bards. ‘*Bretha Nemed déidenach* lists no less than sixteen grades of bard: eight *sóerbaird* ‘noble bards’ and eight *dóerbaird* ‘base bards’. However, another law-text *Bretha im Fhuillema Gell*, uses a simpler sevenfold classification of bards, which extends from the *tigernbard* (‘lord-bard’ i.e. a lord who is a bard) down to the *drisiuc*’ (Kelly, 1988, 47). *CIH* 587.18 (*Míadshlechta*) states: ‘*Bard d(an)o: cin dlíged fogluime is indtleacht fadeisin* ‘A bard,

then: without the prerogative of learning, but intellect alone’ (trans. Breatnach, 1987, 98). Thus ‘the essential difference between the *fili* and the *bard* is the latter’s lack of professional training’ (Kelly, 1988, 47).

I.1.2. Archilochus, a Greek poet of the seventh century BC, is credited with being the earliest satirist on record (Elliott, 1960, 7). His satire took the form of invective and was renowned for its particularly bitter and venomous nature. He wrote in the iambic meter which derived from the Greek word *iambos* ‘to assail’, and therefore satire was associated with it. The names of Archilochus and Lycambes are forever linked owing to a violent iambic which the former composed against the latter and his household, because Lycambes reneged on a promise made to betroth his daughter to him. As a result of the invective both Lycambes and his daughter are said to have hanged themselves (Elliott, 1960, 7). We understand, therefore, that satires such as this were believed to contain a demonic power which had the capacity to cause the death of the victim. Whether this story is true or not does not matter, for tradition accepted it and that is what makes it significant; the ‘word could kill; and in popular belief it *did* kill’ (Elliott, 1960, 15). This brief look at Archilochus and the Gauls is by way of drawing attention to the basic power of satire and how it was perceived amongst early peoples, including the pagan Celts. Thus the concept of satire as a demonic power was a feature common to the Greek world and to that of the Celts of Gaul and Ireland.

I.1.3. Ó Fiannachta (1974, 67) questions the attention given to the *Dánta Grádha* in Irish tradition ‘amhail is go mba iad bun agus barr ár litríochta iad; níl iontu ach bláth teagmhaiseach ar imeall an chosáin i ngairdín clasiceach na Gaeilge...Bhíodar imeallach’ (‘as if they were the beginning and end of our literature; they are but a mere incidental flower on the border of the path in the classical garden of Irish...they were peripheral’). In an effort to help redress this imbalance he devotes a chapter of his book to satire and its different manifestations in Irish literature, stating: ‘is cuid thábhachtach leanúnach dár dtraidisiún liteartha í...ó Dhallán a fuair bás de bharr éagóra a aoire go dtí Máirtín Ó Cadhain a bhíonn de shíor ag suirí go míchompordach léi, agus go Myles na gCopaleen a choimeád an *Irish Times* beo léi’ (1974, 67; ‘it is an important continuous part of our literary tradition...from Dallán who died owing to the injustice of his satire, to Máirtín Ó Cadhain who is continuously wooing it uncomfortably, to Myles na gCopaleen who kept

the *Irish Times* going with it'). In his chapter on 'Satire in early Irish' (1962, 105), Mercier likewise prefaces his discussion of this area of early Irish literature by referring to its 'great antiquity and unbroken continuity'. However, there is a world of difference between the *air* of the early poets and the type of satire demonstrated by writers such as Flann O'Brien, even though works like *At Swim-Two-Birds* plundered the early literature for some of its syntactical composition and subject matter. For example, O'Brien's (1939, 16-18) parodistic description of Finn Mac Cool which he introduces as a 'quasi-humorous incursion into ancient mythology' includes the following: 'the chest to him was wider than the poles of a good chariot...the arms to him were like the necks of beasts, ball-swollen with their bunched-up brawnstrings and blood-veins, the better for harping and hunting and contending with the bards...Three fifties of fosterlings could engage with handball against the wideness of his backside, which was wide enough to halt the march of warriors through a mountain pass...where is the living human that could beat Finn at the magic of thumb-suck...that could carry an armed host from Almha to Slieve Luachra in the craw of his gut-hung knickers?'

I.1.4. Let us now proceed to examine different types of *áer*. The Book of Ballymote contains a treatise entitled *Cis lir fodla aire?* 'How many types of satire are there? which Meroney (1950, 199-212) has edited. In answer to the above question the treatise continues *Ní hansa. A trí .i. aiséis ocus ail ocus aircetal* 'Not difficult, three i.e. declaration, insult, incantation'. Meroney (1950, 206, note on §2) points out that *aisnéis aire* is to be understood here, 'as further on *aircetal* is referred to as *aircetal aire*'. Each type is illustrated with an example, *aisnéis* being described thus: *aisnéis immorro, indisiu tria h-áinsimh cen cuidb[i]us, amal adubhairth in cáinti i tich alaile degdhuine, nirbo lór lais a cuit. 'In scerdfidhear salann duit ar do chuitidh?' ar in timtiridh. 'Nitó' ar seisuim, 'ar nímtá ní ara scertar, acht maine scertar ar mo theangaidh a rec[c] nucu n-écean. Is coirt cheana'* 'declaration, now, is narration in reproach, without rhyme, as the libeller said in the house of a certain gentleman - he thought his rations meager (*sic*). 'Shall salt be sprinkled for you on your portion?' asked the attendant. 'No' said he, 'for I have nothing to sprinkle it on. Unless it be sprinkled right (?) on my tongue, there's no need. It's bark anyhow' (Meroney, 1950, 201, trans. 204). This may find elucidation in Mercier's (1962, 116) reference to Meyer's *Bruchstücke der älteren Lyrik Irlands* (1919)

which lists a number of Middle Irish satirical epigrams, number seventy-five consisting of a reproach ‘for offering bread with salt instead of butter on it, but adds that this is not surprising, since the flesh of all his household is dried up like the bark of a tree’. *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* provides us with another fitting example of *aisnéis aire* (see IV.2.6.).

Meroney (1950, 206-7, note on §3) cites *ail* as ‘blemish...one of the three *bolga* (bags, blisters) raised on the cheek of a false judge’ which prompts him to ask: ‘Is not this *ail* the same as *ail*, ‘stone’, in the sense of a bump by a blow or metaphorically by a slur? Meant here is verbal hurt’. The text justifies this explanation: *ail dono .i. ail leasanma lenas do neoch, no athais mbréthri cidh tria chuidbhuis cid cen cuidbius. Leasainm...amal doradadh for alaile cill fhil i Maigh Ulad; robo Leas Mór a h-ainm ar tús, co rancadar muintir Lis Móir Mochutu dono don chill sin, co tardad drochfhurec bec dóib; doromaltar iarum co solamh ocus dochúadar do baile aile; ocus doradad leasainm forsin cill ucut .i. Ceall Chorrfeisi. Roslil in ail anma sin do grés* ‘Insult next i.e. the insult of a nickname which clings to anyone, or verbal injury whether rhymed or not. Nickname as was bestowed upon a certain church which is in Mag Ulad. Its name was Lismore at first until the household of Lismore Mochutu went there and a skimpy miserable meal was given to them. They ate then in a hurry and went to another place and a nickname was bestowed upon that same church, namely ‘Church of the Wretched Repast’. The insult of that name clung to it forever’ (Meroney, 1950, 201, trans. 204). Again we may refer here to *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* where the church is also an object of derision due to the miserable meal it offers its guests.

The third category is *aircetal aire*, ‘[a]ircetal, verbal noun of *ar-cain*, means the actual poetic product...I render it as ‘ability (in poetry)’ (Breatnach, 1987, 96, n.41). Mercier (1962, 109) calls it ‘versified satire’ and points out that it is here taken as ‘incantation of satire’. It has ten subdivisions: *aircetal aire dano ataait .x. fodla fair-side .i. mac bronn ocus dallbach ocus focal i frithshuidiu ocus tár n-aire ocus tár molta ocus tamall aire ocus tamall molta ocus lánair ocus ainmedh ocus gláim díceand* ‘incantation of satire next; ten types thereof exist: ‘son of womb’, innuendo, ‘word in opposition’, outrage of satire, outrage of praise, touch of satire, touch of praise, full satire, sarcasm and *glam dícind* (Meroney, 1950, 201, trans. 204). The first three of these appear to relate to the secrecy and anonymity of satire: *mac bronn* is explained *fo clith dogníter* ‘it

is done secretly’, *dallbach* .i. *dallfúach* ‘dark word’ (Meroney, 1950, 207, note on §6) is suggestive of blindness or enigma and is followed by *ní feas cíá diandéntar saindriud* ‘it is not known about whom exactly it is made’, and *focal i frithshuidiu* ‘[a]lthough the examples which illustrate it do not appear well chosen, the definition...suggests satire of great subtlety’ (Mercier, 1962, 110). ‘*Tár* and *tamall*...I take to involve distinctions of plus and minus, viz. over- and understatement’ (Meroney, 1950, 209, note on §10). We have here the juxtaposition of praise and blame, *molad* and *áir*, which are frequently contrasted in early Irish literature. *Atá éolus ingnad lasna filedaib .i. áer co ndath molta ocus molad co ndath n-aíre*, the poets have strange knowledge i.e. satire with a hue of praising and praising with a hue of satire’ (*Bretha Nemed Dédenach*, CIH 1112.9). ‘‘Satire’’ is the customary translation of *áer*, but ‘blame’, even ‘libel’, would be more correct’ (Meroney, 1950, 206, note on §1).

Lánair is the very opposite of *dallbach* and consists of a full-blown denigration: .i. *corob ainm ocus uss ocus domgnas inti* ‘when name and family and abode are present therein’ (Meroney, 1950, 202, trans. 206). *Ainmedh* means ‘blemish’ along with *ail* (taking Meroney’s explanation of its meaning above) and is another of the three *bolga* mentioned earlier (Meroney, 1950, 210, note on §15). The three ‘bulges’ or ‘blisters’ brought about by satire are contained in *Sanas Cormaic* (Meyer, 1913, 54-8) in the triad *on*, *anim* and *esbaid*, and since ‘the idea behind *on* and *anim* is ‘fault or flaw’, and inasmuch as *esbaid* signifies ‘defect, want, loss’, these terms refer to a nip or bite that takes something away’ (Meroney, 1950, 218). ‘Such combinations relating to satire are numerous and varied, e.g. *áire 7 écnaig 7 immdergtha* ‘of blame and reproach and reddening’ *brón 7 tar 7 tarcusal* ‘grief and disgrace and insult’, *gress 7 ruicci 7 mebul* ‘scorn and blushing and shame’ (Meroney, 1950, 219). There is a charm entitled *ar delc* in the Stowe Missal (McCone, 2005, 78) which is worth mentioning: *Macc saele án to:fásci delc- nip hon, nip anim, nip att, nip galar* ‘a son of bright spittles presses out a thorn, let it not be a blemish, a defect, a swelling, a sickness’. It is also interesting to note the church’s harnessing of some of these concepts for its own ends. For instance, in the *Addimenta* of the Book of Armagh there is an account of the foundation of Sletty (Stokes and Strachan, 1903, 241) and contained within its lines is Patrick’s request to Dubthach to find *fer sóer socheniuil cen on cen ainim* ‘a man free, well-born, without blemish,

without defect’ to set up a church. In his First Epistle to Timothy (3, 2) St. Paul states: ‘It behoveth, therefore, a bishop to be blameless’ (*irreprehensibilis*), suggesting that *cen on cen anim* may represent a native Irish adaptation of this motif.

The incantational type of satire is epitomised by the last one mentioned, the *glám dícind*, which is neither defined nor exemplified in this treatise. However, Meroney in the same article (1950, 217) defines it as an endless or permanent bite, a type of spell which results in the guilty party manifesting three blisters on his face. These last seven subdivisions of *aircetal aire* would appear to relate to public satirising rather than private or cloaked ones. ‘The ‘bulges’ can have had nothing principally to do with the *glám (dícind)* in its initial sense of a trifold maiming, although a belief in their affinity is well established...In all likelihood they were imported from another tradition, in which they were thought to arise automatically upon the cheeks of an unjust judge after a false decision’ (Meroney, 1950, 219-20). Thus *glám dícind* is connected to *on, anim* and *esbaid*, and whether it caused three blotches or was one of three is not at issue here. Suffice to say that it was a spell or part of a spell directed at one who, if guilty, developed three blisters or blotches on his face as a mark of shame.

I.1.5. *Uraicecht na Ríar* (§24) stipulates that the seven requirements which compose any satire (*cach n-air*) are: *i scáth aide caislechtaí scoth, is treairiut i cuairt éscái- aidbsiu in sin; aidech n-aicetail, congain comail, corrguinecht* ‘in the shade of a smooth flowery ad, in the three periods in the circuit of the moon - that is how it is announced; harmonious reciting, magical wounding, sorcery’ (Breatnach, 1987, 114-5). Breatnach here follows TCD Ms 3.3 and notes that other manuscripts substitute the words *glám dícenn* for *air* in this passage (1987, 115). We thus observe how satire is associated with magic in both its composition and its effect.

The power of the *glám dícenn* and the fear it could evoke is exemplified in the Fer Diad episode of *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, when Cú Chulainn’s own foster-brother reluctantly agrees to fight him in single combat rather than suffer the shame of satire: *dobretha Medb filid ocus áes dána ocus áes glámtha grúaidi ara chend co nderntais a áerad ocus a aithised ocus a ainfiálad...Táinic Fer Diad leisna techtaib hísín ar úaman a imderctha dóib* ‘then Medb sent to fetch him poets and artists and satirists who might satirise him and put him to shame...So for fear that he should be put to shame by them Fer Diad came

with those messengers' (O'Rahilly, 1976, 78-9, ll.2578-2582, trans. 196), the satirists being referred to as the people who bite cheeks *áes glámtha grúaidi*.

Originally *fili* seems to have meant 'seer' (e.g. McCone, 2005, 56), suggesting one who sees into the future, and thus carries with it an aura of power and magic, and this power of prophecy has been seen as similar to that of the druids (Kelly, 1988, 44). An important function of the *fili* was to satirize and to praise and he was thus largely responsible for the decrease or increase of early Irish society's most coveted attribute, honour (Kelly, 1988, 43). An example of potential loss of honour can be manifested in the following: *Ro fóebra fúamann/ fó thuinn technatar/ ro dúisced fuil/ for a grúaide gnúis/ conid fodirc inna rus/ ro mbriatharaib bíth* 'Verbal blades have cut beneath his skin, blood has been aroused onto his cheeks [and] aspect so that it is evident in his countenance that he has been wounded by words' (*Bretha Nemed Toísech*, CIH 2218.10-12). *Enech* means both face and honour: 'from the original meaning 'face, countenance' the technical legal meaning 'honour, dignity' is a natural transition' (Binchy, 1941, 85). This association is illustrated in *Aislinge Óenguso* in the phrase *meth n-enech* 'loss of face/honour', and *diandom fhoíme ar th'inchaib* 'if you receive me on your honour' (Shaw, 1976, 62-3).

I.1.6. The three skills required of a master poet according to *Uraicecht Becc* are *imbais forosna* 'encompassing knowledge which illuminates', *teinm láeda* 'breaking of marrow' and *dichetal di chennaib* 'chanting from heads or extempore chanting' (Carey, 1995b, 42). Carey (1995b, 57) discusses the origins of these three requirements in the sources, concluding that *teinm laedo* was a later replacement of *anamain*, a type of metre (1995b, 46-7). According to him this suggests that originally these qualifications merely reflected the skills required of poets: 'technical expertise (*anamain*), improvisational facility (*dichetal di chennaib*), and inspiration (*imbais*). With the substitution of *teinm laedo* and the reinterpretation of *dichetal*, however, [they] took on a very different character: [poetry] now appears to be exclusively concerned with the prophetic powers and magical techniques associated with the *fili*' (1995b, 47). *Imbais forosnai* is mentioned in connection with the practice of *fledacht* in *Bretha Nemed*, the introduction to the *Senchas Mór* and *The Caldron of Poesy* (Carey, 1995b, 49-50). This 'knowledge which illuminates' therefore supports the idea of supernatural power associated with the poets

and with satire in particular. Carey's research revealed differing attitudes to these same skills, ranging from 'a romantic desire to exaggerate the poetic profession's pagan background ..[to] a resolutely orthodox condemnation of any such pagan or quasi-pagan survivals... and [finally] a historicist strategy that excuses an interest in exotic magical lore by firmly confining it to a distant past' (1995b, 58). Be that as it may, the attitude to satire and satirists attested in the laws and in the sagas is frequently one of disapproval, awe and unadulterated fear, as manifested in the Fer Diad episode of *TBC*.

A fili enjoyed full *nemed* status in early Irish society and his satire, if legitimate, 'played an important part in the early Irish system of justice, being one of the pressures which make people - particularly of high rank - obey the law' (Kelly, 1988, 138). *Uraicecht Becc* provides us with a defence of legitimate satire in place of weapons: *Cid fodera breath do breith a deda don filidh?...coir a breith a filidaecht asa besgna buidhdein, uairais e a primdan buidhein filidhecht. Coir dana a breath do a besgna na flatha no lochta na tuaiti, uair is e doni a moladh dligteach du gach grad isin tuaiti, ocus is e tobdigus a seodu eichni doib amuig, i fail i tinchaidter renda aer ocus na tinchaiter renda arm* 'What is the reason that judgment is given by two rights to the poet?...it is proper to give it to him from poetry, by his own right, because poetry is his own special art. It is proper also, to give it to him by the right of the chiefs, or of the people of the territory, for it is he that composes his lawful praise for every grade in the territory, and it is he that levies their lawful (?) 'seds' for them from territories without, in places where points of satire are attended to, and where points of arms are not attended to (*CIH* II, ll.7-12, trans. *ALI*, 13). Illegal satire, however, involved the paying of damages and these could 'depend in part upon the rank of the person injured. It is more serious to satirize a king's son than a lower chief' (Robinson, 1912=1998, 138). Also the perpetrator of the crime had to forfeit his honour-price, and one is not surprised to find the illegal satirist being treated with deep hostility in the sources. *Ni toimnenn nach neolach combadh lugha do pecad gao i mbriathraib ina todhail fhola ó laim* 'no knowledgeable person thinks that falsehood or words are any less of a sin than shedding blood by hand' (*CIH* IV, 1383.10-11). Here we see the phenomenon of justified and unjustified satire.

I.1.7. There were seven grades of poet: *ollam*, *ánruth*, *clí*, *cano*, *dos*, *macfhuirmid* and *fochloc*, with three sub-grades, i.e. *taman*, *drisiuc*, *oblaire* (Breatnach, 1987, 103). The *fili* was the only category of *áes dána* with *sóer nemed* status, an *ollam* in the craft equating with a *rí túaithe* and having an honour-price of seven *cumals*. Therefore the poets were not only a powerful but also a relatively wealthy element of early Irish society, as their rewards likewise demonstrate. ‘For each poem commissioned by a patron, the poet receives a fee (*dúas*) depending on the nature of the composition...For the most prestigious type, the *anamain*, the poet is entitled to a chariot worth a *cumal*’ (Kelly, 1988, 45). A reward given to a poet cannot be reclaimed, *tait secht taburta la Fēniu i tūaith ata dīlsim cin mac cin rāith...dūas tēachta do file* ‘there are seven gifts in Irish law which are utterly irrecoverable [even though given] without binding surety, without paying surety...a proper reward for a poet’ (CIH I, 24.11-22). Given the power that the poet was perceived to possess, it is small wonder that satirists used it for their own advantage, applying satire as a weapon to extort demands on occasion.

The *taman*, *drisiuc* and *oblaire* are listed as sub-grades of the *fili* in *Uraicecht na Ríar* §18, §19 and §20 (Breatnach, 1987, 113) and their roles lack prestige. *UR* states of the *taman*: *ní héola i fedaib ocus canaid tres for cách* ‘he does not have knowledge of letters, and he assaults everyone with his recitations’. The following is a request for food by the *taman* which no doubt implies a threat if this is not given:

Tuc in mbairgin taile in mbairgin

Ocus blog don blonaicc móir

Maith t’athair ocus do máthair

Tuc in mbláthaig ina deóid. (CIH 1605.26-28, *Uraicecht Becc*)

‘Give the loaf, hither the loaf

And a piece of the large lard.

Good thy father and thy mother.

Give the buttermilk afterwards.’ (trans. McCone, 1989, 130)

The *drisiuc*, likewise, is described as a veritable nuisance: *lenaoid i n-inchaib cáich* ‘he sticks in the face of all’ (Breatnach, 1987, 113). His verse leaves the issue beyond any doubt:

Atá form

Meni tuca biad im dorn

Bérat t’enech, a ben bán

Is indisfet dom dean. (CIH 1605.24-26, Uraicecht Becc)

‘I intend

If you do not put food in my fist

(That) I shall take thy honour, o fair woman

And tell my master’. (trans. McCone, 1989, 130)

The *oblaire* is glossed *fuirseoir gan dán* ‘a buffoon without skill’ (Breatnach, 1987, 113) and the verse attributed to him is similar to the above. The laws list certain entertainers who amused through crude satirical compositions as well as acting the fool, i.e. the *crossán* and the *drúth* (Kelly, 1988, 64-5), see IV.2.3.3. as an illustration of their standard type of behaviour. Accordingly we see these terms covering buffoonery as well as satire and a short episode in the *Táin* deserves mention in this connection: *foruirmiset muinte Ailella a mind rír for Tamun drúth. Ní lámair Ailill a beith fair fessin. Srédis Cú Chulainn cloich fair oc Áth Tamuin co mmebaid a c[h]end de* ‘Ailill’s people put his king’s crown on Taman the Jester. Ailill himself did not venture to wear it. Cú Chulainn cast a stone at him at the place called Áth Tamuin and smashed his head’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 76, ll.2483-6, trans. 193).

I.1.8. The term frequently used in the sources for the satirist of ill repute is *cáinte*, who ‘was an object of clerical odium and...was to be found as a rule along with various other types of outcast and excommunicate’ (McCone, 1989, 127), notably druids and *díbergaig* with pagan associations, and contrasted with the esteem in which the *filid* were held by the church (McCone, 1990, 223). *Cáinte* is included with *bard* and *fer cerda* in the *Míadshlechta* (CIH 587.20) following on the seven grades of *fili*, and is described as *fer ara-rósar a biad t(resi)n ainim aire* ‘a man on account of whom his food be obtained

through the blemish of satire’ (McCone, 1989, 129). Thus, in referring to such satirists, we are generally talking about sub-grades and base poets, although a certain interchangeability exists between terms used. ‘To some extent this...may be due to the fact that *cáinte*, like *fili*, is generic whereas *oblaire*, *drisiuc*..etc., refer rather to specific grades within the class’ (McCone, 1989, 129). *Bretha Crólige* §51 (Binchy, 1934, 40-1) demonstrates a concerted effort on the part of the law makers to curb payment to the *cáinte* and his ilk: *atá .iii.[ar] hi túaith folongaiter folug mbóairec. Ni tormaig ni for a notrus a mmiad nach a nemthes nach a ndligned nach a cendgelt: druí dibergad cáinte. Ar is techtta la dia a ndinsed oldas a cumdac* ‘there are three persons in the territory who are maintained according to the [standard] of maintenance of a *bóaire* - neither their dignity nor their sacred character nor their rights nor their tonsure make any increase in [the standard of] their sick-maintenance - a druid, a reaver, a satirist. For it is more fitting in the sight of God to repudiate them than to protect them’.

The verse attributed to these lesser poets exemplifies the type of destructive satire frequently found in early Irish literature. Robinson refers to these satirists as ‘traffickers in personal abuse’ (1912=1998, 139). Moreover, what is noteworthy in relation to early satire is that ‘no distinction is made ...between the satire of magic malediction and the satire of mockery or abuse’ (Robinson, 1912=1998, 138). In discussing magical satire and curse, Elliott (1960, 291-2) states that it is impossible to distinguish between them, suggesting that ‘perhaps the best approach is to look at both... as relatively undifferentiated responses to the threats and possibilities of a hostile environment. Behind them both is the will to attack, to do harm, to kill - in some negative way to control one’s world’. *Uraicecht Becc* (§23) supplies us with an example of a curse as uttered by Néide against his uncle Caíar:

Maile, baire, gaire Caíar
Cot-mbéotar celtraí catha Caíar
Caíar di-bá, Caíar di-rá- Caíar!
Fo ró, fo mara, fo chara Caíar!

Evil death, short life to Caíar,

Spears of battle will have killed Caíar,
May Caíar die, may Caíar depart- Caíar!

Caíar under earth, under embankments, under stones! (Breatnach, 1987, 114, trans. 115)

This verse is by way of explanation as to why such low-ranking poets as the *taman*, *drisiuc* and *oblaire* may be included along with other poets as possessors of *nemed* status, and is prefaced with: *ar nemchumscugud di ulc friu, fo bíth na háire tri bricht do rigni Néide do Chaíar* ‘because of the non-transference of wrong to them, as a result of the satire with a spell which Néide made against Caíar king of Connacht’ (Breatnach, 1987, 115). *Sanas Cormaic* (Meyer, 1913, §698, 58-60) informs us that three blemishes rise on Caíar’s cheeks in response to this *glám dícenn* and he flees, leaving Néide to become sovereign in his place. When Néide, through a feeling of remorse, searches out Caíar, the displaced king dies of shame. Therefore this *glám dícenn* caused the death of its victim. ‘Tráchtar coitianta ar chumhacht na haoire chun daoine a mharú, ach is ... é an *glám dícenn* an t-aon chineál amháin a gcreidte go bhfaigheadh duine bás dá bharr’ (Breatnach, 1988, 14; ‘mention is commonly made of the power of satire to kill people, but *glám dícenn* is the only type which is believed to cause death to a person’). It is important to point out that Néide’s unjust satire rebounds on him in the final analysis, as indeed does Dallán Forgaill’s in *Tromdám Gúaire* (Connellan, 1860), both culprits suffering the punishment they wished on others.

Satire’s magical properties are illustrated in a description in *Mittelirische Verslehren III* §155 (Thurneysen, 1891) of the process of *glám dícenn*, on account of a king’s refusal to reward a poem properly. This involved a gathering of thirty warriors, thirty bishops and thirty poets (*comairle trichat laech ocus trichat epscop ocus trichat filed*) to fast upon the king’s land. Part of the ceremony consisted of the poets going to the summit of a hill and each taking a slingstone and a thorn of the hawthorn in his hand and all singing in verse before putting the stones and the thorns beneath the hawthorn bush. This same ritual is to be found in *CIH* 1554.27-1565.19, but Breatnach (1988, 13-4) points out that this version differs from the previous one in its addition of two sentences concerning this ceremony: *no delb in fir dia ndentar do criaidh ocus dealg don sgiaich i laim cach fir ocus siat a’ goin na deilbe da ndeilgib sgiaich* ‘or a clayen image of the man

to whom it (viz. the satire) is made, and a thorn from the whitethorn in each man's hand and they piercing the image with their whitethorn thorns' (trans. Breatnach, 1987, 140). This, then, is an explicit attempt to mimic the death of the culprit. This image mutilation is what Elliott (1960, 87-8) calls the 'belief in image magic' and according to him represents an early stage of caricature, wherein the magic power of the image is experimented with. Robinson (1912=1998, 140) expresses some reservations as to whether this whole procedure was a common practice in early Irish society or not: 'It may have been largely invented, or at least embellished, by some *file* with a turn for magical liturgy'. What seems clear, however, is that the bishops did not actively take part in the *glám dícenn*, but were only part of the gathering overlooking proceedings, and Robinson (1912=1998, 140) refers to them as 'suspicious participants'.

I.1.9. While the laws provide information on satire and satirists, specific examples are more difficult to find and we must look to the sagas for further illustration. As has been noted, a common theme of satire in early Irish literature is inhospitality and stinginess. Elliott (1960, 39) refers to these as among the same vices which preoccupy satirists of any age and are the subject of the first satire reputedly made in Ireland, namely 'Cairpre mac Edaine's satire upon Bres Mac Eladain' (Hull, 1930). Hull (1930, 63-64) presents a convincing argument that the satirical verses contained within the text date from the twelfth century, even though the earliest extant copy is in the 14th century *Yellow Book of Lecan*. Furthermore, he continues by citing the fact that two lines from the text are to be found in *Sanas Cormaic* (Meyer, 1913, 98 and 25 respectively) under the words *riss* (story) and *cernine* (dish). 'Since Cormac was slain at the battle of Belach-Mugna in 908AD this satire must have been composed at a date previous to his death' (Hull, 1930, 64). Moreover, this anecdote of the poet Cairpre's visit to Bres Mac Eladain also forms part of the narrative *Cath Maige Tuired* (Gray, 1982) and 'must have been written before Cormac died, for on several occasions he has adapted passages from it. If, therefore, *The Second Battle of Moytura*, which was one of the sources that Cormac employed in compiling his Glossary already quotes from the text...the anecdote itself must have had its origin at least as early as the ninth century' (Hull, 1930, 64). Thus it may be surmised that by the ninth century 'satire had already received a definite literary form' (Hull, 1930, 65).

In this particular text Bres is presented as an unjust ruler: *Nirbdur buidid, didiu, fir Erenn do flaithius Breis. Ar ro:acht na tréfnhir a fognum...Do:berdis fir Eirenn amaithius dó oculus anduthracht. Conna:dechaig fer na bean cenn-mesc na failich uad ríam* ‘ But the men of Ireland were not pleased with the rule of Bres for he forced the champions into servitude...The men of Ireland bore malice and ill-will towards Bres. Never did either man or woman go from him drunk or happy’ (Hull, 1930, 66, trans. 68). With this picture in mind, we are then informed that Cairpre Mac Edaine, the poet, came to the house seeking hospitality: *tainic, tré, in file .i. Cairpre mac Edaine, for aighidecht dochum in taighi* (Hull, 1930, 66). The manner in which Cairpre was treated by Bres provides the impetus for the satire: *Rucad hi tech mbecc himach oculus cumaing, dub, dorcha, séic oculus ni:raibe tene na hindlad na dérghud and. Tuccad teora bairgean beca dó, atét tuara for meis bic. At:racht, iarum, arnabarach oculus nírbu buidech* ‘He was taken into a small outlying house which was narrow, dark, and dim and there was neither fire nor bath nor bed. Three small cakes and they dry, were brought to him on a little dish. On the next day he arose and he was not pleased’ (Hull, 1930, 66, trans.68). As a result Cairpre is justified in uttering a satire upon Bres in verse form:

*Cen cholt for crib cernene;
Cín gert ferbu foro-n:assad aithrinde;
Cen adhbai fhír ara drúbai dísoirchi;
Cin díl daime reisse, (m)ropsen Breisse!*

Without food speedily on a platter
Without a cow’s milk whereon a calf thrives,
Without a man’s habitation after the staying of darkness,
Be that the luck of Bres Mac Eladain (Hull, 1930, 67, trans. 69)

As we can see this satire is incantatory and more like a curse upon Bres, with the verse culminating in the name of the king, much like Néide’s verse, which was also similar to a curse and centred around the name Caíar. While Néide’s satire brought about the death of Caíar, Cairpre’s merely wishes Bres to suffer the same hardships as the poet

himself. However, if one refers to *Cath Maige Tuired*, it will be seen that Bres' fortunes decline to the point where he is actually deposed, Cairpre's justified satire providing the launch-pad for his ultimate demise. Within Irish narrative, lessons may be negative as well as positive and here Bres presents a negative paradigm of kingship (Ó Cathasaigh, 1983, 1-19 and McCone, 1989, 125).

I.1.10. The aforementioned satires/curses conforming to *áer* in the strict sense are personalised maledictions, but more generalised condemnations may be found in wisdom texts and the like. *Tecosca Cormaic* (Meyer, 1909) contains a section devoted to the subject of women which in today's terms reads as a diatribe against them. Meyer dates this text to the early ninth century (1909, xi). Both Ó Fiannachta (1974) and Mercier (1960) single it out for discussion. The following is an excerpt:

*'A húi Chuind, a Chormaic' ol Carpre 'cia etargén mná?' 'Ní hansa' ol Cormac
'Nosnetargén ocus nísnetargléim*

*Serba sír gnáise,
Mórda tathaigthe,
Drútha follaigthe,
Báetha comairle
Santacha tormaig...'*

'O grandson of Conn, O Cormaic' said Cairbre, 'how do you distinguish women?' 'Not hard to tell' said Cormac. 'I distinguish them but I make no difference among them

They are crabbed as constant companions,
Haughty when visited,
Lewd when neglected,
Silly counsellors,
Greedy of increase...' (Meyer, 1909, 28, trans. 29).

Ó Fiannachta (1974, 70) recognises a play on the words *nosnetargén* and *nísnetargléim* but feels the whole section is so exaggerated 'go nochtann sé ar deireadh gur aoir é ar lucht cáinte na mban in áit ar na mná féin' ('it becomes evident in the end that it is a satire of female satirists in place of women themselves'). He doubts that this ninth

century text can be entirely factual and suggests that intermediaries may be responsible for such biting concepts. Elliott (1960, 40) also views it in much the same light, seeing these same expressions as fitting ‘into a satiric tradition...where anti-feminist attacks proliferate’. Mercier however, although admitting that these sayings could be interpreted as satiric, feels they were ‘primarily intended as a sober statement of fact’ (1960, 122) reminding us that these gnomes were written under clerical influence and as such may have had a tendency to moralise without much humour (1960, 120). Perhaps it would be advisable to view these words as pithy sayings rather than strict satire and accept that a clerical author of the ninth century could harbour such sentiments. On the other hand, both Mercier and Ó Fiannachta agree as to the satirical element contained in some of the *Triads*, edited and translated by Meyer (1906) and also dated by him to the ninth century (1906, x). Here are a couple of examples which reflect a type of mockery associated with satire:

§103. *Trí comartha meraigi: slicht a chíre ina fholt, slicht a fhiacal ina chuit, slicht a luirge ind diaid* (Meyer 1906, 14).

‘Three signs of a fop: the track of his comb in his hair, the track of his teeth in his food, the track of his stick behind him’ (Meyer 1906, 15)

§255. *Trí gúala doná fess fudomain: gúala flátha, gúala ecalsa, gúala nemid filed* (Meyer 1906, 34)

‘Three coffers whose depth is not known: the coffer of a chieftain, of the Church, of a privileged poet’ (Meyer 1906, 35).

We may thus suggest that at least by the ninth century satire existed in early Irish literature in the form of curse and certain gnomonic utterances. According to Robinson (1912=1998, 151) ‘satire...doubtless owes little, in its developed phases, to such simple products as the quatrains of Nede and Coirpre...Yet..its connection with gnomonic writing is well recognised...[and] the close association of these two types ...furnishes, in such collections of proverbial morality as the ancient Instructions of Cormac, many passages of well-developed satire’. The examples from the *Triads* also present a more developed idea of satire where ridicule and mockery contain sharp humour.

I.1.11. To demonstrate this development in saga form we may look to *Tromdámh Gúaire* which Connellan (1860) edited under the title *Imtheacht na Tromdháimhe* and which only survives in its fullest form in the fifteenth century *Book of Lismore*, although the ‘story is a complex of which many of the simple elements existed in the Old Irish period’ (Carney, 1955, 170). This tale provides us with examples of magical satire similar to those witnessed in Cairpre’s already discussed satire upon Bres Mac Eladain, but also manifests a development in literary terms whereby the tale itself becomes a satire on the satirists. According to Robinson (1912=1998, 150) this is a case where satire ‘in the loose or primitive sense furnished material for satire in the stricter definition of the word’. This text is usually perceived as a *rémscél* or so-called introduction/foretale to *Táin Bó Cúailnge* ‘and as such is found prefixed to almost all the modern copies of that...composition’ (Connellan, 1860, xxxiii). While revealing how the story of the *Táin* was regenerated, ‘in the more ancient mss. which contain transcripts of the Cattle Raid, such as *Leabhar-na-Huidri* and the *Book of Leinster*...this work is found totally disconnected with that tract, and we may therefore conclude that the *Imtheacht* was written for another purpose’ (Connellan, 1860, xxxiii). However, if, as Connellan (1860, xxxiii) suggests, the author of the *Book of Lismore* text grafted his satire on to *TBC*, thereby accounting for its origins, he managed to kill two birds with the one stone, so to speak in structural terms, as his text also tells a humorous tale of how the satirists were beaten at their own game.

The poet, Dallán Forgaill, has been requested by his king to obtain a magic shield from his rival, King Áed, and has been promised much wealth in return. Áed, however, offers Dallán many rewards but he will not part with the shield and so Dallán threatens to satirise him. Áed retorts that if a satire is made unjustly it would rebound on the doer as was agreed between the saints and the poets when peace terms were drawn up at the assembly of Druim Cett. This does not deter Dallán and he continues with his satire:

A Aedh mhic Duaich Dhuibh,

A ruach ar neich ruibh;

Abhrog na cuach cain,

A adba luath luin.

‘O Hugh, son of Duach the Dark,
 Thou pool not permanent;
 Thou pet of the milk cuckoos,
 Thou quick chafferer of a blackbird’ (Connellan, 1860, 24, trans. 25).

As we can see, this satire consists of basic name-calling, comparing Áed to unpleasant but inexplicable things. Áed himself is perplexed and we gather that Dallán has deliberately made his verses difficult in order to show off his skill. He must then explain the meaning behind his words, and this results in his being dismissed from court. Dallán believes that he has triumphed over Áed as, although previously blind, he now can see. He threatens Áed: *do clous hoineach acein, agus o do haeradh thu ni cluinfe neach he tareis na n-aerso* ‘your hospitality has been heard of far off, but since you have been satirized no one will hear of it in consequence of these satires’ (Connellan, 1860, 30, trans. 31). His jubilation is short-lived, however, since after three days he dies. This is the first of three satires in the tale and provides the motivation for what follows. From this point on ‘the tone of the story, which has been straightforward and objective, now shifts into burlesque’ (Elliott, 1960, 95). Senchán is selected as the new chief poet and decides that the poets should make a visitation to King Gúaire of Connacht. In order not to inconvenience Gúaire unduly, we are informed that only ‘thrice fifty of the professors; thrice fifty students...thrice fifty hounds; thrice fifty male attendants; thrice fifty female relatives; and thrice nine of each class of artificers’ (Connellan, 1860, 39) accompanied him. By this exaggeration the author introduces a note of mockery and absurdity. It is felt that Gúaire would be the perfect victim for their exorbitant demands as he has never been satirised for lack of hospitality. *Talland Étair* provides an example of how extreme the demands of a poet could be, in literature at least: ‘*co-nna:rucae ar ndimdai a Aithirni*’ *ol Echu* ‘*ma no-d:fil ocunn di shétaib no mainib ní bas áil duit co:rrucae*’. ‘*A:tá immurgu*’, *ol Aithirne* ‘*ind óenshuil ucut fil it chiunn do brith dam-sa im durn*’. *Niba érae immurgu*’, *ol Echu* ‘*ro-t:bia*’. *Is and do:rat in rí a mér foa shúil co-nda:tall assa chiunn 7 co:tarat i ndorn Aithirni* ‘‘Lest we incur your displeasure Aithirne’, said Echu ‘if we have whatever you should desire of chattels or treasures you should take them’. ‘There is indeed’, said

Aithirne ‘that single eye which is in your head is to be carried away by me in my fist’. ‘It will not be a refusal, indeed’, said Echu ‘you shall have it’. It was then that the king inserted his finger under his eye so that he removed it from his head and gave it into Aithirne’s fist’ (Ó Dónaill, 2005, 43, ll.8-11, trans. 52).

Gúaire, having generously prepared for their stay, put his house at their disposal and promised to entertain their every wish. This offer was greedily taken up by Senchán and his entourage, their demands becoming increasingly more immoderate and excessive. The second satire of the tale is uttered by Senchán when his fastidious appetite seized on the notion of an egg and this was found to have been nibbled by mice before he could consume it. Referring to the mice as *tuatha daithi*, ‘the nimble race’ (Connellan, 1860, 74-5) he says:

*Locha gidh gér a n-giulbne,
Ni trén a cathaibh cirbdhe;
Do bher tonnaidh don bhuidhin,
A cinaidh fhuighil Bhrighdi* (Connellan, 1860, 74)

The mice though sharp are their beaks,
Are not powerful in the battles of warriors;
Venomous death I’ll deal out to the tribe,
In avengement of Bridget’s leavings [i.e., the egg] (trans. Elliott, 1960, 45).

As a result, *a deirid aroile gur thuit deich luchá marbh a bhfiadhnaise Sheancháin*, ‘and some say that ten mice fell dead in the presence of Senchán’ (Connellan, 1860, 78-9). Thus Senchán’s satire against the mice has worked, and this success encourages him to make another satire, this time against the one whose duty it was to control the mice, namely Hirusan the cat *or is e is fearr agus is urradha acu agus is tighearna dhóibh* ‘for he is the chief and most responsible of them and is their lord’ (Connellan, 1860, 80-1). Hirusan, however, is no ordinary cat and his description calls to mind *na trí caittini... .i.trí bíasta druidechta* ‘the three cats i.e. the three druidic beasts’ of *Fled Bricrend* (Henderson, 1899, 72, §57), whose magic only Cú Chulainn himself could quash. While

the satire on the mice reflects Senchán's willing them to death, much like Néide's curse on Caíar, this last one is more comparable to Dallán's satire on King Áed: *Hirusan atach n-ingne. Fuighiull doibhri. Earball bo luach. Ara fri haraidh. Athach fria Hirusan* 'Hirusan, monster of claws. Remnant food of the otter. With beauish tail like that of a cow. Similar to a horse watching another horse. A monster is Hirusan' (Connellan, 1860, 80-1).

Here again there appears to be deliberate complexity, with Senchán following on with an explanation that Hirusan can only scratch with his nails when the mouse is hidden and out of reach, 'remnant of a badger' on account of a struggle he once had with a badger which left him with jagged ears, 'tail of a cow' compares the cat's tail flicking in annoyance as the mouse gets away with that of a cow in heat and 'charoiteer against charioteer' likens the cat and the mouse to two horses working in a team with one listening intently to the other (Carney, 1955, 175). This ridiculing of the cat draws him to Senchán's side. Hirusan came 'blunt-mouthed, rapacious, panting, jagged-eared, sharp and rough-toothed' (Robinson, 1912=1998, 135) and put Senchán on his back. 'The poet would have been devoured except that as the cat dragged Senchán past St. Ciarán's cell, the saint picked up a flaming iron bar, hurled it at Hirusan killing him and the poet was saved' (Elliott, 1960, 46). This satire, like Dallán's, also failed and pertinently it was a saint who came to Senchán's aid. 'Hirusan was magically affected by Senchán's mocking satire; but the cat's magic was mightier than that of the poet and only the mightiest magic of all - that of a saint - saved Senchán from death' (Elliott, 1960, 47).

Of the three satires in the tale, only the one against the most insignificant creatures succeeded. Senchán's power is thus seen as pathetic, with the 'bulk of the tale...devoted to puncturing the myth of the inviolability of the poets' (Elliott, 1960, 97). In the final analysis it is the hermit Marbán who is responsible for rescuing Gúaire from ruin and turning the tables in on the poets by demanding they tell him the story of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. When they turn out not to know the tale, an embarrassing admission by members of their profession, he puts them under *gessa* to travel until they have acquired this knowledge. 'Marbán makes a condition that each poet is to return to his own territory, and after that date there were no more 'burdensome companies'' (Carney, 1955, 179).

Elliott (1960, 91-2) discusses how utter belief in magic/curse must be sublimated in order for art to be created, because ‘then the materials of the rite become available for new uses, new meanings, new significance’. He continues, ‘satire *as an art* (Elliott’s italics) cannot develop so long as belief in its magical efficacy retains its hold over men’s minds’ (Elliott, 1960, 98). This form, therefore, must be seen to be free from its magical bonds for art or creative composition to take place. In other words, he believes that sophisticated satire could not be created as literature until a belief in its power was reduced or eliminated. The portrayal of the *cáinte* or his like and of their satire in a bad light in the sagas reflects the church’s attitude to it and its efforts to outlaw its perpetrators. This may indicate a lack of belief in its magical aspect.

I.1.12. Elliott recognises this tale as an instance where ‘[b]urlesque is employed as an agent of indirect criticism’ (1960, 98) thereby lifting satire clear of its inhibiting spell-like restrictions, leaving it ‘free to develop in the ways appropriate to art...free, that is, to help transform satire from magic into art’ (1960, 98). In a brief comparison with the drama of ancient Greece, Elliott cites Aristophanes as close to magic and ritual roots but ‘the miraculous achievement of the Greeks was that they transcended those origins’ (1960, 94). When it comes to Ireland, however, he claims that ‘[n]othing approaching the quality of that achievement can be found, of course,...[here] the magical substratum is much more apparent’ (1960, 94-5). Thus he gives *Tromdámh Gúaire* and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* as examples of Ireland’s early satire breaking out of the magical mould. These tales, however, were composed roughly around the eleventh to twelfth centuries. What about the period of the ninth to eleventh centuries? Was gnomic literature the only recognisable form of satire as we know it today? In the following chapters it will be suggested that Irish literature did in fact produce works of sophisticated satire within the period of the ninth to the eleventh centuries, both as complete narratives or as overriding or important elements contained within narratives.

I.1.13.1. By way of a preliminary example, the *Mellgleó n-Iliach* from *Táin Bó Cúailnge* will be discussed. This is one of a number of episodes in the tale which describe how certain Ulster warriors came to Cú Chulainn’s aid. It is entered in the B-list of sagas along with *Fiacalgleó Fintain* and *Caladgleó Cethirn* among others (MacCana, 1980, 72). Although these episodes come under the heading *gnáthscéla* ‘there is no question of

their referring to separate narratives’ (MacCana, 1980, 87). It is therefore considered as a *remscél* to the major battle of the *Táin*, and as such seems to be accorded some importance. ‘According to Thurneysen, the earliest evidence which we have for the *Táin* is found in the rather obscure poem, the *Verba Scáthaige*... We have two versions of the poem, a shorter one which consists of 33 or 34 lines and the longer one which has 80 lines’ (Ó hUiginn, 1992, 58). Events connected with the *Táin* are mentioned in both versions. While the shorter version confines itself to references to Cú Chulainn’s duels and the fight of the bulls, the longer version also makes mention of specific incidents found in the *Táin* such as *Mellgleó n-Iliach* and *Brisleach Mór Maige Muirthemni* (Ó hUiginn, 1992, 58). This longer version represents an expansion of the shorter poem which Thurneysen dated to the twelfth century. ‘Nevertheless, the evidence of this composition is of considerable interest for it shows that at such a late date the *literati* were capable of writing what was substantially an archaized synopsis of much of what we now know as Recension I of the *Táin* in the obscure *rosc* style’ (Ó hUiginn, 1992, 59). For our purposes, it serves to highlight the perceived importance of *Mellgleó n-Iliach*.

The title ‘*Mellgleó*’ seems to prepare us for a humorous interlude, ‘*gleó*’ translating as ‘fight’ (*DIL*, 363) and ‘*mell*’ as ‘delightful’ (McCone, 2005, 259) in the sense here of giving enjoyment. While Recension I stipulates that *Mellgleó Iliach sin uair condidnatib in slóg* ‘that is Mellgleó Iliach because the host laughed at him’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 102, 1.3386) Recension II explains: *is aire atberar Mellgleó n-Íliach ris dáig de chlochaib 7 táthleccaib móra fogní-seom a gleó* ‘it was called Mellgleó nIliach because he fought his fight with stones and rocks and great flagstones (O’Rahilly, 1967, 108, ll.3929-30 trans. 244). In this case it is suggested that *mellgleó* is a compound of *mell*, ‘a large ball, a round mass’ (here referring to the stones)’ (O’Rahilly, 1967, 332 note on ll.3929-30). Thus the two versions seem to propose different interpretations. As with much of Recension II of *TBC*, this episode is an expansion of Recension I, and it is by comparing these two versions that the original meaning intended by its author may perhaps be revealed. For although Recension II has added material, it nevertheless omits or changes certain particulars from Recension I.

To begin with, Iliach is referred to as *senathair Lóegairi Búadaig* in Recension I (O’Rahilly, 1976, 102) whereas he is called *Íliach...mac Caiss meic [Baicc] meic Rosa*

Rúaid meic Rudraige (O’Rahilly, 1967, 108, ll.3895-6) in Recension II. While both texts thus connect Iliach with Ulster, Recension I concentrates on his descendant and Recension II on his forefathers. By presenting him at the outset as the grandfather of the illustrious Ulster champion Lóegaire Búadach, Recension I places him in an elite warrior class. However, the statement *buí icá gairi la húa hi Ráith Impail* ‘he was being cared for with filial piety by his grandson in Ráith Immail’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 102, l.3369 trans. 215) alerts us to the fact that his vigour is diminished. Nevertheless, *dofóccair dochom in tslúraig co tóetsad a[n]dígail lais* ‘he announced to the host that they would die at his hand in revenge’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 102, ll.3369-79, trans. 215). In comparison, Recension II omits the detail that he was under care and states that, Ulster being under attack, Iliach took counsel with his people and vowed *ainech Ulad do tharractain* ‘to avenge the honour of the Ulstermen’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 108, l.3900). This text goes into detail regarding the onslaught on the province and has Iliach state: *is cumma géa rafóethus féin assa aithle* ‘it matters not if I myself fall thereafter’ (O’Rahilly, 1967, 108, l.3900-1, trans. 243) thereby making his decision appear even more heroic.

The manner in which Iliach sets out is roughly similar in both versions, except that Recension II adds verbs to the sentences and these alter the meaning somewhat. Recension I states: *is amlaid dolluid ina charput c[h]retach n-imbi cen fogaimen cen fortgai. Dí shengabair buidi fón c[h]arput crín* ‘he came thus in his shaky, worn-out chariot, without rugs or covering, two old sorrel nags beneath the decrepit chariot’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 102, ll.3371-3, trans. 215). In comparison Recension II declares: *ra gabait dó-som a dá shengabair chrína chremmanncha bátar for tráig do tháeib in dúnaid. Acus ra indled a shencharpat fhorro cen fhortga cen fhorgemne itir* ‘his two old, decrepit, mangy horses which were on the strand beside the fort were harnessed for him, and his old chariot without any rugs or covering was yoked to the horses (O’Rahilly, 1967, 108, ll.3902-4, trans. 243). By the addition of *ra gabait* and *ra indled* we are given to understand that Iliach’s people helped prepare him for battle whereas in Recension I he was entirely alone. This difference is further emphasised by a comparison of *ocus línais a charpat n-imbi di c[h]lochaib co mbu lán co tici a fhocharpat* ‘and he filled his chariot with stones as high as the skin-coverings’ in Recension I (O’Rahilly, 1976, 102, ll.3372-3, trans. 215) with *ra ecratar a munter in carpat imme do chlochaib 7 chorthib 7*

táthleccaib móra ‘his people filled his chariot around him with stones and rocks and great flagstones’ in Recension II (O’Rahilly, 1967, 108, 3908-9, trans. 243).

Recension II also has Iliach going into battle fully armed even though his spears seem to reflect his general image of decrepitude: *dá shleig chendchrithánacha bernacha* ‘two gapped, shaky-headed spears’ (O’Rahilly, 1967, 108, l.3907, trans. 243). A further discrepancy between the two recensions is that, according to Recension I, Iliach attacked the Connachtmen naked (*ossé tarnocht*). O’Rahilly (1967, xviii-xlix) remarks: ‘there are in LL occasional omissions of small points which are found in Recension I. Some of these may be due to scribal carelessness...In Recension I we are told that Iliach came to fight naked...but this is not mentioned in LL’. This omission is repeated at another important juncture in the tale i.e. when we are made privy to the Connachtmen’s reaction to their attacker. Recension I gives Iliach’s nakedness as the cause of mirth amongst the Connachtmen: *rathaigis iarom in slog indas in toichime dombert, contibset in fear tarnocht* ‘then the host noticed in what manner he came and they mocked the naked man’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 102, ll.3375-6, trans. 215). In Recension II the Connachtmen voice their reaction: ‘*Rapad maith lind ám...combad hí sein tuarascbáil fá tístais Ulaid uile dar saigid*’ ‘We should like indeed...if it were thus that all the Ulstermen came to us’ (O’Rahilly, 1967, 108, ll.3911-2, trans. 243). Although this does not mention his nakedness, O’Rahilly holds that ‘the remark of the men of Ireland seems to imply his nakedness’ (1967, xlix), but it may be no more than that decrepitude was intended.

The strange thing is, however, that both versions make reference to *clap(ar)* and *lebarthrintall* or *leburpentol* : *ossé tarnocht, leburpentol 7 in clapar triasin creit síis* (Recension I, l.3375), and *lebarthrintall a chlaip triana charpat síis dó* (Recension II, ll.3910-1). There is a question mark beside *trintall* in *DIL* (608) citing this as its only example and O’Rahilly translates it as ‘private parts hanging down’ (1976, 215 and 1967, 243). *Pentol* is likewise only attested in this one passage with ‘membrum virile (?)’ entered as translation (*DIL*, 495). Thus while Recension II omits the fact that Iliach was naked on two occasions (which can hardly be due to scribal carelessness), it nevertheless includes the rather more graphic description given above. The reaction of the Connachtmen is pivotal to the interpretation of the episode, with Recension I portraying Iliach as a laughing-stock and Recension II seeming to dilute this image.

Later on in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Recension I, ll.3937-8) we are told how the Ulstermen went into battle: *samlaid dodeochadar 'sin chath tornocht acht a n-armo namá* 'they have come into battle moreover, as naked except for their arms'. In this particular instance Recension II has not omitted anything and has, moreover, repeated the motif, unlike Recension I: *is amlaid atrachtadar lomthornocht uile ac[h]t a n-airm 'na llámaib* 'they arose as stark-naked all except for their arms in their hands' (ll.4641-2), which is closely followed by *lomthornocht uile* (l.4646). Therefore the author of Recension II has no problem with including the word 'naked' in his text if it suits his purpose. This example from both versions appears to be a way of magnifying the perceived heroism of the Ulstermen and we must deduce that Recension II's earlier omission was because he felt it only served to denigrate Iliach. It seems he has tried to water down the satirical image given of Iliach in Recension I while still keeping within the parameters laid out in the earlier text. 'If both Cú Chulainn's and Fergus' warrior prowess is presented in more elaborate terms in LL *TBC*, as compared with *TBC* I, a similar process can be traced in the special treatment which various aspects of the general theme of warrior honour undergo in the Book of Leinster *Táin*' (Greenwood, 1994, 52). '[O]ne of the most powerful of all forms of public disapproval is ridicule...few horrors are more to be dreaded by members of a shame culture than to be publicly laughed at' (Elliott, 1960, 67-8). Iliach's position in Recension I is not to be envied, for ridicule 'can sever the delicate lifelines which bind man to the social body' (Elliott, 1960, 77). We thus understand the reason behind Iliach's being seen to possess the support of his people in his efforts in Recension II.

I.1.13.2. The motif of Celtic warriors going into battle naked is attested in classical sources. According to Polybius (II.28) when the Gaesatae were fighting the Romans 'from conceit and daring [they] threw their clothing off, and went out to the front of the army naked, having nothing but their weapons' (trans. Koch and Carey, 2003, 9). Polybius (II.29) pays tribute to the Celts' efforts to dismay the Romans with their battle methods: 'the Romans...were greatly disturbed by...the battle noise of the Celts. For there were among them countless horns and trumpets which were being blown simultaneously from every part of the army...Also terrifying was the appearance and rapid manoeuvring of the naked warriors in front, men at the prime of their strength and

magnificence’ (trans. Koch and Carey, 2003, 9). Diodorus Siculus (V §29) states of the Gauls: ‘some of them think so little of death that they fight wearing only a loincloth’ (trans. Koch and Carey, 2003, 12). ‘According to Tacitus the army among Germanic peoples consisted of horsemen armed with shield and spear on the one hand and of naked or lightly clad infantry on the other’ (McCone, 1987, 101). Thus fighting naked was a sign of bravery with the Celts and other Indo-European peoples (McCone, 1987, 101-2) being associated with the younger warriors especially, and it is suggested that this image is being satirised in Recension I by deliberately associating it with an old man.

As with the reaction of the Connachtmen, Dóche mac Mágach’s role is shifted slightly in Recension II. Whereas the earlier version says: *ro choisic...in dáescorslóg* ‘he checked the jeering of the rabble’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 102, ll.3376-7, trans.215), the later one omits this mocking of Iliach and merely states: *barrecgaib...dó-som 7 firis fáilte friseom* ‘he met him and welcomed him’ (O’Rahilly, 1967, 108, l.3913, trans. 243). Thus we see the pattern continuing to emerge whereby Recension II cannot condone the utter ridicule of Iliach presented in Recension I. Dóche’s demonstration of respect is honoured in both versions as also is Iliach’s own show of appreciation by requesting that Dóche be the one to behead him when he has spent himself fighting. Again, both versions have Iliach asking that Lóegaire be given his sword after his death. This comes as no surprise in Recension I where Iliach has been introduced into the tale as the grandfather of Lóegaire, but Recension II includes this idea without explanation, thus leaving a loose end unusual for its author.

The account of Iliach’s lone fight against the Connachtmen in Recension II remains structurally true to that of Recension I except that it is characterised by familiar elaboration. This can be demonstrated in the marrow-mash incident. In Recension I Iliach is told: *ba do chnámaib bó nUlad dogníth* ‘that it was made of the bones of the cows of the Ulstermen’ (ll.3380-1) giving us a bare statement of fact. Recension II, on the other hand, informs us that it was due to Cú Chulainn: *smiramair fogní Cú Chulaind do chnámib chethra Ulad do leges Chethirn meic Fintain* ‘a marrow-mash Cú Chulainn made from the bones of the Ulstermen’s cattle for the curing of Cethirn mac Fintain’ (ll.3925-6). Accordingly, when Iliach produces his own marrow-mash of the bones of the

Connachtmen Recension II implicitly suggests that he may be compared to the great warrior Cú Chulainn.

I.1.14. This brings us to the final few sentences which serve to round off the episode by explaining its title. It is suggested here that Recension I intended this as a satirical episode and that its title accords with what is in the text. Its narration is laconic but flowing. Recension II, however, appears to produce an artificial explanation for its title. While the author omitted and changed certain particulars of the episode, he did not produce a seamless piece of work. If he had wished to camouflage the satire completely, then some descriptions would have been better excluded from his version. As it is, it appears he was prepared to change a certain amount, but perhaps out of respect for the earlier work, he did not wish to be too drastic with his editing, leaving us with a piece that is ambiguous in meaning. *Mellgleó n-Iliach* hardly conforms to Kelly's view that 'Recension II of the *Táin* conforms...to modern expectations of an aesthetic creation, presenting a smooth narrative in a unified style' (1992, 71). What may be inferred from the changes is that the author of Recension II had difficulty with the idea of an Ulster warrior being ridiculed. For him, it seems, Ulster warriors were always to appear heroic, and the *Táin* was there to eulogise that heroism. The perceived view of modern critics of the *Táin*, however, is that 'whole-hearted approval of war is withheld. The tale does not dwell indulgently on descriptions of the large-scale battle, and the final encounters...pass off without human casualties' (Kelly, 1992, 86). In a way, then, the *Táin* itself seems to tire of war in its closing stages and perhaps the *Mellgleó n-Iliach* episode was originally devised as a sharp criticism of the concept of war and heroism. Presenting Iliach as a decrepit, naked old warrior who is the laughing stock of the Connachtmen, turns the tables on the standard image of the young, virile warrior going into battle. Recension II's manipulation of the earlier text demonstrates his general unease with the satirical image portrayed of Iliach.

2. External influences on early Irish literature.

I.2.1. '*TBC* is a literary presentation of a tradition' according to Carney (1955, 65), who states on drawing his conclusions as to the external element in early Irish saga that 'the

Christian authors, in presenting the pre-Christian past, drew not only on native material, but upon their total literary experience. This experience included [among others] a direct knowledge of a certain range of Latin literature [and] a knowledge of Greek epic which may have come through intermediary Latin sources' (1955, 321). Stanford (1970, 32) echoes Carney's view, stating that 'no clear evidence for direct literary borrowing from Greek epic...seems to have been presented...though a few examples...certainly suggest a knowledge of Odyssean material'. He allows that 'evidence for some acquaintance with Greek in early Christian Ireland is clear in the Greek words and letters to be found in the early Hiberno-Latin and vernacular Irish writings' (Stanford, 1970, 22) but quotes Bieler saying that '[t]here is no evidence to show that the ancient Irish knew even a single writer or poet of classical Greece in the original' (Bieler, 1963, 14). Thus we accept that influence is mainly demonstrated in 'free versions of classical themes' (Stanford, 1970, 33). *Merugud Uilix Maic Leirtis* (Meyer, 1958) is cited by Stanford (1970, 34) as such an example, where classical and Irish elements sit side by side in a 'sophisticated fusion' (1970, 35). Here early Irish and late Latin features are combined with 'what looks very like echoes of Homer's *Odyssey* not only in small details but also in characterisation' (1970, 34).

When it comes to Latin influence, however, some extant material is available. This includes an Irish version of Virgil's *Aeneid* (Calder, 1907) and a version of Statius' *Thebaid* known as *Togail na Tébe* (Calder, 1922). These translations are termed 'loose' and 'imaginative' by Stanford (1970, 36-7) and one can only speculate as to the texts used by these translators. Hofman (1988) deals with the issue of evidence for direct knowledge of Virgil in early medieval Ireland, concentrating his examination on sixteen Latin and Old Irish glosses of Virgil quotations in the copy of Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae* in the library at St. Gallen (Ms. SG 904). Although it is generally agreed that Virgil was known in early medieval Ireland, Hofman (1988, 189) points out that many scholars hold that Virgil was known only from secondary sources. Hofman (1988, 190) prefaces his argument by alluding to the connection between Priscian and Virgil: 'like all grammarians, Priscian illustrates his grammatical remarks with quotations from pagan Latin authors, and especially from Vergil'. His findings reveal that, given the context in which some of the quotations are made, their accuracy indicates a familiarity

with the text of Virgil himself (1988, 211): ‘items 1,5,7,10,11,12,15,16...are exactly the kind of glosses a teacher would enter in his copy of Vergil’ (1988, 212) and also ‘it is clear from the errors in items 2,3,14 that Vergil was quoted – just as in Antiquity and in the Merovingian realm – from memory in early medieval Ireland’ (1988, 212). Proof of direct knowledge of classical texts by Irish authors is difficult to establish and previously this had been attributed to scholars who travelled on the continent and not directly to Irish sources (Bieler, 1971, 45-9). Hofman’s exhaustive examination, however, could open up debate on this subject, for SG 904 ‘is considered to have been written early in the 9th century in a monastery in Ireland itself’ (Hofman, 1988, 189). For our purposes, it may be stated that there are ‘two main *genres* of medieval vernacular Irish literature in which classical influences have been detected. The first, and much the older, is that of the early heroic legends, the second that of the early translations into Irish of the Latin authors’ (Stanford, 1970, 30).

I.2.2. Having established the existence of classical influence in the sagas it now remains for us to focus more specifically on Latin authors. There was a knowledge of these authors among the early Irish writers, as Columbanus’ writings show that he ‘was familiar with some of the Latin classical and late-classical poets, notably Virgil, Horace, Martial, Juvenal, Statius, Ausonius and Claudian’ (Stanford, 1984, 7). It is impossible to work out if this knowledge was gleaned before Columbanus left Ireland or not, but Stanford (1984, 7) cites Adamnán’s commentary on Virgil’s *Eclogues* and *Georgics* as evidence that these works were known at least in Iona and it may be suggested that they could have been known before the community transferred there. ‘In the transmission of Horace’s poems the Irish do seem to have played a leading part during the eighth and ninth centuries... and the fact that Horace was known also to Columbanus is possibly suggestive of a tradition of Horatian studies in Ireland from the sixth century onwards’ (Bieler, 1971, 48). We must, however, rue the fact that ‘no manuscript of a major classical author has survived in Ireland from the early medieval period’ (Stanford, 1984, 7). But in the later middle ages Virgil and Statius were translated, and thus ‘some manuscripts...must have survived or else were imported’ (Stanford, 1984, 7).

Roman satire was written in verse and was known as *satúra*, meaning mixture or medley (Elliott, 1960, 104). When Quintilian was comparing Greek and Roman literary

achievement he said of *satura: tota nostra est* 'it is all our own' (Elliott, 1960, 100). We are therefore to understand that Quintilian meant something specific by *satura*, which would only encompass a facet of the general term *satire* today. 'For Quintilian...*satura* designates specifically a *form* of literature, a genus; and when he writes *satura...tota nostra est*...he means that the special type of literature created by Lucilius, dominated by a certain spirit, clothed in a certain metrical form, fixed by the usage of a series of canonical writers, and finally designated by a name specifically Latin, is Roman and not Greek' (Elliott, 1960, 101). This is not to say that *satura* did not inherit anything from early Greek literature. The main influence derived from various Greek forms, however, was one of spirit and tone, but Lucilius and after him Horace and Juvenal transcended these forms to create something new (Elliott, 1960, 104). This sophisticated genre has little place for the type of satire exemplified by Dallán Forgaill. 'When Horace or Juvenal hurls threats...we understand the threats in a special sense: language which was once believed capable of magically inflicting death, now kills in a metaphorical sense only' (Elliott, 1960, 129). Thus Roman satire consists of a different literary form to that of early Irish narrative and we must therefore look at its spirit and tone for elements of similarity with early Irish saga.

I.2.3. Horace and Juvenal were both responsible for developing this poetic genre in their own individual ways. Horace aimed to dispel some of the invective associated with satire from tradition (Elliott, 1960, 112). 'In his deft and insinuating way Horace attempts no less than to change the character of satire, to give it a milder, less crusading nature. He is not a prosecutor...he claims; ...he does not like to give pain...and if he laughs at various forms of nonsense, that does not mean that he is motivated by a dark and cutting malice' (Elliott, 1960, 112). Horace's poetry may have been reflective of his contemporary period, for 'the relatively moderate character of Augustan Rome demanded urbanity and good manners of a poet, and Horace ...tuned his verse accordingly. Folly was his quarry' (Elliott, 1960, 117).

By Juvenal's day, however, a poet was not held in the same esteem in Roman society and we witness 'the progress of corruption in the difference between the comparative independence of Horace and the servility of later poets' to their patrons (Highet, 1954, 7). Juvenal felt this dependency deeply humiliating and was savage in his

description of the ‘sufferings of middle-class penury in a world where the rich seem to grow richer year by year and the poor more slavish’ (Highet, 1954, 8). According to Elliot, satire has always been used as a moral weapon, and ‘Juvenal’s *facit indignatio versum* is the essential expression of the controlling attitude’ (1960, 107). What Juvenal did was to take ideas from earlier Greek and Roman authors and apply them to contemporary Rome, using everyday illustrations from life (Highet, 1954, 173). While other writers merely mocked, Juvenal manifested a bitter, pessimistic attitude, but he ‘blended his pessimism with a strong sense of moral purpose’ (Highet, 1954, 173), giving satire a new arena wherein it could compete with oratory, tragedy and epic (Highet, 1954, 173). ‘The satirist, reporting everyday life, must do so very clearly, for he has to show us the familiar in a brighter light’ (Highet, 1954, 174) and this Juvenal did with vividness, energy and truth. In an empire that was appallingly corrupt Juvenal managed from within to create works that were original and that held a message for all ages (Highet, 1954, 178).

As Juvenal borrowed freely from earlier authors, so too were the Roman satirists utilised by commentators to draw comparisons with the medieval church (Bischoff, 1971, 89-90). ‘In the hope of bringing home the meaning of a text more surely to their readers, [these commentators] ..often employ medieval terms to describe...things mentioned by the author although the medieval term and the original classical one are not exactly synonymous’ (Bischoff, 1971, 89). Examples cited by Bischoff include the following: the word *moniales* in reference to vestal virgins in Juvenal; *sacerdotes* referred to as *presbyteri*; and an Attic virgin referred to as an *abbatissa* (1971, 89). We may regard this as representing ‘one trend or mode of interpretation of classical authors and to see this as flourishing in the late eleventh and the early twelfth century, a mode which is more appropriate to the satirists than to any other group of authors’ (Bischoff, 1971, 90) as they were recognised moralists. In this way, medieval commentators tried perhaps to understand their own time by ‘projecting their milieu on to the background of antiquity’ (Bischoff, 1971, 92).

The Roman satirists such as Horace and Juvenal wrote satires which were relatively direct, where it was reasonably easy to see to whom or to what they referred. Take Juvenal, for instance, in his scathing comment on Roman values in Book I of his

satires, line 74: *Probitas laudatur et alget* ‘honesty is praised and grieves/suffers/ chills’ which Highet (1954, 176) interprets as ‘the reward of honesty in Rome is ‘praise and starvation’’. Taking into account Juvenal’s contemporary background and circumstances, it is therefore not surprising that he wished to remain anonymous given the thrust of social comments such as the aforementioned.

Irish satirical narratives, however, such as *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó*, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* and possibly *Serglige Con Culainn* manifest parodistic elements to a greater or lesser degree. Parody is defined as burlesque or ludicrous imitation and lends a comic aspect to an already familiar work. According to Mercier (1962, 2) in the case of parody the reader must, first of all, ‘recognise the work or the genre parodied; then he must see the absurdity of the parody by comparison with the original; finally, this absurdity must be reflected back from the parody on to the original, so that he can see in the latter the inherent tendency to absurdity which made the parody feasible to begin with’. In other words, there is an understood extra layer to the satire in parody that is essential for communicating the intended meaning.

I.2.4. Bakhtin (2000, 112) sees laughter in literature as one of the most ancient ways of representing language and ‘[o]ne of the most ancient and widespread forms for representing the direct word of another is *parody*’. Bakhtin (2000, 114) takes us back to the satyr plays of ancient Greece for examples of parodying doublets which, in most instances ‘developed the same narrative and mythological motifs as had the trilogy that preceded it’. He refers to the satyr play as the ‘fourth drama’, a ‘ribald comedy with a chorus of satyrs, performed immediately after the tragic trilogy’ (2000, 114n.N) and written by the same authors as those who wrote the tragedies, e.g. Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus. These plays were not in any way inferior, however, for ‘[t]hese parodic-travesty counter-presentations of lofty national myths were just as sanctioned and canonical as their straightforward tragic manifestations’ (2000, 114). These satyr dramas illustrate the need to view from a different angle, they ‘provide the corrective of laughter and criticism...[and] force men to experience...a different and contradictory reality that is otherwise not captured’ (Bakhtin, 2000, 118). Taken in this light, it is clear that the ‘Greeks did not view the parodic-travesty reworkings of national myth as any particular profanation or blasphemy’ (Bakhtin, 1988, 115).

Laughter was also an important facet of Roman literature as ‘[i]t was Rome that taught European culture how to laugh and ridicule...The literary and artistic consciousness of the Romans could not imagine a serious form without its comic equivalent. The serious, straightforward form was perceived as only a fragment, only half of a whole; the fullness of the whole was achieved only by adding the comic *contre-partie* of this form. Everything serious had to have, and indeed did have, its comic double’ (Bakhtin, 2000, 118). There is, regrettably, little extant material relating to this type of Roman literature because ‘those upon whom the transmission of this heritage depended were agelasts who elected the serious word and rejected its comic reflections as a profanation (as happened, for example, with the numerous parodies on Virgil)...[and] it was oral tradition pre-eminently that transmitted many of these forms to the Middle Ages, transmitting as well the very style and logic of Roman parody’ (Bakhtin, 2000, 118).

When it comes to the Middle Ages, we witness a wealth of parodic forms which seem to derive from Roman tradition (Bakhtin, 2000, 124). If anything, parody was further expanded so that ‘[t]here was no genre, no text, no prayer, no saying that did not receive its parodic equivalent’ (Bakhtin, 2000, 129). Parody requires a ‘shared literary experience, which, in the Middle Ages, was provided principally by the classroom or by religion’ (Strayer, 1987, 440). ‘The best-known texts in the Middle Ages (and thus the most common sources of parody) were the Bible and the liturgy’ (Strayer, 1987, 440). There is at this time the added discourse of the church, i.e. the Bible, especially the Gospels. These, too, were not immune to ridicule, as *Cena Cypriani* or Cyprian Feasts illustrates. This work describes a symposium and is constituted of the following: ‘the entire Bible, the entire Gospel was as it were cut up into little scraps, and these scraps were then arranged in such a way that a picture emerged of a grand feast at which all the personages of sacred history from Adam and Eve to Christ and his Apostles eat, drink, and make merry. In this work a correspondence of all details to Sacred Writ is transformed into carnival’ (Bakhtin, 2000, 126). Thus we may compare the previously discussed phenomenon of pagan writers such as Juvenal being glossed by religious terms by medieval writers to illustrate a text’s meaning for a later age, with the phenomenon of medieval writers creating parodic works like the *Cena Cypriani*, which views the church’s teachings in a comic way. This open attitude may help describe medieval

laughter, for this type of laughter was a 'holiday' laughter when feast days were excuses for irreverent behaviour. 'In those days it was permitted to turn the direct sacred word into a parodic-travesty mask; it could be born again...out of the grave of authoritative and reverential seriousness. Under these conditions, the fact that *Cyprian Feasts* could enjoy enormous popularity even in strict church circles becomes understandable' (Bakhtin, 2000, 128).

3. The modern interpretation of satire.

I.3.1. 'Satire, in its literary aspect, may be defined as the expression ...of the sense of amusement or disgust excited by the ridiculous or unseemly, provided that humour is a distinctly recognizable element, and that the utterance is invested with literary form' (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1962, vol 20, 6). Satire is thus rather difficult to define succinctly, as humour may cover a number of different types including wit, irony, burlesque, parody or the grotesque. 'Without humour, satire is invective; without literary form, it is mere clownish jeering' (*Ency. Brit.*, 1962, vol 20, 6). Satire has been generally viewed as a negative genre which concentrates on the absence of good sense or traditional values or put in another way, focuses on human vice and can make the world appear grotesque (Kernan, 1965, 3). The form that this basic approach takes depends upon what type of humour the author employs. Before discussing different types of humour, we will take a brief look at some critics' views on satire. Dryden's essay on satire entitled *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* written in 1693, came to the conclusion that true satire, as distinct from lampoon, existed only between the polarities of wit and morality (Kernan, 1965, 8). It may therefore be surmised that castigating human vice is not, in itself, sufficient motivation for satire as we understand it today, but that there must be a moral as well. 'To dignify satire by rendering it the instrument of morality...was a development implying considerable advance in the literary art' (*Ency. Brit.*, 1962, vol 20, 6). According to Kernan (1965, 8) the satirist 'must first be a responsible critic of men and manners...He cannot be an irresponsible railer lashing out at anyone or anything which displeases him. But his criticism must be

witty as well as moral, it must be phrased in such a way as to make its point with some elegance and sting’.

Kernan (1965, 13) refers to Dryden’s loose term ‘wit’ as meaning ‘the shape or form which art gives in various ways to the world and characters which satire serves up’. Dryden thus identified satire as consisting of art and morality and saw this art as emanating from ‘a poet’s conscious skill’ (Kernan, 1965, 13) which was then used to highlight moral failing. Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) devotes a section to an examination of satire and, taking Dryden’s explanation as a starting point, he proceeds to expand on this theory: ‘Satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognises as grotesque, and at least an implicit moral standard’ (Kernan, 1965, 13). Frye’s inclusion of the need for imagination on the part of the reader opens up satire as a world of ‘demonic imagery’ which is represented by the satirist in varying degrees of grotesqueness and according to a number of different value systems (Kernan, 1965, 14-5). Thus, although Dryden’s theory still holds good, Frye succeeds in enlarging and developing it to encompass many more ideas, forms and styles which ‘contain either an implicit or explicit set of values’ (Kernan, 1965, 16). Satire is still comprised of art and morality. However, these no longer represent polarities but rather are produced in differing shades and variations which have become intertwined into an ‘intricate and continuing conflict which generates the plot’ (Kernan, 1965, 18).

I.3.2. We will now proceed to look at satire from the aspect of author, scene and plot. As a general rule, when one is reading or talking about a text, one of the first questions to be asked is ‘who is the author?’ This helps us to set a foundation for an understanding of the text. In the case of satire, this is of especial importance owing to the critical nature of what is being communicated. Nevertheless, this may prove to be a distraction leading to preconceived views about a text. ‘Our attention is thus directed away from the satiric work itself and toward some second object, the personality of the author or the contemporary social scene. In this way satire is denied the independence of artistic status and made a biographical and historical document, while the criticism of satire degenerates into discussion of an author’s moral character and the economic and social conditions of his time’ (Kernan, 1959, 165).

Barthes' essay *The Death of the Author* (2000, 147), describes our reliance on information about the writer: 'The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end...the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us'. If we take Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (Eddy, 1973) as an example, we may understand a certain abhorrence on the part of the reader owing to the cannibalistic nature of the text's content. Swift ends his work by speaking in the first person: 'I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single Penny; the youngest being nine Years Old, and my wife past Child-bearing' (Eddy, 1973, 31). However, this does not succeed in distancing him from the work, even though such personal details could not have applied to him. If one were to take the work literally, one would have only to cite Swift's madness in later years as sufficient evidence, if so desired, for his presumed degeneration. For Barthes, 'to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on the text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing' (2000, 149). Not knowing the biographical details of an author opens up a text to wider interpretation and may be a contributing factor to the popularity of myths and legends down through the ages. Barthes recommends concentration on language rather than the author, since 'a text is made up of multiple writings drawn from many cultures...but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author....a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination' (2000, 150).

Early Irish prose literature can usually boast neither specific authors nor even a definite original date of writing. Early Irish texts as they have come down to us are often the work of several copiers/redactors. A rough historical background may sometimes be suggested, but precision is seldom possible and language is often the surest yardstick by which we can hope to estimate date. External literary influence was presumably limited to early Christian and non-Christian works in Latin with the immediate Irish cultural matrix arguably being principally a product of the interaction of Christian with pre-Christian values. This is rather less complex than the great multiplicity of influences involved in the novel, which is the focus of Barthes' article. With satirical narrative especially this may not altogether be a bad thing, as the moral involved may then be applied to a loosely specified period of time. As far as the particular texts to be studied in

this thesis are concerned, this may bestow an enduring quality upon them as moral satires.

The author of satire usually plays down the ideal and does not emphasise his moral or message, rather concentrating on the grotesqueness of human nature. This can sometimes result in a message being overlooked or misinterpreted. In *A Modest Proposal* Swift goes into morbid detail about how to get the most out of a child's 'Carcass': 'A Child will make two dishes at an Entertainment for Friends, and when the Family dines alone, the fore or hind Quarter will make a reasonable Dish, and seasoned with a little Pepper or Salt will be very good Boiled on the fourth day, especially in Winter' (Eddy, 1973, 24). This political satire makes use of a grotesque proposal in order to pour ridicule and scorn upon the Irish government of the time for its harsh treatment of its subjects and lack of regard for their welfare. Swift employs the concept of brutality to combat brutality. As they are looking for ways to make money out of their subjects, what better way than to make direct physical use of them? Swift uses logical arguments to reach his conclusion. His 'modest' proposal makes sense except that it is utterly inhuman and strains credibility. Obviously, different elements may be stressed in a satire according to the individual author and his aim.

I.3.3. The scene of satire is generally crowded and disorderly, being packed with the 'deformed faces of depravity, stupidity, greed, venality, ignorance and maliciousness...Pick up any major satiric work and open it at random and the immediate effect is one of disorderly profusion' (Kernan, 1959, 167). If we relate this concept to *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* we recognise the potential for chaos from the very start with the Ulstermen and the Connachtmen both seeking Mac Da Thó's hound and both sides turning up to claim him on the same day *táncatar dá cóiced Hérenn i n-óenló co:mbáatar i ndoruss bruidne Meic Dathó* 'the two provinces of Ireland came on the one day so that they were at the entrance to Mac Da Thó's hostel' (Thurneysen, 1935, 6, §5). Thereafter the narrative is full of people portraying differing aspects of humanity's less desirable qualities. *Serglige Con Culainn* is likewise a densely populated tale, with Cú Chulainn demonstrating his less agreeable qualities in front of the people of Ulster. At the celebrations of Samain Cú Chulainn refuses to grant the women's wishes saying: *ní fogbat merdrecha Ulad a n-aill acht foraim én dóib do thabairt fornd indiu* 'the whores

of Ulster find nothing else to impose on us today but the hunting of birds for them' (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §5, ll.36-7) and threatens Leborcham with violence for making the request on the women's behalf: *atetha a chlaideb do imbirt furri* 'he seizes his sword to ply it on her' (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §5). Where *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* collectively represents depravity and greed in its characters, *Serlige Con Culainn* concentrates primarily on Cú Chulainn's bad behaviour, his irresponsible actions leading one to draw comparisons with other characters in the text.

'There is, of course, a great deal of variation in the scenes of individual satires: the Rome of Horace is not identical with that of Juvenal... Every author of satire is free to stress the elements of the scene which appear most important to him, but beneath the divergencies of the surface the satiric scene remains fundamentally the same picture of a dense and grotesque world of decaying matter moving without form in response only to physical forces and denying the humane ideal which once molded the crowd into a society' (Kernan, 1959, 170).

I.3.4. When it comes to the plot of satire, in the sense that change is brought about either in the characters or society, 'then the most striking quality of satire is the absence of plot' (Kernan, 1959, 176). The situation we encounter at the very beginning does not progress much by the end; 'the scenery and the faces may have changed outwardly, but fundamentally we are looking at the same world, and the same fools' (Kernan, 1959, 176-7). If we apply this theory to *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó*, we realise that at the beginning both the Ulstermen and the Connachtmen want Ailbe the hound, but that by the end of the tale neither succeeds. In the meantime we witness a pointless battle which produces much bloodshed, including the death of the hound. In *Serlige Con Culainn* we witness Cú Chulainn's anti-social behaviour at the beginning of the tale and although he has many adventures throughout the tale, the final picture we are given is of him wandering Slige Midlúachra in a frenzy, having understood nothing of what has gone before. It takes the druids' *deog dermait* (Dillon, 1953a, 29, §48, l.839) 'drink of forgetfulness' to return him to sanity.

'Whenever satire does have a plot which eventuates in a shift from the original condition, it is not a true change but simply intensification of the original condition' (Kernan, 1959, 177). The situation is as unpleasant at the end as it is at the beginning.

‘The tragic plot has been described as a continuing rhythm of ‘purpose, passion and perception’ in which the tragic hero does something (purpose), is forced to endure the consequences of his act (passion), and then as a result of his suffering comes to a new understanding (perception). The rhythm of satire, however, lacks the crucial act of perception which permits development and forward movement’ (Kernan, 1959, 177). The plot follows the pattern of purpose and passion but fails on perception. The characters do not learn anything from their mistakes, merely carrying on blindly. They do not grow morally.

I.3.5. This brings us to the various types of humour employed by the satirist in order to achieve his goal. As stated earlier, humour covers many facets. As we are specifically referring to satire, we will limit ourselves to burlesque, irony and parody, for although other shades of comedy may be reflected in satire, these three seem to deliver the greatest punch and to be the most utilised forms. Burlesque is the ludicrous imitation of reality; the satirist uses it to aid the reader draw comparisons between the real and the ideal. It is ‘a form of the comic in art, consisting broadly in an imitation of a work of art with the object of exciting laughter, by distortion or exaggeration’ (Ency. Brit. 1962, vol 4, 423). When discussing *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* and the boasting contest contained therein, we will appreciate how this tale could have been described as a ‘burlesque’ (II.1.2.).

While burlesque is a frequently used element in satire, irony is the ‘fundamental satiric device’ (Mercier, 1962, 2). All irony is not satire but ‘nearly all satire makes use of irony’ (Kernan, 1965, 81). Irony basically says one thing and means the exact opposite. In being ironic, the satirist ‘praises what he loathes, speaks with enthusiasm of utopias which he proves to be wastelands, creates pleasant little tales about the beasts and never seems to notice that his animals are reductions of human beings, solemnly dresses his contemporaries in epic robes far too large for them, and confidently puts Achilles’ spear in hands which cannot hold it’ (Kernan, 1965, 82). Irony depends on an established or understood standard on the part of the author and the reader, so that when we are confronted with its opposite we recognise it as ironic. This may be understood in the author’s portrayal of the character of Cú Chulainn in *Serglige Con Culainn*. Irony is about pretence, a pretence to morality which is a sham (Kernan, 1965, 84). Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* contains sustained irony which could be ‘taken literally unless the

reader accepts certain norms of behaviour and realises that the ironist shares them. The careful reader of *A Modest Proposal* feels that nobody in his right mind could discuss cannibalism so cold-bloodedly; therefore Swift must be joking' (Mercier, 1962, 2).

Parody is the skilled craft whereby the satirist employs one work to produce an absurd or ridiculous effect in another. To achieve this of course, the work must be known to the reader. Intertextuality is the borrowing from one text to another without necessarily using it for comic purposes and this literary device is a well-known art among writers of early Irish literature. We have only to cite, as one of many, the episode of Cú Chulainn being cooled in three vats of water in his *Macgnímrada* (O'Rahilly, 1976, 25, ll.814-21) and a similar recurrence of this episode in *Serglige Con Culainn* when he was a grown man (Dillon, 1953a, 21, §36, ll.596-9). Parody, however, is an extension of intertextuality. *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* is a recognised work of parody, shamelessly utilising the *immrama* as instruments whereby to illustrate the fantastic land of 'O Early Eating' (IV.2.13.). As is evident from the above, theories of satire, as we understand them today may be applied, without difficulty, to early Irish narrative. In his discussion on satire in early Irish narrative, Mercier (1962, 8) states 'I know of no comparable example of parody in Western European vernacular literature which antedates *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*...written not later than 1200'. As the Irish had been writing scholarly works in the vernacular since the eighth century, he points out that 'vernacular parody might conceivably have appeared much sooner than it did in Ireland' (1962, 8).

So where did the Irish *literati* get their ideas from? It has been suggested that influences could have been derived from Latin authors like Horace and Juvenal, but their form of satire was of a straightforward variety. We have no direct evidence, however, of parodic works by Latin authors having been read in early medieval Ireland. Could parody have developed naturally in Ireland, independent of outside influences, at least in the initial stages? In ordinary terms, we are talking here about a send-up, a little light relief from what is a serious well-known phenomenon, whether it is a ritual, an event, a phrase etc. This may be seen as a natural progression of the human imagination, and parody is no more than the literary equivalent of this. Thus parody may not necessarily contain satire, since satire requires a moral purpose. Because parody is often interpreted as lightweight, the serious underlying issue may be overlooked. What may be suggested,

however, is that in some early Irish narrative the use of parody with a moral purpose is to be found. The result is tales which are moral satires. While these tales may entertain, there is a serious underlying motive to them.

I.3.6. ‘Satire is, like comedy and tragedy, a very ancient form which appears to have its roots in primitive ritual activities such as formulaic curses and the magical blasting of personal and tribal enemies’ (Kernan, 1959, 167). The contemporary understanding of satire still shares some characteristics of its ancient form, although it has become more varied and refined. Satire in the conventional sense has received considerably less attention in medieval Irish studies than *áer* and for this reason will be the main topic of this thesis. In the following chapters early Irish narrative will be examined for evidence of this satire and to demonstrate that this type of literature did exist and may be more comprehensive than formerly anticipated. The tales to be discussed in detail will be *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó*, *Serglige Con Culainn* and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*. It will be argued that *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* and possibly *Serglige Con Culainn*, as tales dating from around the tenth century, contain parodistic elements. *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* is considered the classic satirical text from early medieval Ireland, while *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* has been recognised as a satirical parody by some critics, a burlesque by others and a broadly accurate reflection of early Irish *mores* by still others. *Serglige Con Culainn* has been viewed as an unusual text containing certain elements which put Cú Chulainn’s reputation in jeopardy, but other critics have viewed it as a typical Otherworld adventure tale. In the course of this discussion, episodes from other early Irish tales will be addressed as appropriate for evidence of satirical content and for comparative purposes.

The preceding chapter has not been intended to be a comprehensive study of satire. For present purposes a general discussion is sufficient to indicate the areas of interest in relation to early Irish literature. It now remains to look closely at the texts in question. The editions used are *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* (Thurneysen, 1935), *Serglige Con Culainn* (Dillon, 1953a) and Version H of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (Meyer, 1892). H was chosen over B for three reasons. Firstly it has generated less attention over the years, secondly the text is considered to be closer to the original and lastly it has been deemed to be less satirical than B. One of the aims of this thesis is to demonstrate that H

stands out as a satirical work in its own right. McCone's article 'Die Spottwettkämpfe in der Geschichte von Mac Da Thós Schwein' (2006) has been consulted in chapter two. Dillon's (1941) and Meyer's (1892) translations of their respective texts have also been consulted. Where their exact translations are cited, they will be given directly after the Old Irish text followed by the editor's name and page reference in brackets. Otherwise the editors's names and references will be given in brackets before the translations. This procedure will also be followed in relation to other texts from which citations are taken. Slight modifications have been made to Stokes' rendition of the verse in IV.11.2.2. Modifications such as length marks have been inserted where considered appropriate in certain quotations. The chapters have been divided into three parts. Section one discusses the basic views and background material of the text concerned, section two is a textual analysis and section three is a conclusion. Translations for *CIH* 2218.10-12 (I.1.5.), *CIH* 24.11-22 (I.1.7.) and *CIH* 1112.9 (I.1.4.) are from a lecture given by Liam Breatnach in 2003. The translation of *CIH* 1383.10-11 (I.1.6.) is by Róisín McLaughlin from a lecture also given in 2003. The *punctum delens* is manifested as an unitalicised 'h' in italicised text. As Robinson's 1912 article was not available, citations are taken from a 1998 copy by Matthews, with page references made to this particular publication.

II. Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó.

1. Introduction.

II.1.1. *SMMDT* was obviously a well-known and popular saga, to judge by the number of manuscript versions that are left to us, six in all. The manuscripts in question (Thurneysen, 1935, i) are firstly the Book of Leinster (LL, c.1152-1161; O’Sullivan, 1966), H.3.18 (c.1700) and Harley 5280 (Hl; written in the first half of the sixteenth century), which Thurneysen’s edition of the text (1935) employs as independent witnesses to the earliest extant version. By selecting the oldest linguistic forms from them he endeavours to reconstruct, if not the original, then at least the archetype from which all three derive. The version in Rawlinson B.512 (R), written around the fifteenth century, is included in Thurneysen’s edition, but purely for comparative purposes, being printed on the lower part of each page below the main text. He considers it a remoulding of the story and states that it ‘does not preserve the original text with any accuracy; it contains innovations, expansions, etc. in almost every section’ (Thurneysen, 1935, ii).

McCone (1984, 1-30) challenges this: ‘Thurneysen’s view that the Rawl.B.512 version is a later compilation based upon the other three rather than representing a separate and probably slightly more independent line of descent from the archetype hardly conforms to the facts as he presents them’. He suggests that Thurneysen exaggerates the differences between the texts. ‘[R]éitíonn cuid mhaith den téacs in R leis na trí théacs eile beagnach focal ar fhocal d’ainneoin na n-éagsúlachtaí atá le fáil ann go flúirseach. Is deacair na cosúlachtaí suntasacha...a chur in oiriúint do theoirc Thurneysen faoi bhunús R gan dul thar meán i muinín comhtharlaithe, agus b’fhusa cur i gcás go bhfuil R ar aon dul le L, H agus Hl sa mhéid is go síolraíonn siad uilig ón gcomhfhoinsé chéanna i ndeireadh thiar’ (McCone, 1984b, 6: ‘much of the text in R agrees with the three other texts practically word for word, in spite of the many differences which are to be found there. It is difficult to reconcile the remarkable similarities to Thurneysen’s theory as to R’s origin without becoming over-reliant on coincidences and it would be easy to suppose that R is on a par with L, H, and Hl in so far as they all spring from the same source in the end’). Be that as it may, this seems to be the manuscript version

chosen by scribes to copy from in the later medieval period as ‘there is no doubt that the Early Modern version of *SMMDT* is based on the Rawlinson B.512 version’ (Breatnach, 1990, 41). Accordingly it must have been considered of significance at that time. The ‘modern’ version survives in two manuscripts, namely Edinburgh MS.xxxvi, written 1690-91, and H.6.8, written about 1777. Their version differs from that of the others to such an extent that Thurneysen deems them ‘of no value for restoring the original text’ (Thurneysen, 1935, ii). According to him ‘judging by the language on the whole, I think the original tale was composed (roughly) about A.D.800’....We may presume a common source, say, of the tenth or eleventh century’ (1935, iv).

II.1.2. *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* has received a fair amount of critical attention over the past number of years. It is generally recognised as a highly sophisticated composition. Taking a chronological glimpse at opinions of the saga’s critics, we observe Thurneysen introducing the preface to his edition thus - ‘[t]his is one of the best told of Old Irish sagas; it gives a vivid picture of the warlike spirit of the time’ (1935, i). For Dillon (1948, 18) *SMMDT* ‘is motivated...by the competition for the Hero’s Portion and is notable for its lively dialogue. Both...[*Fled Bricrend* and *SMMDT*] are pure comedy, and they provide a contrast to the noble tragedy of Deirdre and the story of Conla’s death, the purely heroic temper of the *Táin*, and the gentle romance of *Táin Bó Fraich* or *Serglige Con Culainn*’. Chadwick took a somewhat similar view but expanded this to encapsulate a perceived irony: ‘Never has the tradition of the Irish Heroic Age received a more compelling form - so much so that an earlier generation of scholars looked upon it as a direct and truthful presentation of the warlike spirit of its time. Yet Irish court life was never like this; nor are we much nearer the truth in calling it a parody. Perhaps we may say rather that a literary genius has presented us with a well-preserved heroic tradition, seen through the prismatic lens of a later age. He brings to his theme a ripe sophistication, a concentrated irony, and a gay and lighthearted hyperbole’ (1968, 79).

Gantz finds the fact that Cú Chulainn is absent in this saga rather perplexing. ‘Cú Chulainn is not only absent, he is not even mentioned. One could argue that Cú Chulainn is a late addition to the traditions of the Ulaid and that this story predates his arrival. There are, however, other puzzling elements. The pig of the title is so large that forty oxen can be laid across it: such a beast could be mythic in origin, but it could also

be satiric' (1981, 170). He subsequently points out evident similarities between *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó*, in that the Ulaid and the Connachta both go to war over an animal, in one instance a pig, and in the other a dog. McCone believed 'gur scéal traidisiúnta amach is amach é *SMMD*: cloíonn sé le gnáth- charachtair agus gnáth-thréithe na Rúraíochta, baineann sé feidhm as seanmhóitífeanna na déscéalaíochta págánta, agus tá cuid mhaith den chúlra sóisialta ann bunaithe ar ghnásanna atá chomh hársa leis an ré Chomh-Cheilteach breis is cúig chéad roimh Chríost' (1984b, 34: 'that *SMMD* is a traditional tale through and through: it adheres to the usual characters and traits of the Ulster cycle, it makes use of old motifs of pagan mythology, and a lot of the social background there is based on customs which are as ancient as the Common Celtic period over five hundred years before Christ').

In the same article he stipulates however, 'ní cóir é [*SMMDT*] a mheas mar iarsmalann staire agus déscéalaíochta amháin: ba ghléas praiticiúil í an luath-scéalaíocht chun idéil agus uailmhianta comhaimseartha a chur in úil freisin cé gurb as múnla traidisiúnta a theilgtí na scéalta i gcónaí' (1984b, 37: 'it is not correct to consider *SMMDT* as a remnant of history and mythology only: early narrative literature was a practical means of expressing contemporary ideals and ambitions even though the tales were cast in a traditional mould'). Ó Corráin's critique appears to take a cue from Gantz: '*Scéla Muicce Meic Dathó*...seems to be a sophisticated parody of the heroic genre as represented by *Táin Bó Cúalgne* - whilst the principal characters remain the same, a new tale is built about the dog of the king of Leinster in the place of the divine Brown Bull of Cúalgne and heroic combats become boorish boasting and mindless slaughter- so redolent of Irish learning and so stylishly executed within the conventions of the genre that most modern scholars and not a few of their medieval predecessors have entirely missed the point of the jape' (1985, 85-86). We thus see that *SMMDT* has been interpreted differently by successive critics. The saga is generally seen as a reflection of a heroic age but with important reservations. Certain elements are cited as cause for puzzlement, giving rise to the suggestion that perhaps they should not be taken at face value. While Thurneysen's view can hold good, it has been increasingly felt that there is more to *SMMDT* than the faithful portrayal of a warrior society, be it contemporary or

traditional. It is with this background of research in mind that we may begin to explore *SMMDT* for satirical intent.

2. Textual Analysis.

II.2.1. As a literary composition *SMMDT* is a beautifully constructed saga with striking sophistication of style and technique. It narrates action and speech with precision and verbal economy, aiding the unfolding of the drama with almost effortless ease. This development of the storyline hinges upon the introduction of three problems and their resolutions, (McCone, 1984b, 8). It is ‘scéal a bhfuil struchtúr breá loighciúil ag baint leis chun an plota a fhorbairt céim ar chéim’ (McCone, 1984b, 8: ‘a tale which has a fine, logical structure in order to develop the plot step by step’). Firstly, there is the problem that both the Connachta and the Ulaid wish to take possession of the hound belonging to Mac Da Thó, as a result of which it is promised to each. Secondly, we have the problem of who will divide the pig, which leads to the boasting contest initiated by Bricne Mac Carbaid. Lastly, there is the issue of the insult directed at the Connachta over their meagre share of the pig, which results in battle, bloodshed and the death of the hound. This boils down to one basic problem and one basic result: the Connachta and the Ulaid both wish for the hound but this is killed in the final battle (McCone, 1984b, 8). However, the introduction of complexities gives a subplot to the story and a rich progression in its development. The introduction of the pig for the welcoming feast brings in the question of who will divide it. Meanwhile the issue of the dog is held in abeyance as we are presented with the boasting contest, introducing a further element to the story. Our interest is thus enhanced as the plot thickens, being built upon in a crescendo, exploding in the battle scene and the death of the hound. We see here a deliberately structured tale, the different issues raised being echoed to some extent in the difference of title accorded it in the manuscripts –*Scéla muicci M(ei)c Dathó* (H, HL), *Incipit Scél Mucci M(ei)c Dathó* (L), *Scaradh Ulad ocus Connacht im Choin M(ei)c Dá-Thó ocus immá muic* (R), ‘The separation of the Ulstermen and the Connachtmen on account of the dog of Mac Da Thó and of his pig’, while the saga lists name it *Orgain*

Meic Dathó, ‘the slaughter of Mac Da Thó’, this last perhaps to fit it into a certain saga-list category (MacCana, 1980, 67).

The aforementioned triad of problems and resolutions constitutes a structure also found in other sagas within the Ulster cycle and in early Irish literature as a whole. For example, in *Aided Cheltchair Maic Uithechair* the observance of a *geis* on the part of the *briugu* Bláí results in his eventual death, along with the death of Conganchnes Mac Dedad and Celtchar himself. Celtchar’s punishment for killing Bláí is to rid Ulster of three tribulations, one of which is the hound Luch Donn. From the cairn over Conganchnes’ head emerge three pups, one of which is Mac Da Thó’s dog Ailbe, another a dog given to Culann the smith and the third a dog which Celtchar himself took as his own. This dog eventually caused trouble for the Ulstermen and Celtchar was asked to do away with it, but its death became the cause of Celtchar’s own, a drop of its blood dripping onto him and resulting in his death. While we are presented with a triadic pattern, one problem gives birth to the whole and one resolution emerges to round things off tidily and succinctly, as in *SMMDT*. In this instance, the killing of Bláí by Celtchar is resolved in Celtchar’s own death. Authors of both sagas have performed a feat of symmetry encompassing sets of patterns. While triadic patterns are a more pronounced feature of *Aided Cheltchair* than *SMMDT*, their presence in the tale deserves mention.

An obvious example of intertextuality is the reference to Celtchar’s killing of Conganchnes Mac Dedad in *SMMDT* (Thurneysen, 1935, 8, §7). Intertextuality can also be recognised if we look at how the behaviour of the hounds in *Aided Cheltchair* causes upheaval amongst the Ulaid, and then compare it to the episode *Aided con na cerda* in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (O’Rahilly, 1976, 17-19). The unruly behaviour of Celtchar’s hound in *Aided Cheltchair* may be seen as the converse of that of the hound of Culann, the defender of Mag Muirthemne. Culann says: *Conággai b ainech ⁊ anmain dam-sa...in fer muintire ruccad úaim .i. mo chú. Robo dín ⁊ dítiu díar feib ⁊ ar n-indili. Robo imdegail cacha slabra dún eter mag ⁊ tech* ‘the servant who has been taken from me, that is, my hound, maintained life and honour for me. He was defence and protection for my goods and my cattle. He guarded all my beasts for me in field and in house’ (O’Rahilly 1976, 19, trans. 141-2). We also find mention of the number three: ‘Three chains on him and three men on every chain’. In passing, we may refer to Meyer concerning ‘the sacred

character of the number three' perhaps owing 'its origin to the effect of the doctrine of the Trinity' (1906, xii). Patterns can thus be an element in the communication of a tale's message, the author's manipulation of the theme a testimony to his literary expertise. *Aided Cheltchair* consists 'of three human *aitte* (*aideda*)...and the slayer in the first of these is himself slain at the end of the story in proper, if postponed, atonement for his misdeed. The combats imposed upon and performed by Celtchar are...likewise three, and the dog that will ultimately prove to be his undoing is one of a litter of three' (McCone, 1984a, 1). Structuralism's 'essence is the belief that things cannot be understood in isolation - they have to be seen in the context of the larger structures they are part of' (Barry, 1995, 39). Applying this structuralist approach leads us further away from the text itself so that we can identify parallels in other works of the same ilk, this parallelism being a frequent characteristic of early Irish literature.

II.2.2. The opening line of the saga, *Boí rí amrae for Laignib, Mac Dathó a ainm* 'there was a wonderful king over the Leinstermen, Mac Dathó was his name' (Thurneysen, 1935, 1) is a common one in early Irish literature and can be compared, for example, to *Togail Bruidne Da Derga: Buí rí amra airegda for Érin, Eochaid feidleach a ainm* (Knott, 1936, 1) 'There was a wonderful, noble king over Ireland, Eochaid Feidleach was his name'. Thurneysen follows L for the first sentence, but the small variations in the other manuscripts deserve attention, especially their rendering of 'rí': Hl has *ribrug-*, R has *brughaid*, and H agrees with L. McCone questions Thurneysen's decision here on the grounds that 'the Rawlinson version deserves to be accorded independent evidential value and its *baí brughaid amra do Laignib, Mac Da Thó a comainm* then 'provides undeniable support...for the antiquity of the Harley reading' (1984a, 4). His reasoning suggests that R got *brughaid* from the archetype and that *ríg-briugu* 'arch-hospitaller', was the correct version as recorded in Hl, although slightly corrupt (1984b,17). This would mean the other manuscripts lost part of this compound, with L and H retaining only *rí*, in accordance with the common formula referred to above (McCone, 1984b, 17).

By way of added support for his view, McCone notes with reference to an article by Buttimer (1982) that 'Mes-Róida alias Mac Da Thó is described as a great *briugu* in a short poem entitled *Cethri meic Airtt Mis-Telmann* and preserved in Rawl. B502, 88b 28ff. This is surely conclusive evidence for the *ríg-briugu* reading argued for...on purely

textual grounds’ (1984a, 4). Mac Da Thó can thus be understood as a chief *briugu* or hospitaller, rather than a king, in company with Da Derga, Forgall Manach, Mac Da Réo and Da Choca. Rawlinson B.512 lists the same hospitallers but more informatively: *bruigen Dá-Berga hi feraibh Cúalann hi Laighnib ocus bruigen Forgaill Monach a taebh Luscai ocus bruigen Da-Reo hi mBrefne ocus bruigen Da-Coga a n-íarthar Midhe* (Thurneysen, 1935, 1), while H1 and L both add Bláí Briugu of Ulster as a sixth. Forgall Manach is recognised as a king of *briugaid* in *Tochmarc Emire* (McCone, 1984a, 3) and so these hospitallers can be understood to be of great importance. ‘The *briugu*’s status depends on his having a ‘never-dry cauldron, a dwelling on a public road, and a welcome to every face’...The office of *briugu* seems to have been one by which a wealthy man of non-noble birth could acquire high rank through displaying..hospitality and..generosity...A chief *briugu* has equal rank with the lowest grade of king or with a chief poet’ (Kelly, 1988, 36-7). According to *Críth Gablach: difholaig rii rurech 7 ri[g]écis 7 br[i]ugaid..ocht cumala aragellat a fholog* ‘there is no maintenance for a chief king, chief poet and chief *briugu*...eight cumals take the place of his maintenance’ (Binchy, 1941, 19, §33, 1.480 and 18, §32, 1.468). The chief *briugu* is thus one of the exalted figures who are exempted by the law regarding sick-maintenance ‘owing to the heavy expense which their *folog* (and the maintenance of their party and friends) would impose on the injurer’ (Binchy, 1941, 92). The fact that Bláí Briugu is only mentioned in H1 and L may reflect his less exalted position as illustrated in *Aided Cheltchair*, where he is listed as proprietor of a *tech n-oíged* rather than a *bruiden* (McCone, 1984a, 5).

II.2.3. Regarding the etymology of the word ‘*Da*’ found in a number of these names, O’Rahilly sees this as a proclitic form of *dea*, *dia* ‘god, goddess’: ‘The special development of *dea* in Da Derga and the like is sufficiently explained by the fact that in these names *dea* lost all its stress and became a mere proclitic, so that eventually its meaning was forgotten’ (1976, 128-9). Thus Da Derga would originally have meant the god Derga, and so on. O’Rahilly took these hospitallers to be euhemerized mythological beings and saw their *bruidnea* as otherworldly also: ‘The word *bruiden* means a spacious hall, especially a banqueting-hall; and as the Otherworld was conceived as a place of perpetual feasting, *bruiden* was applied in particular to the festive hall in the *síd* over which the god of the Otherworld presided. That the five *bruidne*...represent not human

habitations, but the Otherworld festive hall, the Celtic Valhalla, is not open to doubt' (1976, 121).

When we look at the description of the *bruiden* in *SMMDT*, O'Rahilly's argument is enhanced: *secht ndorais isin bruidin ocus secht sligeda trethe ocus secht tellaige indi ocus secht cori* (Thurneysen, 1935, 1-2) 'seven entrances to the hostel and seven paths through it and seven hearths in it and seven cauldrons'. *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* contains a similar description: *is tresin teach atá in [t]sliigi. Atáit .iii. ndoirsi isa teach ocus .iii. n-imdada iter cech dá dorus, ocus ní fil acht oencomlaid n-airi ocus imsuítheair in chomlai fri cech ndorus día mbí in gaeth* (Knott, 1936, 9) 'the road is through the house, there are seven entrances in the house and seven couches between each two entrances and there is only one door to it and the door is turned against every entrance to(wards) which the wind is'. We are not referring to real hostels here, but to strategically located mythic places where the *bríugaid* bestow hospitality from an ever-full cauldron. To quote O'Rahilly again: 'Each of these *bruidne* ...had a cauldron which gave everyone his proper food and which cooked sufficient food for any company of guests...The Otherworld possessed a never-failing supply of the choicest food and drink' (1976, 121). A mythological origin is also implied by McCone (1984b, 12) in the following: 'bunús déscéalaíochta leis na bruíonta neamhghnácha seo a bhfuil flúirse gan deireadh le fáil iontu' ('a mythological foundation of these unusual hostels in which there is to be found plenty without end').

In the same article, McCone refers to the similarity of background between the bulls in *Táin Bó Cuailnge* and the hound Ailbe in *SMMDT*. 'Tá cúlra osnádúrtha an dá tharbh sa Táin,...agus luíodh sé le reason dá mbeadh bunús déscéalaíochta le cú Mhac Da Thó freisin (1984b,12: 'the two bulls have a supernatural background in the *Táin*..and it would follow that there would be a mythical origin to Mac Da Thó's hound also'). Mac Da Thó's hound was one of a litter of three which emerged from the cairn above Conganchnes mac Dedad's head in *Aided Cheltchair*, also indicating a probable mythical origin. One of the other pups was given to Culann the smith and later became the defender of his property until killed by the boy Sétanta, who then changed his name to Cú Chulainn. Taking all these motifs into consideration, we recognise the opening passage of *SMMDT* as one likely to have mythical resonances. In common with other sagas

containing similar motifs such as *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* and *Bruiden Da Choca*, the implication is that conflict is pending.

II.2.4. In reality, *briugaid* were professional dispensers of hospitality, especially food, with cauldrons kept on the boil continuously. In *Esnada Tige Buchet*, the *briugu* Buchet is described as ‘a cauldron of generosity among the Leinstermen’ (Kelly, 1988, 36). *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* says of its host: *ó gabais trebad ní tudchaid a chairi di theni acht no bid oc bruith bid di feraib Hérenn* (Knott, 1936, 39) ‘since he took to husbandry-became a *briugu* - his cauldron has not come from the fire but it is habitually boiling food for the men of Ireland’. Mac Da Thó’s cauldron had a restriction attached to its function, however: *in fer no:t<h>éged iarsint shligi do:bered in n-aél isin coiri, ocus a:taibred din chétgabáil, iss ed no:ithed. Mani:tucad immurgu ní din chéttadall ni:bered a n-aill* (Thurneysen, 1935, 2, §1) ‘the man who used go along the way would put the flesh-fork into the cauldron and that which he brought forth of the first taking, it is that he would eat. If he did not get anything from the first approach, however, he used not to get another’.

When we compare this description in §1 to that of *Bruiden Da Choca*, we notice an appreciable difference: *ni tabairte acht a beim n-aieoil di cech duine imtib, ocus ní thecmaing acht a biad coir di cech duine ass sin* (Stokes, 1900, 314) ‘just one thrust of his fork used to be given to each person, and there comes only his proper food out of that’. This procedure was in accordance with the native way of dividing food, where each got what was in keeping with his rank. *CIH* 2291.29-30 states: *nach fer folongar i fenechas dligid a biathad a miad a gráid* ‘any man who is maintained according to Irish law is entitled to be fed according to the dignity of his rank’ (Kelly, 1988, 62 n. 182). In *SMMDT* however, all is left to chance, it is virtual pot-luck, and this apparent flouting of convention may well be significant. It is seen by McCone (1990, 2) as a deliberate echo of the Old Testament account of Heli and his two sons, who displeased the Lord in the First Book of Kings (2:13-14): ‘Now the sons of Heli were children of Beliae, not knowing the Lord. Nor the office of the priests to the people: but whosoever had offered a sacrifice, the servant of the priest came while the flesh was in boiling, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand. And thrust it into the kettle, or into the cauldron, or into the pan: and all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took to himself’. If the flesh was

not relinquished to the servant, he threatened to take it by force. There was a prophecy then made against the house of Heli, whereby Heli was to lose his two sons because of their wickedness: ‘And this shall be a sign to thee, that shall come upon thy two sons...In one day they shall both of them die’ (Kings II 34). And so it came to pass that the sons of Heli were slain and the Ark of the Covenant lost in catastrophic consequence of such behaviour. While Mac Da Thó may have seven cauldrons plentifully stocked with meat, not everyone may receive his due share, a potential source of conflict. In a hierarchial society this haphazard way of dividing food would give cause for surprise and concern. If we accept McCone’s explanation, this abnormal behaviour in a tale as precise as *SMMDT* is no accident and its insertion at this juncture could be designed to alarm the reader by bringing the dire consequences of the action in the biblical parallel to mind.

II.2.5.1. Having set the scene, with messengers arriving from Ulster and Connacht to request the hound Ailbe, the tale moves on to the introduction of its first problem. Both sets of representatives make generous offerings of livestock and a chariot in their greed and eagerness to possess the hound, although it is interesting to note that it is the Connachta, the eventual losers in the boasting contest and battle, who emphasise the goodwill aspect of their offer, rather than the Ulaid. This leaves Mac Da Thó in a fix as to who should have it: *ro:lá didiu i socht inni Mac Dathó co rrabe tri thráth cen dig cen biad, acht ’co immorchor ón taib co araile* (Thurneysen, 1935, 3, §3, henceforth, all citations will be from this edition by section number) ‘Mac Da Thó fell into silence then so that he was three full days without drink, without food, but tossing himself about from one side to the other’. He is not able to make a decision, opting out of responsibility and becoming lethargic. As Mac Da Thó languishes in hesitancy and indecision, it is his wife who comes to goad him into activity with her advice. The following poem (§3) sees a break in format and as such demands attention. This is one of only two poetical pieces interposed in the narrative.

While the second of these (§15) consists of two relatively short passages marked ‘R’ in the margin of the manuscripts and thus understood to be *retoric*, this first is in the form of a dialogue and in rhyming syllabic metre. In early Irish literature ‘narrative and dialogue tend to be quite plain when primarily intended to advance the plot, but are susceptible of considerable elaboration in order to slow down or even halt

the action at crucial points,...in dialogue the rhetorics and rhyming syllabic verse..are the standard devices' (McCone, 1990, 51). Thus we may interpret this poem as a pivotal episode in the saga, which is quoted full in all versions of *SMMDT* except Rawlinson B.502, which includes just the first line: *Tucad turbaid cotalta do Mac Da-Thó coa tech 7 reliqua* (Thurneysen, 1935, 3, n.3) 'A disturbance of sleeping has been brought to Mac Da Thó, to his house, etc'. This omission on the part of R could point to the fact its author considered the poem so well-known that it seemed unnecessary to quote it in full.

While language can easily be updated in the transcribing of prose, poetry should conform to certain metrical requirements and thus, of its essence, is less easy to modify without detection. The poem's basic metre is *deibide scailte*, with seven syllables per line and with some variation in pattern from verse to verse: e.g. in verse 1, lines 1 and 3 rhyme, as do lines 2 and 4, whereas in verse 2, lines 1 and 2 rhyme, and so do 3 and 4. Line 3 in verse 1 reads: *Boíthi ní no:chomairled* 'He had something which he was deliberating'. This is an important line in the poem as it introduces Mac Da Thó's dilemma. It has the seven syllables required of the metre but the 'meaningless conjunct particle *no* can only be used with simple verbs that are accompanied by no other conjunct particle. Its most important function is to convert a minimal form of the verbal complex compatible only with the morphophonemically intricate process of suffixing into a binary one suitable for the less demanding device of infixing' (McCone, 1997, 12). Here *con:airlethar* is treated as a simple verb in accordance with Middle Irish usage rather than as the Old Irish compound verb with deuterotonic *con:airled* 'he was deliberating'. Emendation, however, is impossible without reducing the syllable count to six, and as there is no variation between the manuscripts, *no:chomairled* seems almost certain to have been present in the archetype.

In verse 9, line 1, *in chomairle at:biri-siu*, 'the advice which you utter' contains a Middle rather than an Old Irish 2sg. present indicative of the verb *as:beir* 'speaks'. This form is present in all three manuscripts but emendation is not excluded metrically as elision could apply to *in chomairle 't:biri-siu* to yield the same seven syllables as Old Irish *as:bir-siu* without elision. In verse 1, line 4, we have *cenco:labradar fri nech* 'though he speaks to no one', *cenco* being a common Middle Irish form that is also to be

found in all three manuscripts but is easy enough to emend to Old Irish *cení* without altering the syllable count.

Thurneysen (1935, iv) based his estimation of the saga's date on linguistic forms contained in the three manuscripts. His dating of the archetype to the tenth century is based upon a number of Middle Irish forms found in all three manuscript witnesses. However, he dated the original roughly to 800AD on account of various Old Irish forms supported by one or more manuscript(s). This seems to be speculative and there does not seem to be sufficient evidence to date this saga earlier than the tenth century, particularly in view of already discussed *no:chomairled*.

What happens to Mac Da Thó in this important paragraph can be related to an episode between king Ahab and his wife Jezebel in Kings III, 21.4-5: 'and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, 'Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?' (Poppe, 1999, 169-171). King Ahab lapses into laziness and it is his wife who deals with the problem and finds a solution. As with Mac Da Thó's wife, Jezebel's interference ends in disaster. 'Now there was not such another as Ahab, who was told to do evil in the sight of the Lord: for his wife Jezebel set him on' (Kings III, 21.25).

If we relate this biblical reference to the poem, the woman's role must be interpreted as evil. However, Mac Da Thó himself is not entirely innocent, and his lethargy means that he ducks responsibility. In leaving the window of opportunity open for his wife to take over, he is weak. His instincts tell him he should not divulge his dilemma to his wife for he cites the counsel of the legendary Crimthann Nia Náir regarding women: *ní tardda do rúin do mnáib, rún mná ní maith con:celar* 'you are not to give your secret to women, a woman's secret is not well hidden'. She coaxes him by suggesting that no ill will come of letting her in on his secret: *cid fri mnaí at:bertha so manid:epled ní airi/ ní na<d>:tét do menma-so, téti menma neich aili* 'though it be to a woman that you should say this if nothing would perish on account of it?/ something which your mind does not reach, the mind of some other reaches'. In other words, she is suggesting that two heads are better than one when it comes to settling a dispute. This effort to persuade her husband, along with her being referred to as *ben trebar* 'prudent/clever woman', calls to mind Adam's temptation by Eve. There is also a sense

of irony behind her utterance, as Mac Da Thó knows that many will perish as a result of this revelation: *do:foeth mór fer find fria rath* ‘a lot of fair men will fall for his (the hound’s) sake’. He knows bloodshed is unavoidable, but it is as if he acts against his better judgement in informing his wife of his predicament and, like Adam, he is convinced by her suggestion. The woman can here bring to mind both Jezebel and Eve, in either case exerting an evil influence on her husband and thus implying that important decisions are properly the preserve of men alone.

II.2.5.2. Poppe (1997, 1-3) reviews the different views of this pivotal episode taken by McCone (1990, 77-78) and Buttimer (1982, 61-73). While moral readings of the tale as a whole are preferred by both, they offer ‘radically divergent assessments of the advice of Mac Da Thó’s wife and its general results’ (Poppe, 1997, 3). McCone favours a biblical interpretation illustrating the episode as an allegory for Adam and Eve, with resulting ‘losses of honour, life and property...[which] all stem ultimately from Mac Da Thó’s craven abdication of proper male responsibility to follow his wife’s Machiavellian advice’ (1990, 77). Buttimer views it in a favourable light, as it results in a ‘successful defence of honour, and a consequent enhancement of the prestige of Leinster’ (1982, 68). He sees Mac Da Thó as the main focus of attention, as he ‘provides the best means of understanding SMMD. Concerning him, it is most important to remember that he is a Leinsterman, as the opening sentence of the story makes plain: *Boí rí amrae for Laignib, Mac Dathó a ainm*. As a Leinsterman, he is delicately poised between the rival concerns of the other provinces’ (Buttimer, 1982, 64). Buttimer clearly opts for the L (*rí*) version here, and in support of Mac Da Thó’s Leinster connections he cites the poem *Cethri meic Airtt Mis-Telmann*, found in Rawl.B502, p.82b28 ff., a work which deals largely with the affairs of Leinster. Art is listed in the Leinster genealogies a couple of generations after Bressal Brecc. In this particular poem, one of his sons is a powerful *briugu*, Mes-Róida, a name by which Mac Da Thó is also known in *SMMDT*. However, Buttimer does not discuss this discrepancy in title.

MacGearailt’s (1984) review of volume VI of the diplomatic edition of the Book of Leinster takes into account further possible Leinster bias. He highlights the plight of the Laígsi who, by the twelfth century, were ‘a *fortúath* of Leinster and a dependency of Uí Chennselaig and as such had little independent scope for advancement’ (1984, 195).

He states that they claimed descent from Conall Cernach, even though he was an Ulster hero. ‘The LL compiler of the Leinster genealogies...calls [the Laígisi] ..*cenél Conaill Chernaig*’ (LL 39715). In the genealogies of the Laígisi (LL 40904) we are informed that they were descended from Conall Cernach’s son, Lugaid Laígsech Cennmór’ (Mac Gearailt, 1984, 195), and Conall Cernach is the winning hero of the boasting contest in *SMMDT*. Thus Leinster bias can be seen not just in relation to Mac Da Thó.

Be that as it may, Buttimer sees Mac Da Thó as a peacemaker who manages to ‘balance impartially and with success the conflicting interests of Ulster and Connacht and to emerge from the constraints of this situation unscathed’ (1982, 64). However, he addresses the issue of the wife’s advice only from the point of view of the outcome. He does allow that ‘[t]his arrangement has at first sight the appearance of utter duplicity’ (1984, 64) but regards Mac da Thó’s silence and inaction not as a weakness but as a sign of strength. Because Mac Da Thó has agreed to the decision in private rather than in the public domain, he sees him as preserving his honour intact. Thus there is a serious divergence between the views of McCone and Buttimer. For Poppe ‘misogynistic interpretation...appears internally consistent and...probable’ (1997, 8) but the issue of Leinster bias may also have to be incorporated, even if only within the context of the Book of Leinster.

II.2.6.1. Mac Da Thó’s reaction to his wife’s advice is immediate: *iar sin at:racht suas ocus no:mbertaigedar* (Thurneysen, 1935, 5, §4) ‘then he rose up and vaunts himself’. Her decisiveness seems to stir him into action as he belatedly attempts to take control: *in chomairle at:biri-siu, is s<i> ním déni cutal* (Thurneysen, 1935, 4, §3) ‘the advice which you utter, it does not make me weak’. Now he must carry out her duplicitous advice to promise the hound to both companies in turn while acting the perfect host. O’Leary (1986, 16) remarks that ‘verbal deceit runs throughout the Ulster Cycle and motivates the action in some of its central tales’ and describes Mac Da Thó as showing ‘a cavalier attitude to truthfulness’ in acting out his wife’s advice. Thus when both the Connachta and the Ulaid turn up on the same day for the hound, he must feign surprise: *ni ’farc<h>elsam, a ócu...ar apaide is mochen dúib* (Thurneysen, 1935, 6, §5) ‘we were not expecting you, o warriors,..nevertheless you are welcome’. As if to alert us to danger, the author emphasises the animosity between both sides, referring to its timescale

in Christian terms: *Niptar aighi carat im fhleid ...tri chét bliadan ria ngein Chríst ro:boí in cocad etorro* (Thurneysen, 1935, 6, §5) ‘They were not the faces of friends round a banquet...for three hundred years before the birth of Christ there had been the war between them’. Mac Da Thó affects to maintain equilibrium with the help of flattery and the killing of a pig for the feast: *marbthair dóib dano in mucc Meic Dathó* ‘then Mac Da Thó’s pig is killed for them’ (Thurneysen, 1935, 6, §5). When the gigantic pig is brought in to the assembly, he apologises because it may be inadequate: *ni dabar samail riss sin; ataat aige oculus mucca la Laigniu, a:testa de-sin mairfithir dúib i mbárach* (Thurneysen, 1935, 7, §6) ‘that is not by reason of your equality to it; there are cattle and pigs with the Leinstermen, that which is lacking here will be killed for you tomorrow’.

‘The Otherworld...had an inexhaustible supply of pork, which was the meat most highly esteemed in ancient Ireland...So [in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*] we find Nár Tuathcháech, the swineherd of Bodb of Sid ar Femen, engaged in cooking a pig in Da Derga’s *bruiden*. In *Scél Mucce Meic Da Thó* we have a feast of which the main constituent is a huge pig’ (O’Rahilly, 1946, 121-123). The pig is initially described in culinary terms as if to whet the appetite: *tri fichit gamnach oca biathad side co cenn secht mbliadan* (Thurneysen, 1935, 6, §5) ‘sixty milch-cows at its nourishing for seven full years’. *Fled Bricrend* (Henderson, 1899) also revolves around a similar theme, in this case it is the champion’s portion or *curadmír* rather than the specific issue of who will carve the pig which is in contention. It is interesting to note the description of the pig there: *atá torc secht mbliadan and; (o ro bo) orc becc, ní dechaid inna béola acht littiu lemnachta...o ro bo lóeg bec, ní dechaid fráech no foigdech inna béola acht firlemnacht oculus luigfér glasfeoir oculus arbar* ‘there was then a seven-year-old boar; since it was little, nothing has gone past its lips but fresh milk...since it was a little calf, neither heather nor twig-tops have entered its lips but sweet milk and herbs, meadow hay and corn’ (Henderson, 1899, 8, §9, trans. 9). While the deliciousness of the pig is comparable to that of Mac Da Thó’s, there is no reference to its proportions. The author of *SMMDT* has thus introduced an additional element for us to ponder upon.

II.2.6.2. Just as the hound has mythical resonances, so too may the pig. In *Aided Cheltchair Maic Uthechair* (Meyer, 1906) we find reference to a hound and the place name of a large pig in the same sentence: *romarb a bú 7 a mac 7 romarb feisin hí féin 7*

docóid iarsin co Glenn na Mórmuici (Meyer, 1906, 28) ‘it (Luch Donn) killed her kine and her son and killed her herself and then went to the Glen of the Great Pig’. The epithet *luchthond* is also applied to Lóegaire Búadach in *Fled Bricrend* §22 and §46 (Henderson, 1899, 22 and 56) as a form of praise. The placename Glenn na Mórmuici may have some mythical origin but, be that as it may, the gigantic size of Mac Da Thó’s pig - *cethorcha dam dia tarsnu* (Thurneysen, 1935, 7, §6) ‘forty oxen across it’- gives it an air of unreality. That said, the fact that its succulence is only skin-deep makes it sinister: before we get carried away by this delight, its attraction is undercut by the statement *tri neim immurgu no:bíata co:ralta ár fer n-Érenn impe* (Thurneysen, 1935, 6, §5) ‘on poison, however, it was being fed so that the slaughter of the men of Ireland take place for it’. While the giant pig can thus be seen as having mythic resonances, it can also be interpreted as satiric, as Gantz (1981, 179) has pointed out. On top of this we are presented with a situation where all the best warriors of Connacht and Ulster are assembled to fight over the honour of eating this delectable pig which nonetheless was said to have been reared on poison by virtue of the deaths it was destined to cause. The prospect of a fine feast will thus prove deceptive.

Buttimer suggests a broad reading of the text, inviting us to ‘take a more general perspective on the events of the story than the narrower approach implicit in the name ‘The Story of Mac Dathó’s Pig’’ (1982, 65). He considers, however, that the central issue of the champion’s portion has had too much emphasis in the past, and so does not give it significant attention in his article: ‘[f]or all the importance commentators attach to the *curadmír* incident, the dog remains a focus...in the story’ (1982, 65). While one must agree in principle, the pig has become the highlight at this point in the story, the dog remaining in the background for the time being. Buttimer’s single allusion to the pig is as a mere reflection of Leinster’s plenty: ‘the province is prosperous enough to rear as well-fed a pig as [Mac Da Thó] presents at his feast and to replenish the supplies for this repast if necessary’ (1982,66). Placing little emphasis on the boasting contests and their *raison d’être*, the enormous pig, is to gloss over more than half of this saga including some striking episodes in the interests of focussing on a particular argument.

II.2.7. Verbal contention between the Ulaid and the Connachta erupts in §6. When Ailill asks *cindas rainnfithir in mucc?* (Thurneysen, 1935, 7, §6) ‘how will the pig be

divided?’ it is Bricne Mac Carbaid who maliciously asks: *cía indas...acht a-rrann ar chomramaib?* (Thurneysen, 1935, 7, §6) ‘in what manner but its dividing by contests?’ This interjection should set alarm bells ringing as he is a renowned trouble-maker in early Irish literature, a status reflected by his nickname Bricriu Nemthenga ‘Bricriu of the Venomous Tongue’ (Henderson, 1899, 3). Bricne continues: *do:rat cách díb builli dar sróin a chéili riam* (Thurneysen, 1935, 7, §6) ‘each of you has struck a blow across another’s nose before’, revealing his wish that this be repeated. Conchobar then states that he has young men who have been on patrol on border areas, intimating they are experienced and ready for action if required: *atát gillai dún is’taig im:rullatar in cochrích* (Thurneysen, 1935, 7, §6) ‘we have young men inside who have gone around the borderland’. Senláech’s retort to Conchobar is stinging in the extreme, the imagery depicting the bloody red water of Lúachair Dedad under the Ulstermen’s backsides intended as a warlike goading. This is further aggravated by his reference to some of them as *ag méith* ‘a fat ox’, a typical object of booty which suggestively dehumanises them.

The raillery intensifies as further persons are drawn in with Muinremur Mac Gerrginn of Ulster citing the capture and slaughter of Senláech’s own brother: *do bráthair fadéin .i. Cruaichniu Mac Rúadluim a Cruachnaib Con-Alad* (Thurneysen, 1935, 8, §7) ‘your own brother Cruaichniu Mac Rúadluim of the Cruachain Con-Alad’. The progression from general to personal continues as Lugaid Mac Con Ruí answers this jibe by stating that Inloth Mór Mac Fergusa meic Léti, another champion of Ulster, was likewise killed by Cland Dedad. This time it was Echbél mac Dedad who was responsible. The Ulster champion Celtchar mac Uithechair then cuts in with a boast about his own slaughter of Conganchnes mac Dedad, a brother of the aforementioned Cú Roí. Here we have a direct reference to an incident central to the extant tale *Aided Cheltchair Maic Uithechair* (Meyer, 1906, 28). This however, was not a mere killing but a beheading (*ocus a chenn do béim de* ‘and the cutting of his head from him’), the victim being Echbél’s own brother to boot. Celtchar has thus beheaded a renowned West-Munster hero, but in *Aided Cheltchair mac Uithechair* Celtchar himself is killed by a drop of his own hound’s blood. Since both texts are linked by common canine and other themes, the allusion to *Aided Cheltchair* here is clearly deliberate. In the manner of an ever

decreasing circle this litany of triumphs/failures is brought home to these opposing champions by the killing of their own kin. Their blood is up as Cet Mac Mágach, Ailill's brother, emerges to claim the privilege of dividing the pig by seizing a knife in his hand and challenging anyone to dispute this.

The initial verbal hostilities are now moving into a new phase where Cet has established himself and it is up to the opposing side to produce a warrior who can better him at boasting of his prowess. Superiority must be achieved and acknowledged. The honour of dividing the pig will be granted to the greatest hero. 'The early Irish honour code depicted in the literature is radically competitive. There are no winners without corresponding losers, and a hero has always to be aware of where he stands in relation to others. However, early Irish honour is an overwhelmingly public virtue and so a warm sense of inner merit is worthless' (O'Leary, 1984, 117). Cet then raised his weaponry higher than the weapons of the host: *do:fiúargaib side immurgu a gaisced úas gaiscedaib int sluaig* (Thurneysen, 1935, 8-9, §8) 'he, the aforementioned, held up his arms over the arms of the host'. Virtually the same phrase is to be found in the Egerton 93 version of *Fled Bricrend* (Henderson, 1899, 88-99) in relation to Cú Chulainn who raises *a gaisced úas gaiscedaib in tslóig uile* 'his arms over the arms of the whole host' to symbolise his pre-eminent valour and claim to the *curadmír*. Cet is thus putting himself on a level with the best. He is seen to be in control and an Ulster audience or reader would be seriously dismayed at this point. It is as if the author deliberately leads us to believe that the Connachta may win the day.

II.2.8. Cet's brandishing caused a momentary halt to the proceedings: *ros:lá i socht na h-Ulto* (Thurneysen, 1935, 9, §9) 'the Ulstermen fell into silence'. §9 is a prelude to the boasting contests, which continue to §14 and comprise seven contests in which one Ulster hero after another is humiliated by Cet. The first challenge was made by Lóegaire, referred to as Lóegaire Búadach 'the Victorious' elsewhere in the Ulster Cycle. For example in *TBC I*, 1.3485 where he is listed in the *Tochestol Ulad*, and again at 1.3367 in *Mellgleó nIliach* (O'Rahilly, 1976, 106 and 102). Along with Conall Cernach and Cú Chulainn he is one of the three greatest Ulster champions around whom the tale *Fled Bricrend* revolves. His challenge here, however, was somewhat reticent as it had to be prompted by Conchobar: '*At:chí sut, a Loegairi,*' *ol Conchobar. 'Niba fír' ol Lóegaire,*

‘*Cet do rainn na mucce arar m-belaib-ni*’ (Thurneysen, 1935, 9, §9) ‘You see that, Lóegaire,’ said Conchobar ‘It will not be true,’ said Lóegaire, ‘for Cet to divide the pig in front of our very mouths’. It was, then, more of a combined effort than a single direct challenge. By way of a follow-up to this, Cet introduces the subject of Lóegaire’s taking up of arms (*gabál gaiscid*) as a young warrior when they both encountered one another at the borderland. This would normally be a proud moment in a warrior’s life when he has been granted the chance to prove his mettle and gain recognition at the start of his career. ‘As a compound of *gáe* ‘spear’ and *sciath* ‘shield’, *gaisced* ‘set of arms’ and then by extension ‘martial prowess, valour’ evidently belongs to the sphere of the warrior. Indeed, receipt of *gaisced* was a key element in a young warrior’s initiation, as when Conchobar simply gives the precocious Cú Chulainn a spear and shield in response to the latter’s request for *gaisced*’ (McCone, 1990, 121): *Dothéit co Conchubar do chuingid gascid...Dobeir gai 7 sciath dó* ‘He went to Conchobar seeking arms...He gave him a spear and a shield’ (TBC, O’Rahilly, 1976, 19-20). The day after receiving arms in recognition of his readiness for action, Cú Chulainn is presented with Conchobar’s own chariot and horses and goes on his first expedition into enemy territory, achieving notable success and returning home in great triumph.

Lóegaire’s initial experience as a warrior was, however, totally different according to *SMMDT: fo:rácbaís in roth ocus in carpat ocus na heocho, ocus at:rulais féin ocus gai triut* (Thurneysen, 1935, 9, §9) ‘you left the wheel and the chariot and the horses behind and you yourself absconded with a spear through you’. Cet is here portraying the actions of a coward, depicting Lóegaire’s effort to prove his heroic abilities in his first encounter as disastrous and humiliating. Lóegaire is not referred to as *Búadach* ‘Victorious’ in this saga and he certainly has not earned this description in his first encounter. It is interesting to suppose the author deliberately left this sobriquet out, insinuating a singularly inglorious beginning for a champion from whom one would generally expect victory. However, Lóegaire is referred to as *Búadach* in *Fled Bricrend* even though he turned tail and ran when defeated by the *bachlach: Immacomsinitar dóib...Techid Lóegaire iar tain, co ráinic Emain Macha iar facbáil a ech 7 a gili 7 a armgascid* (Henderson, 1899, 48) ‘They struggle together...Lóegaire then fled until he reached Emain Macha, after having left his horses and gillie and arms’. But in this

particular tale both Lóegaire and Conall Cernach are pitted against the supreme hero Cú Chulainn. Nevertheless, Lóegaire's humiliation in *SMMDT* has not resulted in permanent injury unlike the next four contests. After this devastating recollection, Cet contemptuously remarks: *nis:toirchi in muicc fon indasin*, 'you're not getting to the pig in that way', which makes Lóegaire retire helplessly from the contest.

We have been introduced to the first contender in the main boasting contest. This accounts for about half of the total text and so the author obviously attached considerable importance to it. It is interesting to note that in H1 the *comrama* are numbered in the margin .ii to .vii (Thurneysen, 1935, 26n.21). All subsequent contestants are now systematically humiliated by Cet, the shame growing from episode to episode.

II.2.9.1. The next challenger is Óengus mac Láma Gabaid, described as *láech find mór* (Thurneysen, 1935, 10, §10) 'a great fair champion'. In *Aided Óengussa meic Óenláma* (O'Rahilly, 1976, 76, 1.2488-94) he displayed absolute heroism when confronted with the army of the Connachta: *dointaí..in slóg n-uile oc Modaib Loga..asberat ind eólaig im[mus]nebliad ríam remáin co tíastais fo chlaideb oc Emain Macha acht bid ar galaib óenfhir conrísta friss. Brisit fír fer fair iarom 7 ra mbeótar i n-écomlond* 'he turned back the whole host at Moda Loga...the learned say that he would have driven them on before him to be put to the sword at Emain Macha if only he had been encountered in single combat. They broke fair play with him then and they killed him in unfair combat'. But as in many situations in this saga, not everything is as it appears. Although he is regarded as a great hero: '*is ferr di láech indaí-siu' ol cách* (Thurneysen, 1935, 10, §10) 'he is a better warrior than you' everyone said', he cannot deny the shame he carries through his father. Cet reminds him of the event: *Tarlaic urchor do gaí mór form-sa. Dos:léicim-se dó in ngaí cétna co:mbert a láim de, co:mboí for lár* (Thurneysen, 1935, 10, §10) 'He cast a throw of a large spear at me. I cast the same spear at him so that it took his hand from him so that it was on the floor'. The son is thus humiliated for the past defeat of the father, and the father's shame is visited upon him as if it were his own.

Adding to his humiliation is the fact that his father was wounded with his own spear, thus underlining Cet's superior skill as a warrior. As with *gabál gaiscid*, the motif of the loss of a limb, in this case a hand, is associated with the life of a warrior. 'This would be natural enough insofar as regular involvement in fighting with spears, swords

and other sharp implements would entail well above average risks of the loss of a limb or limbs' (McCone, 1996, 97-8). Óengus mac Láme Gábad bears a name which could normally be expected to signify aggression and hostility - Hand of Peril. If one did not know the manner in which Óengus' father acquired this epithet, one would presume this to mean that Óengus was a warrior of repute having inherited his skill from him. However, by informing us of the aforementioned details, the author succeeds in completely undercutting this epithet, changing its meaning rather to 'endangered hand'. He, in his turn, sits down defeated.

II.2.9.2. One-armed figures are to be found in the mythology of Celtic, Germanic and other Indo-European peoples and there are grounds for thinking 'that at least some figures in the Túatha De Danann derive from pagan Celtic deities' (McCone, 1996, 93). Thus early Irish literature contains reflexes of pagan myths associated with warrior activity. In *Cath Maige Tuired* for example, Núadu, king of the Túatha Dé Danann, loses his hand in battle with the Fomoiri. Dumézil's theory of Indo-European ideology saw sovereignty as the first of three functions of this society, the other two being warfare and fecundity. He considered sovereignty to consist of two parts, (a) magical and (b) contractual. The representatives of these might display characteristic disabilities: (a) were one-eyed and (b) were one-armed. 'This theory of the 'dieu borgne' and the 'dieu manchot' is, in large part, based upon an assumed correspondence between the Norse deities, Othinn and Týr, and the two famous Roman heroes, Horatius Cocles and Mucius Scaevola' (McCone, 1996, 94). McCone (1996, 95) states that in *Cath Maige Tuired* 'there is an obvious temptation...in seeing the two leaders of the Túatha Dé Danann..namely the one-armed Núadu and the at least transiently one-eyed Lug, as Celtic counterparts of the Germanic Týr and Othinn and hence as..mythical reflexes of this basic bipartite conception of sovereignty'. McCone has argued, however, that these disabilities belong to warrior activity rather than sovereignty: 'Núadu may have been king of the Túata Dé Danann when he lost his arm but the fact remains that this happened in battle' (McCone, 1996, 97). He further states: 'Dumézil's notion of sovereignty embodied by a pair of deities, one with a missing eye and the other with a missing arm, ill accords with the repeatedly articulated early Irish requirement that a king be physically perfect' (McCone, 1996, 96). In early Irish society a king was 'expected to have a perfect body,

free from blemish or disability’ (Kelly, 1988, 19). Núadu was forced to relinquish the kingship as a result of losing his arm but, by way of acknowledging his worth and the esteem in which he is held, he is fitted with a silver hand and can therefore resume the kingship, his wound having been received through bravery in battle. McCone’s position on this issue is the one followed here.

II.2.10. Éogan mac Durthacht, king of Fernmag, is the next Ulster hero to step up. He plays a key part in the saga *The Exile of the Sons of Uisliu*, for ‘Éogan son of Durthacht, the king of Fernmag, had made up with Conchubur - the two had long been at odds - and had been charged to kill the sons of Uisliu’ (Gantz, 1981, 262-3) and subsequently he was to marry Deirdre. Fernmag was a border area between the provinces of Connacht and Ulster, a location matching Éogan’s capacity for dual loyalties. At one time he was at war with the Ulstermen: *boí imnisse chatha eter Ultu 7 Eógan mac nDurt[h]acht* (O’Rahilly, 1976, 15, 1.482). Later in the tale he is listed as one of those at the muster of the Ulstermen (O’Rahilly, 1976, 106, 1.3489). In addition to his lack of integrity, however, Éogan is here shown by Cet to be less than heroic in other respects. As he was taking a drove of cattle from Éogan’s house, Cet’s shield catches a spear fired at him from the same Éogan. Cet again manages to recover his opponent’s spear and throw it back at him, this time causing Éogan to lose an eye in the process: *atot:chiat fir Hérenn co n-óinsúil* (Thurneysen, 1935, 11, §11) ‘the men of Ireland see you with one eye’ as Cet cuttingly remarks along with the final flourish: *messe thall in súil n-aili asdo chin* (Thurneysen, 1935, 11, §11) ‘it was I who took the other eye out of your head’. There is no reference to Éogan being blind in one eye in the *Táin*. In *Toichim na mBuiden* Fergus identifies him thus: *Lóech mór calma co ngráin 7 erúath ossé gormda grísainech ina hairinach. Folt dond temnidi fair ossé slimthana for a étan. Cromsciath co fáebar condúala fair. Sleg c[h]óicrind ina láim, foga forgabalach ina farad. Claideb cróda iarna c[h]inddruim* ‘A tall, valiant warrior, hideous, fearsome, swarthy and with fiery countenance. He had dark brown hair which lay smooth and fine over his forehead. He carried a curved shield with scalloped rim. In his hand he had a five-pronged spear and with it a pronged javelin. He bore across his back a bloodstained sword’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 110, ll.3632-36, trans. 222-3). If he had a disability it would no doubt have been mentioned.

Not alone is Cet's wounding a major humiliation for Éogan, but it casts doubts on his fitness as king, being one-eyed and therefore blemished. 'A physical defect, debility or niggardliness can cause loss of sovereignty. For instance, the law tract on bees *Bech-bretha*, alludes to the arguably historical deposition of the seventh-century Ulster dynast Congall Cáech (C. the one-eyed) from the Tara kingship through being blinded in one eye by bees' (McCone, 1990, 123). 'There is..clear evidence for the primary association of the cyclops with warrior activity' (McCone, 1996, 101) and as with the motif of one arm, lack of an eye has martial and mythical connotations. Cú Chulainn himself undergoes *ríastrad* 'warp spasm' when battle frenzy overcomes him, and part of his horrible distortion includes one of his eyes disappearing into the back of his head while the other becomes greatly enlarged *ar ba bés dó-som...indala súil ina chend ⁊ araili fria chend anechtair* 'for it was a custom with him...one eye (back) in his head and the other protruded' (TBC, O'Rahilly, 1976, 53, ll.1651-3). An excerpt from *Brisleach Mór Maige Muirthemne* describes the aftermath of Cú Chulainn's death *íar sin trá ra choraig Lugaid a moing dara aiss ⁊ benaid a chend de. Íar sin tra dorochair a chlaideb a lláim Con Culaind co n-eccmoing a láim doí di Lugaid co rraibí for lár. Benair a lám doí dano di Choin Culaind dia digail* (Best and O'Brien, 1954-83, 450, ll.14057-61) 'then Lugaid arranged his hair behind him and struck his head from him. Then his sword fell from Cú Chulainn's hand and struck his arm from Lugaid so that it was upon the ground. His arm is then struck from Cú Chulainn in revenge'.

These warrior motifs are associated with Cú Chulainn, the ultimate hero, and owe their effectiveness in narrative to their social and mythological roots. Cyclopes are found in *Cath Maige Tuired*, where we have the example of Balor representing evil and Lug, representing good. Balor, being of the Fomoiri, is destined for failure and his malignant eye used only to be opened when he engaged in battle. Lug, his opponent, becomes one-eyed temporarily in order to fire up the men of Ireland for battle: 'Lug was strengthening the men of Ireland that they might give battle vehemently in order that they might no longer be in bondage...And it is there that Lug chanted going on one leg and with one eye around the men of Ireland, (*conid and rocan Lug an cétalso síos for lethcois ocus letsúil timchell fer n-Érenn*)' (McCone, 1996, 93). Thus this disability, be it transient or permanent, is associated with battle. Moreover, the pagan Celtic gods Lugus and Nodus

can be understood to underlie the Irish Lug and Níadu, this saga even being regarded by some ‘as a more or less unadulterated piece of pagan mythology’ (McCone, 1996, 93). Ingcél Cáech, mac ríge Breatain in *Togail Buidne Da Derga*, is described thus: *fear ainmín húathmar. Oenshúil asa étan, leithighthir damshechi, duibithir dethaig, ⁊ tri meic imlesan inti* (Knott, 1936, 12, §44) ‘a rough, terrifying man. One eye in his forehead as broad as an ox-hide, as black as a beetle and three pupils in it’. All in all, Éogan mac Durthacht is represented as a rather dubious figure whose kingship could be in jeopardy. His disability might normally be seen as a mark of bravery in battle but Cet’s evidence dispels any thought of that.

II.2.11.1. As the next section (§12) involves two characters, it will be split here into §12a and §12b. Cet’s arrogant *frithálid, a Ulto, in comram beus* (Thurneysen, 1935, 11, §12a) ‘carry on with the contest, Ulstermen!’ precipitates the reappearance of Muinremur Mac Gerginn ‘Fat Neck, son of Short Head’, who has already participated in the opening boasts in §7. Muinremur’s role in *Fled Bricrend* is a courageous one as he stands up to the *bachlach* after Conchobar and Fergus mac Róich have been excused due to their sovereignty. When the challenge is issued, Dubthach says: *is derph tra ebeatsa..ni fuil ann nech bis fu laoch dith..ut..a n-degaid na deisi sin* ‘it is certain now that there is not one here who is the worth of a warrior after those two’. Muinremur immediately jumps up on to the floor exclaiming: *Bid cusindosa on ém*, ‘That will be until now, indeed!’. The narrative proceeds then to describe Muinremur’s physical attributes: *nert cét cathmiled antt ocus nert cét cetluigh a ccechtar a dao righedh* ‘the strength of one hundred warriors in him and the strength of one hundred heroes in each of his arms’. The fact that he does not complete the challenge does not necessarily make him a coward, as Lóegaire Búadach and Conall Cernach fare no better either in a tale geared to having Cú Chulainn emerge as the ultimate hero. Just standing up to the *bachlach* placed Muinremur among the elite warriors.

He holds this distinguished reputation in the *Táin* also, as *Comlond Munremair ⁊ Con Roí* (O’Rahilly, 1976, 50, ll.1609-30) demonstrates: *doluid-side ó Emain Macha do chobair Con Culaind...Rofitir Cú Roí ní boí fer fulaing Munremair insin tslóg* ‘he came from Emain Macha to help Cú Chulainn...Cú Roí knew that there was not a man in the host to endure Muinremur’. In *SMMDT*, however, he is very quickly silenced by Cet,

owing to the latter's reference to his own latest slayings. This is a humiliation which again alludes to kin. In this case, however, the hero does not suffer because of the father but on account of the son. While head hunting was an accepted warrior activity, Cet's brutal statement '*Ni fuilet trí thráth and ó thucus-<s>a trí laíchenn úait im chenn do chétmeic ast fherenn*' (Thurneysen, 1935, 11, §12a) 'it is not three full days since I took three warrior-heads from you, from your land, including the head of your firstborn son', informs Muinremur that his heir has been slain and the serious import of this leaves him speechless. Cet's cold remark: *Is mé ro:glan mo goo fodéoid, a Muinremu<i>r* (Thurneysen, 1935, 11, §12a) 'Muinremur, I have cleaned my spears at last' intimates that Muinremur may not yet be aware of his son's death, so recently have these events taken place. His spirited reply to Senláech in §7 (*ba méithiu a n-ag fo:rácbaís-<s>iu ocainni* ('it was fatter the ox that you have left with us')) demonstrated his pugnacity, but here Muinremur has not had a chance to boast of any of his own exploits, the blow to his family pride and honour being so devastating and demoralising.

II.2.11.2. Heads obtained in battle were seen as trophies and added to a champion's prestige, and the head-hunting motif is frequently attested in early Irish literature. In *Aided Chonchobuir*, for example, we have a description of what the heroes did with their prizes: *Ba bás d'Ultaib ind inbaid sin cach curaid nomarbdaís ar galaib óenfhir nogatta a n-inchind assa cendaib ocus commesct[h]a áel airthib co ndénad liathróite crúade díb. Ocus intan i n-immarbáig nó chomramaib dobertis dóib co mbítis nobítis inna lámaib* (Meyer, 1906, 5) 'At that time it was a custom with the men of Ulster to take their brains out of the heads of every warrior whom they slew in single combat, and to mix lime with them, so that they were made into hard balls. And whenever they were in contention or at comparison of trophies, these were brought to them, so that they had them in their hands'. In *Aided trí mac Nechta Scéni*, Cú Chulainn returns triumphant from his first expedition into enemy territory as follows: *Conid samliad siu luid do Emain Macha: dam allaid i ndíaid a charpait ⁊ iall gésse oc folúamain úassa ⁊ trí cind inna c[h]arput* 'In this wise he went to Emain macha with a wild deer behind his chariot, a flock of swans fluttering over it and three severed heads in his chariot' (TBC, O'Rahilly, 25, ll.797-801).

Again in *Túarascbáil Delba Con Culaind* we get a description of how the champion appeared to the hosts: *Náí cind isindala láim dó. Deich cind isind láim aile.*

Ros ecroth úad frisna slúagaib. Conid comram aidchi do Choin Chulaind sin ‘In one hand he held nine heads, in the other ten, and these he brandished at the hosts. Those were trophies of one night’s fighting by Cú Chulainn (*TBC*, O’Rahilly, 1976, 72, ll.2364-66). Thus heads won in battle were a source of pride and were displayed publicly. Cet certainly exhibits pride in his trophies here, but does not succeed in winning our admiration. The brutal and unexpected manner in which the Ulsterman Muinremur is informed by the enemy Cet of the recent killing and beheading of his eldest son invites the reader to sympathise with the victim. The author has turned this motif on its head, so to speak, concentrating on the sorrow which this cruel custom can inflict rather than on its heroic merits.

II.2.12.1. The next interjection comes from Mend mac Sálchada ‘Clear, son of Heel-Battler’. *Sálchad* is an obvious compound of *sál* ‘heel’ and *cath* ‘battle’ and presumably its normal meaning was interpreted as something like ‘heel-battler’ on account of a youthful warrior’s swift footedness. Here, however, it is taken to refer to the loss of a heel in battle. Etymologies are known generators of narratives in early Irish literature, as can be evidenced in the *Dindsenchas* (Gwynn, 1903), and thus it seems natural for the author of *SMMDT* to make use of this device with reference to both Óengus mac Láma Gábaid and Mend mac Sálchada. Here, however, the author has devised a novel interpretation which appears deliberate. He even draws particular attention to this by having Cet remark: ‘*Cid ane, meic na mbachlach cusna lesanmannaib do chomram cucum?*’ (Thurneysen, 1935, 12, §12b) ‘What next, sons of wretches with nicknames for contesting with me?’ In *Fled Bricrend*, Henderson translates *bachlach* as ‘*clodhopper*...to walk in an awkward manner, to shovel along in walking’ (1899, 182). It is the description given of the giant, thus projecting the image of a loping, unwieldy person.

Cet despatches Mend quickly by alluding to his nickname and how he came by it. He refers to himself as personally responsible for the name of Mend’s father: *Ar ba mese ba sacart oc baistiud ind anma-sin for a athair* (Thurneysen, 1935, 12, §12b) ‘For it was I who was the priest baptised your father with his name’. This is the second of two direct Christian allusions in the saga, the first being the reference to the feud between the Ulaid and the Connachta: *Trí chét bliadan ría ngein Christ ro:boí in cocad etorro* (Thurneysen,

1935, 6, §5) ‘For three hundred years before the birth of Christ there had been the war between them’. The author of this saga is not given to verbosity and much of the tale’s appeal lies in its economy of words. These Christian references, then, are presumably inserted for a purpose and we would be well advised to take note (see I.2.3. page 30). It leads us to question the accuracy of the tale’s supposed pagan mythological setting. Carney (1955, 305, n.2) holds that ‘one cannot remove sentences like this from such sagas, and assume that one is thereby getting nearer to the ‘old tale’... [They] may best be regarded as an essential part of it’. Juxtaposed with the motif of a one-legged warrior is the image of Cet as a baptising priest. Irony must surely be intended here as the name reflects another of Cet’s triumphs with resultant humiliation. *Messe t<h>all a sháil de co claidiub conna:ruc acht oínchois úaim* (Thurneysen, 1935, 12, §12b) ‘I it was who struck his heel with my sword so that he took but one foot away’. Again this is an inherited humiliation, the son labelled a *bachlach* by association, although he is personally devoid of physical disability.

II.2.12.2. The motif of the one-legged warrior is attested in early Irish sources but its comparative infrequency probably mirrors its more serious nature in relation to fighting ability. ‘[T]he relatively non-debilitating lack of an eye occurs with the greatest frequency, loss of an arm occupies an intermediate position...and one-leggedness, as the disability most harmful to an infantryman’s mobility, is depicted least often’ (McCone, 1996, 98). That said, we may again cite Lug’s dance in *Cath Maige Tuired*, as it incorporates hopping on one leg. ‘What Lug actually performs in this manner is...a bellicose and imprecatory *cétal* or incantation’ (McCone, 1996, 95) which is associated with the *glám dícénn*, an evil satire (see I.1.4.). When Cú Chulainn underwent *ríastrad*, part of his distortion involved his legs: *Ro láe sáebglés díberge dá churp immedón a chrocind. Táncatár a t[h]raigthe 7 a luirgne 7 a glúne co mbátár dá éis. Táncatár a shála 7 a orcni 7 a escata co mbátár ríam remi* ‘A wild feat of contortion befell his body inside his skin. His feet and his shins and his knees came to the back; his heels and his calves and his hams came to the front’ (TBC, O’Rahilly, 1976, 68, ll. 2248-51). Thus far, the reader has been presented with a series of potent warrior motifs, namely, head-hunting and the not infrequently co-occurring trio of a missing eye, hand and leg, ‘a physical deficiency not yet accorded any particular significance in the Dumézilian scheme of

things' (McCone, 1996, 95). While it may be presumed that warriors suffering these disabilities received them through bravery on the field of battle, Cet has here succeeded in associating them with the dishonour, shame and sorrow of defeat.

II.2.12.3. At this juncture it may be pertinent to take a look at some of the classical Greek or Roman descriptions of the ancient Celts as they supply evidence for a number of the above themes being representative of a warrior society. The Posidonian tradition is responsible for much of our information regarding the Celts and represents 'the highest level of achievement, not only in Celtic ethnography but in Greek ethnography as a whole' (Tierney, 1960, 198). Athenaeus 4.40 cites the twenty-third book of Posidonius' *Histories* to the effect that 'the Celts sometimes engage in single combat during their feasts...Posidonius also says that in ancient times, the best warriors received the thigh portion during feasts. If another man were to challenge his right to the choicest portion, a duel was fought to the death' (Koch and Carey, 2003, 11). This Book 4 contains the longest passage on the Celts and is the most instructive regarding Celtic food and drink (Tierney, 1960, 201). 'Posidonius related the practice as an item of interest in itself and further, as an illustration of barbarian high spirit' (Tierney, 1960, 202). Strabo's *Geography* 4.4.5 describes the Gaulish peoples as follows: '[b]esides simplicity and spiritedness, there is also much senselessness, boastfulness, and love of ornament about them' (Koch and Carey, 2003, 18). Diodorus Siculus 5.29 gives a detailed account of the Gauls' prelude to single combat: 'And when any man accepts the challenge to battle, they then break forth into a song in praise of the valiant deeds of their ancestors and in boast of their own high achievements, reviling all the while and belittling their opponent, and trying, in a word, by such talk to strip him of his bold spirit before the combat' (McCone, 1984b, 30). Polybius in 2.28.3-10 of his *Histories* refers to a Celtic tribe called the Gaesatae or Spearmen from the Alps, who were engaged with the Romans in the Battle of Telamon (225BC): 'In the middle of the battle the consul Gaius, fighting with greatest bravery, was killed and his head was brought to the Celtic king' (Koch and Carey, 2003, 9). Strabo 4.4.5 also gives an instance relating to head hunting as follows: 'there is also among them the barbaric and highly unusual custom (practised most of all by the northern tribes) of hanging the heads of their enemies from the necks of their horses when departing from battle' (Koch and Carey, 2003, 18). Accordingly, the Celts were

seen as a proud, warlike people who paraded their martial qualities and their spoils of war. These aforementioned classical authors ranged in time from c200BC to c60AD and so documented a period at least six or seven centuries before the writing of the earliest extant Irish sagas.

The feast, the contest over the champion's portion, and head hunting are central issues in *SMMDT* and can thus be seen to have been part and parcel of a Celtic society. 'Is léir ón na...móitífeanna liteartha éagsúla i seanscéalta na hÉireann agus cuntaisí clasiceacha ar an seansaol Ceilteach mar a bhí sé ar an Mór-roinn sa ré phágánta go bhfréamhaíonn na móitífeanna Éireannacha i bhfad thiar sa domhan Ceilteach' (McCone, 1984b, 32: 'It is clear from the different literary motifs in the old Irish sagas and in classical accounts of the life of the ancient Celts as it was on the continent in the pagan period that the Irish motifs go way back in the Celtic world'). This however, does not mean that they necessarily reflect the time in which the tale was written. '[T]he immediate setting of the oldest hero tales, that is to say the state of endemic warfare between Ulster and the rest of Ireland...belong to a period some centuries older than the time when they were first written down - belong in fact to a *prehistoric* Ireland' (Jackson, 1964, 4). Thurneysen's view that *SMMDT* gives 'a vivid picture of the warlike spirit of the time' (1935, i) may therefore be questioned. His estimated date (800AD) for the original text of *SMMDT* would still be much later than that of the sources, and, if we consider it to be an even later composition, (circa tenth century), then the setting might relate to time honoured customs yet further removed. These motifs presumably had their origins in a pre-Christian oral tradition.

However, these extant tales were written in a monastic environment as the few Christian insertions in *SMMDT* help to remind us. 'Thurneysen himself was quite prepared to recognise significant ecclesiastically mediated external influences upon a native inheritance' (McCone, 1986a, 89). 'Ar ndóigh, níor chuir forbairt na litearthachta i réimse teoranta na mainistreacha deireadh leis an scéalaíocht béil sa saol tuata, agus bheadh an dá thaobh den scéalaíocht thraidisiúnta seo ag maireachtáil le chéile agus ag oibriú ar a chéile sa luathré stairiúil. Is minic a bhíos coimeádachas agus comhaimsearthacht i gceist ag an am céanna mar sin' (McCone, 1984b, 36: 'Indeed, the literary development of the monastic period did not put an end to the oral tradition in the

secular world and the two sides of the story-telling tradition were existing together and working with one another in the early historical period. Thus it often was that conservatism and contemporaneity were a concern at the same time'. Thus, while conservatism is a distinct possibility, we must be mindful of what the literature is saying in terms of its own period and what this could signify.

II.2.13. Having thus far discussed certain injuries suffered by the various warriors, namely, loss of a hand in section 10, loss of an eye in §11, head hunting in §12a and loss of a foot in section §12b, we may now look at how these attributes have been integrated thematically into the text. *Breslech Már Maige Muirthemne* nears its close with a litany of Cú Chulainn's slayings before his death: *im ocht cét lam ndess do imdibe. Im ocht cét súle clé do chaeachad co fargaib in sluagsin uile fo ainm dia éis issind oenló* (Best and O'Brien, 1954-83, 456, ll.14254-6) 'including the cutting off of eight hundred right hands (and) including the blinding of eight hundred left eyes so that he left all that host under blemish in his wake on the one day'. It is not surprising therefore, to find episodes concerning these same injuries similarly juxtaposed in *SMMDT* and that they are based upon a similar incident whereby the victim is wounded by the very same spear which he had originally cast at Cet. The sequence is framed by §§10 and 12b, which demonstrate a link whereby both events relate to a wound inflicted by Cet on his opponent's father and a name imposed on the latter then being inherited by the sons. This creates symmetry and establishes a connection between the related motifs of the severed hand and the severed foot.

Óengus and Mend are humiliated because of permanent wounds received by their fathers but Éogan mac Durthacht's denigration is based upon a permanent wound that he himself received at Cet's hands. We also witness a progression in terms of the seriousness of injury with the loss of an eye considered a non-fatal wounding of part of the head, followed by loss of the whole head by inevitably fatal decapitation. These four boasting contests involving Cet form a carefully arranged and coherent group as they concentrate upon four different martial practices which Cet's opponents survived without undue damage. In terms of stature, Óengus and Mend would be considered relatively minor figures in the Ulster Cycle and it is only their fathers who have received non-fatal wounds. Éogan represents a more important figure but his wound, although permanent,

still leaves him with one good eye. While Muinremur has lost his first-born son, this very designation clearly implies that he has at least one other son to succeed him. As we move on to §13, however, the remaining boasting contests take on a more serious nature with far more damaging consequences for the futures of those concerned. It thus seems that the author deliberately raises the stakes still further from this point on.

II.2.14. §13 consists of a wounding which seems to stem from the author's own imagination or experience, as it does not seem to figure elsewhere in early Irish saga. Be that as it may, a deeply disturbing phenomenon is introduced. Celtchar mac Uthechair is depicted in *Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair* as a vigorous hero whose son goes surety for him when he returns to Ulster from the Déisi, whither he fled after his killing of Bláí Briugu (Meyer, 1906, §4). His daughter Níab is also mentioned in this saga (§9) as it is she whom Celtchar promises to Conganchnes mac Dedad, in order to trick him into revealing his point of physical weakness resulting in his death (Meyer, 1906, 28-9).

However, in *SMMDT* Celtchar is represented as childless. The author seems prepared to invent for his own purposes rather than adhere to tradition. As a result of an injury inflicted on him personally by Cet, Celtchar is no longer capable of begetting offspring. *Ro:lécus-sa gai n-aill cocut-su co ndecheid tret shlíasait ocus tre húachtar do macraille* (Thurneysen, 1935, 12-3, §13) 'I threw another spear towards you so that it went through your thigh and through the upper part of your testicles'. Cet follows this up with the withering statement: *Ataí co ngalur fhúail ónd úair-sin, nicon rucad mac na ingen duit* (Thurneysen, 1935, 13, §13) 'You are with a urinary disease since, [and] neither son nor daughter has been born to you'. In *Serglige Con Culainn* Celtchar is referred to as *Celtchar na celg* 'Celtchar of the wiles' (Meyer, 1906, 43), a nickname eminently suited to his crafty doings in *Aided Cheltchair Maic Uthechair*. Celtchar accordingly represents a less than perfect hero. While Celtchar did not epitomise integrity in *Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair*, this injury would nevertheless have been an unmerciful blow to any warrior's pride as virility was seen as an essential element in a warrior's make-up. This injury, however, goes beyond mere warfare and affects the victim's whole future, unlike the previous four. The injuries have thus been steadily growing more serious, culminating in this the ultimate sign of weakness. This hero may

appear vigorous but his name is destined to die with him, as it is the end of his line in the absence of offspring.

II.2.15.1. When Cúscraid Mend Machae, ‘Cúscraid the Stammerer of Machae’ steps up, everyone says: *is adbar rig ar deilb* (Thurneysen, 1935, 13, §14) ‘he is a suitable person for kingship on account of shape’. §14 concerns the top of the social scale as Cúscraid is the son of Conchobar and could be understood to be in line for the kingship. *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (Knott, 1936, 4, §10) describes the future King Conaire as follows: *ro bátar didiu teora búada for Conaire .i. búaid chúaisi 7 búaid radairc 7 búaid n-airdmesa* ‘Conaire, therefore, had three gifts i.e. the gift of hearing and the gift of seeing and the gift of judgement’. In *Bruiden Da Choca* (Stokes, 1900, 150, §2) Cormac is the son who is favoured by the Ulaid to succeed on Conchobar’s death: *fós is dó ro erb Conchobar in righi do tabairt re hidacht a bais, uair is é fa sinnsir aigi* ‘moreover, it is to him that Conchobar commanded the giving of the kingship in expectation of his death, for he was his eldest’. *Bruiden Da Choca* (Stokes, 1900, 150, §2) states of Cormac Conloinges that he has the makings of a king because *atait na huile buaida fair .i. buaidh ndeilbh[e] ocus gaiscidh 7 n-einigh 7 firinne* ‘there is upon him all the gifts i.e. the gift of shape and of valour and of honour and of truth’. However, *boí Conall Cernach ic ierraic na rige dia dalta .i. Cuscraid Menn Macha mac Concubair* ‘Conall Cernach was seeking the kingship for his foster son Cúscraid son of Conchobar’. Cormac is known as Cormac Conloinges because he migrated to Connacht along with Fergus mac Róich after Conchobar’s treachery of the sons of Usnech. It transpired that *ro fhoibredar Ulaid cath do tabairt do cheile umi sin, 7 do dhiult Cumsgraid in cath do thabairt ar uamhan co tuitfedís clanna Rudraigi re’roile* ‘the Ulaid prepared to give battle to each other on account of this and Cúscraid refused to give battle for fear that the Rudraigi would mutually fall’. Thus Cúscraid appears reluctant to be king in this saga. Cormac’s requested return to Ulster is dogged by misfortune culminating in his destruction and slaughter by the troops of Connacht at Da Choca’s Hostel and it is Cúscraid who succeeds by default.

While his appearance in *SMMDT* is cause for optimism, it belies his weakness, for Cúscraid cannot speak correctly. Cet says to him: *fo:rácbaiss train do muintire, ocus is<s>amlaid do:cúadaiss ocus gaí tríat brágit conna:étai focul fort chenn i córai; ar*

ro:loitt in gaí féthi do brágat (Thurneysen, 1935, 13, §14) ‘you left a third of your followers and thus you went and a spear through your throat so that you do not get a word out of your head correctly’. The implication is that, although he may appear suitable material, a man without the gift of speech cannot rule and be king. It has already been seen in relation to Éogan mac Durthacht how a king should normally retire if blemished. Cúscraid’s injury is represented as disqualifying him from the kingship before he can even assume it. *Tecosca Cormaic* lists some of the qualities recommended for kingship: *soacaldam cen mórdaitid, frithfholad fir, trócaire co dlúthugud, bretha fira* (McCone, 2005, 30) ‘affability without pride, requital of truth, mercy with consolidation, just laws’. It was therefore a requirement of kingship to be a skilled negotiator and that entailed possessing the art of good speech-making. ‘The life of a *túath* centres around its king...At any time the king may summon them for a *slógad* or ‘hosting’ to repel invaders or to attack a neighbouring *túath*. He also convenes the *óenach*, a regular assembly for political, social, and perhaps commercial purposes’ (Kelly, 1988, 4).

II.2.15.2. The author has brought us full circle in this episode so to speak, as we are made privy to Cúscraid’s adventures when he first took up arms and encountered enemies at the border area. The phrasing in this section is almost identical to that of §9 and this is clearly deliberate. Lóegaire opened the catalogue of events with his *gabál gaiscid* on his first expedition and we now encounter a similar episode involving Cúscraid at the end. This represents a comprehensive list of possible war injuries framed by two distinguished Ulster heroes and actually numbered in HI (see II.2.8.). In §9 the warrior turns in flight leaving his wheel, chariot and horses; here in §14 he leaves a third of his people behind. Because of this speech impediment, Conchobar is left with a son unfit to succeed him. In this way Cet humiliates not just Cúscraid alone, but all of the Ulstermen: *do:rat tar fon n-indas-sin forsín cóiced n-uile* (Thurneysen, 1935, 14, §14) ‘he put shame upon the whole province in that way’. Their kingly line is jeopardised and although Cúscraid has the makings of a king in appearance, this is not sufficient for him to perform his functions properly. We observe further symmetry here in the contrast between Celtchar, who cannot be succeeded by heirs, and Cúscraid, who is unsuitable as his father’s heir.

Also noteworthy is the array of distinctive names given to the contestants in the boasting competition. Many of them consist of epithets relating to their or their fathers’

disabilities or to their own appearance. They are represented as flat characters, mere stereotypes, and thus open to ridicule. In *Fled Bricrend* we are introduced to Conchobar's valiant heroes, listed among them are: Celtchar mac Uthechair, Éogan mac Durthacht, Cúscraid Mend Machae mac Conchobair, Muinremur mac Geirrgind, Errge Echbél, Mend Mac Sálchada, Lóegaire Búadach, Conall Cernach, Cú Chulainn and Bricriu (Henderson, 1899, 13). The line-up here is very similar to that of *SMMDT* and this raises the tantalising question of whether one text borrowed from the other and, if so, which. Did *SMMDT* borrow interesting names from *Fled Bricrend* and perhaps compose a narrative around them or did *Fled Bricrend* draw upon *SMMDT* and incorporate heroes with interesting names? Henderson estimates 'that if we take *Fled Bricrend* as the work of one man and of uniform date, the earliest redaction of the story is more than a century later than the age of the glosses...and not earlier linguistically than circa 875AD' (1899, liv-lxii). In his linguistic discussion of the text Henderson lists *no-* occurring with old compound verbs in three instances: *nothairned* (IX, 57), *nothathiged* (X, 63) and *nothescbad* (XVI, 91), (1899, lix). None, however, occur in a poetical or rhyming section. The issue of date in relation to these two texts is an intriguing one which must await further research. While some of these heroes are recognisable from other Ulster sagas (e.g. Congachnes mac Dedad plays a major role in *Aided Cheltchair*), the correspondence in these two sagas appears to be remarkably close.

Fled Bricrend also shares with *SMMDT* the beheading theme, the feast and the champion's portion, although in this case there is not a champion's portion as such but the related issue of the privilege of carving. We witness the alacrity with which Muinremur Mac Geirrgind, Lóegaire Búadach, Conall Cernach and Cú Chulainn are prepared to behead the *bachlach* in the former and a severed head brings the boasting contest to a close in the latter. Whereas in *Fled Bricrend* Cú Chulainn is mercifully saved from being beheaded by the *bachlach*, and only had to demonstrate his readiness to complete his side of the bargain, the author of *SMMDT* wishes us to positively share in the event's brutality.

II.2.16.1. The drama is at its peak with Cet triumphantly about to carve the pig, knife poised at the ready, when in comes the great Ulster hero Conall Cernach. Having believed their side defeated by this stage, an Ulster audience would see his entry as a last

glimmer of hope. Pointedly the author has Conchobar vaunting himself at Conall's entry and throwing his headdress from his head, but that is as far as he goes. Neither he nor Ailill play any major part in this saga until it nears its end and they are hardly depicted as strong decisive leaders of men.

Once Conall enters the fray in §15, Cet's attitude changes. We sense he has taken on more than he can chew and he admits as much in remarking *at comsa...frim* (Thurneysen, 1935, 14, §15) 'you are a match for me', and his response is markedly respectful in comparison with his dismissive attitude to the previous contestants. To highlight this development in the proceedings, the author inserts rhetorics. While not written in rhyming verse, these passages 'consist chiefly of poetical epithets to the names of the two heroes, mostly of four syllables and connected by alliteration' (Thurneysen, 1935, 27). We must linger and concentrate on this important occasion: '*fochen Conall, cride licce, londbruth loga, luchair ega, guss flann ferge*' (Thurneysen, 1935, 14-5, §15) 'welcome Conall, heart of stone, fierce ardour of a warrior, brightness of ice, red strength of anger'. Conall replies with similar praises for Cet, adding a prophecy: *Ar ar:cichset airg loman londgliaid na da err eblait écht ar écht, regaid fer dar fer is'taig-seo innocht* (Thurneysen, 1935, 15, §15) 'For the warriors will go forward; in an angry fight of lions the two chariot fighters will perform violent deed for violent deed. Man will go over man in this house tonight'. This rhetoric, by way of its air of exaltation, might be seen as an indication of forthcoming drama.

II.2.16.2. The next section (§16) constitutes the dramatic climax to the boasting contest, with role reversal taking place. Conall Cernach's role spans §§15 and 16, suggesting that he is of major importance in understanding the saga. After the respite experienced during the rhetoric, the brisk pace of the previous paragraphs is here resumed, with Conall taking the initiative in the argument and turning the tables on Cet. It is Conall who orders Cet to go from the pig- *eirg ón muicc didiu!* When Conall boasts of not sleeping without a Connachtman's head under his knee every night since he first took up arms, Cet has at last to admit that Conall is a better warrior than he. This should be the time for Cet to give up the argument and retire, as he forced all the previous warriors to do, but he cannot resist one last jibe. His arrogance has not deserted him and his conceitedness is such that if his own exploits will not measure up to Conall's, then he will boast of those

of his brother, Ánlúan Mac Mágach, another great Connacht hero: *Mad Ánlúan no:beth is'taig, do:bered comram ar araile duit. Is anim dún nad:fil is'taig* (Thurneysen, 1935, 16, §16) ‘If Ánlúan were here, he would give contest on account of another. It is a pity for us that he is not here’. This is a masterly episode combining suddenness of action with gruesome attention to detail: *‘Atá immurgu’, ol Conall, oc tabairt chinn Ánlúan assa chriss; ocus do:léici do Chet dara bruinni co:rróemid a loim fola for a béolu* (Thurneysen, 1935, 16, §16) ‘‘But he is!’ said Conall, taking the head of Ánlúan from his belt; and he threw it at Cet across his chest so that its gush of blood burst on its lips’. Since Conall had Ánlúan’s head hidden up to this point, the reader is not only struck by the drama of this act with the head still gushing blood - a grim reminder that *rigor mortis* has not yet set in, Ánlúan being so recently slain - but is also deeply shocked into the bargain.

II.2.16.3. This echoes §12 where Cet took heads himself, including the head of Muinremur mac Gerginn’s firstborn son. His cruel boast earlier has now rebounded in that he is confronted with the head of his own brother in response to a boast about the latter’s prowess. Muinremur has a parallel experience in §7 when he boasts of the death of his opponent’s brother: *ba méthiu a n-ag fo:rácbaís <s>iu ocainni....i. do bráthair* ‘it was fatter the ox that you left with us i.e. your brother’ and later in §12 he suffers the loss of his own son. The author thus gives head hunting an especially prominent position in this saga. In the sources it is seen as a consequence of war and a just reward of victory, but here it is portrayed as an act of wanton cruelty. Rather than concentrate on the heroism of conflict, the author shows us the other side of the picture and invites us to view the negative aspect of warfare.

In *Aided Cheltchair Maic Uthechair* we observe certain parallels with *SMMDT* in that Conganchnes mac Dedad ravages Ulster because of the death of his brother Cú Roí (who was beheaded by Cú Chulainn in *Aided Con Roi*), but is then slain himself by Celtchar: *co thall a cend de* ‘so that he took his head from him’. Celtchar initiates the cycle of violence by killing Bláí Briugu but also meets a grim end himself. In *SMMDT* Cet’s brother Ánlúan has been beheaded. *Bruiden Da Choca* (Stokes, 1900, 400) relates a duel between Cormac and Cet mac Mágach in which Cormac is overcome and beheaded, Ánlúan then taking his head back to Athlone. In *Aided Cheit Maic Mágach* (Meyer, 1906,

37-42), Cet is actually slain by Conall Cernach. Cet thus reaps as he has sown. The parallels between these sagas are hardly coincidental, and presumably the reader was intended to associate them.

The author brings the boasting contests to a close without changing the pattern of events established in preceding paragraphs. The structure has remained constant throughout, the changes in detail thus standing out all the more because of it. The irony is deep as the same actions are repeated, but the personalities are reversed - *ro:gab side immurgu ón muic ocus dessid Conall aicci* (Thurneysen, 1935, 16, §16) ‘he then left the pig and Conall sat down at it’. The dividing of the pig has now been resolved. It is Conall who triumphantly shouts: *tecat don chomram a fecht-sa!* ‘let them come to the contest now!’.

II.2.17. The boasting contests are an indispensable part of the structure and make-up of this saga. This monastic author can be presumed to have had Christian values as his yardstick when presenting the morally reprehensible characters and actions witnessed here. Contained within these episodes are a whole series of sins including greed, sloth, hatred, malice, pride, boasting and gluttony committed by extremely questionable heroes. We may interpret Mac Da Thó’s inaction as sloth, Cet’s vaingloriousness as pride. Anger erupts as a result of Conall’s unfair division of the pig, which also demonstrates greed, and then the manner in which he consumes it is an example of gross gluttony. ‘As the plot unfolds, major heroes, up to and including the king of Ulster himself, are humiliated one by one, and there is widespread death and destruction extending to the cause of the conflict, Mac Da Thó’s hound, which is thus lost to owner and would-be owner alike. The thoroughly unchristian behaviour depicted in *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* thus proves totally futile and counter-productive for all concerned. In effect, this story is a glorious moral essay on the consequence, dire, absurd or both as the case might be, of human vanity...*Scéla Muicce* illustrates a veritable catalogue of serious sins, all of them duly catastrophic’ (McCone, 1990, 78). The author thus undermines key aspects of the warrior ethos in order to further his Christian aims. If this is a cautionary tale with a Christian message, the intended satire may be understood more deeply when the final episode of the saga is examined.

Once the issue of the carving of the pig has been resolved, the tale has seemed as good as over to some critics. Murphy feels the tale after this incident is just a rounding-off and says the author finishes ‘with a condensed summary of the succeeding events’ (Murphy, 1971, 49). Murphy does not make any mention of the Fer Loga episode and seems to think that the tale’s conclusion is an anticlimax. Mac Eoin (1967, 247) offers the following reasons for the author of *SMMDT*’s decision to continue his narrative after this episode : ‘our sense of what a story ought to be tells us that *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó* should end with the climax, when Conall takes his place at the pig and carves it. But the storyteller had many loose ends, historical and onomastic, to tie up, and felt obliged to continue the story for a couple of paragraphs’. Buttimer’s critique (1982, 65) harks back to the title ‘*Argain Meic Dathó*’ given in the saga lists and sees in it an invitation ‘to take a more general perspective on the events of the story than the narrower approach implicit in the name ‘The Story of Mac Dathó’s Pig’. The end of the story is in every sense organic, suiting the ethos of the entire tale. The dog’s chase after the Connachtmen and ultimate death cannot be accounted loose ends’. In his view the conclusion restores the ‘rough parity’ between Connacht and Ulster that obtained at the beginning of the saga and it is Mac Da Thó who is responsible for this and who alone remains intact and composed.

These three critics then, view the saga in rather general terms. While various events therein are discussed, there does not seem to be any particular attention to detail as regards the methods used by the author in literary terms. Considerable importance attaches to the language used to convey message and meaning in this respect. The author makes play on words or patterns of words; the effect being rather like a leitmotiv establishing connections between episodes. After winning the contest Conall proceeds to demonstrate that his behaviour is no better than Cet’s. There is no good or right represented here and all seems debased. Conall attacks the pig in animal fashion: *gebid dano cenn in tarra ina béolo, co:tairnic dó rann na-mmucce. Ro:súig in tairr .i. ere ind nónbair cona:farcaib bannai de*, ‘he then seizes the end of the belly in his mouth until he finished dividing the pig. He sucked the belly i.e. a load for nine men, so that he did not leave behind a drop’. What he performs is an act of grotesque gluttony. His greed is such that he leaves the Connachtmen with the front feet for their feast, thus giving rise to a

fight that develops into a wholesale battle. Gluttony was considered the ultimate vice by the early Irish church (see IV.2.10.).

II.2.18. The grand climax with Cet and Conall shaping up to one another is over, but Conall's gluttonous behaviour and unfair division of the pig provokes the final battle leading to the hound's involvement and death. This can be seen as a further climax, but all is not over yet. The author's great capacity for gruesome description as exhibited in the Ánlúan episode is demonstrated again in the battle scene: *maidith dano in slúag forna doirsiu co:rralsat soimól for lár ind liss .i. cách oc trúastad a chéli* (Thurneysen, 1935, 17-8, §18) 'the host breaks out upon the entrances so that they throw 'a good drinking round' upon the floor of the *lios* (presumably because blood was spilling around all over the place, like drink at a heavy drinking session), i.e. everyone striking his fellow'. All is mayhem but the author does not dwell unduly on this battle scene, which would normally be seen as an event of supreme importance to a warrior society.

We now look forward to the final resolution of the saga, namely the question of who gets the hound, the very reason for the conflict in the first place. Mac Da Thó again plays an important role and is introduced walking out with the hound. In Poppe's opinion (1997, 6-7) Mac Da Thó is again seen to be indecisive when he lets the hound choose which side he will fight for: 'he again fails to take a vital decision himself, significantly again regarding the future ownership of his dog, and leaves it to the dog instead'. *Is and luid Mac Dathó immach ocus in cú inna láim, co:rrailced etorro dús cía do:ngegnad* (Thurneysen, 1935, 18, §19) 'Here Mac Da Thó went out with the dog in his hand in order to let it loose between them to find out whom the dog would choose'. Thus one might expect the hound to decide the outcome of the battle, but we are told that this had already been decided: *ar ro:mebaid for Connachta* (Thurneysen, 1935, 18, §19) 'for the Connachtmen were routed'. He merely chose the already victorious side but even this does not bring any guarantees as he is slain shortly afterwards. When we interpret this in terms of a hound as a potent warrior symbol, Ailbe appears to be deliberately downgraded and satirised in accordance with the general aims of *SMMDT*. Buttimer takes the following view of Mac Da Thó's action: 'extending the fracas out of doors provides the Leinsterman with an opportunity to disengage himself from the troublesome situation. Here again...Mac Dathó's fairness remains in evidence' (1982, 64-5). As Buttimer

interpreted Mac Da Thó's initial indecision as a show of strength by remaining silent and aloof, so does he take a similar view of his action here. To support his theory, Buttimer mentions Thurneysen's proposed date of composition (800AD) as evidence of historical significance for a pro-Leinster bias in the tale; 'the work indicates that pro-Leinster writing was taking place at roughly the same time and in the same area as Thurneysen's observations seem to suggest' (1982, 66). However, in the absence of sufficient linguistic evidence for this early date (see page 12), then Buttimer's theory becomes open to doubt.

II.2.19.1. We are thus launched into the Fer Loga episode, which some modern critics feel is an anti-climax to the story, as mentioned above. Since it hardly equals the Ánlúan incident in high drama, it can be felt to be a comedown from this peak of excitement. We note that after the gory but short description of the battle we are tersely informed that the hound chose the Ulstermen: *Do:rráiga in cú Ulto ocus ro:léici for ár Connacht, ar ro:mebaid for Connachta* (Thurneysen, 1935, 18, §19) 'The hound chose the Ulstermen and set upon slaughter of the Connachtmen, for the Connachtmen had been routed'. Thus it appears that the purpose of the author is not to linger on the physical aspect of the battle scene but to place greater emphasis on the psychological impact of the final incident. If so, this apparent anti-climax is a deliberate literary stratagem rather than a purely functional tying-up of loose ends. In order to interpret this properly we must first look at the issue of the hound and what it may represent.

In reviewing the function of the hound in early Irish literature, McCone (1984a, 13) states 'that the hound was the symbol of the warrior values *par excellence*.' He argues that the supernatural hounds in *SMMDT* and Cú Chulainn's *macgnimrada* in *Táin Bó Cúailnge Rec. I* (O'Rahilly, 1976, 17-19, ll.540-607) are associated with martial characteristics and seen as guardians of the Otherworld hospitaller. If Mac Da Thó is recognised as the Otherworld hospitaller in origin, then Ailbe can be seen as the dog which guards him and his property and is 'the embodiment of the canine and martial virtues of strength, frenzied fierceness and fidelity' (McCone, 1984a, 10). Moreover, the hound as symbol of martial characteristics is not confined to early Irish literature. Warriors demonstrably played a very important role in the society of Germanic peoples (McCone, 1987, 101-4) and 'the affinity of berserk warriors and the like with animals is depicted on a number of occasions in the literature. In this respect some significance

attaches to bears and hounds but the wolf undoubtedly occupies a particularly important position...*beserkir* are likened to hounds and wolves in frenzy...and were also called ‘wolfskins’ (McCone, 1987, 103; his trans. of original German). These warriors were young men who took to the wilderness for a limited period before being readmitted into society. It is thus fair to assume that this association of hounds with heroes in the literature and mythology of Germanic peoples is related to a similar feature in early Irish literature.

Returning to the saga, Fer Loga may seem a somewhat lowly protagonist after champions such as Cet Mac Mágach and Conall Cernach, but this incident conjures up the image of a hero killing a hound and two provinces battling over the hound. This in turn brings to mind the battle over the bulls and the young Sétanta’s crucial fight with the hound of Culann in his ‘boyhood deed’ to earn him the name Cú Chulainn. There is, however, one important difference between these two texts, as Poppe (1997, 4) points out: ‘in SMMDT both Ulster and Connacht attempt to obtain the same hound from Mac Da Thó, whereas in Táin Bó Cúailnge the Ulstermen, and especially Cú Chulainn, attempt to defend the Donn Cúailnge and their province against the four other provinces of Ireland under the leadership of the king and queen of Connacht’. Mac Da Thó represents Leinster, an independent province with two powerful neighbours, and perhaps this feature indicates a pro-Leinster bias. Moreover, although recalling Cú Chulainn’s boyhood deeds with the smith’s hound, Fer Loga is a mere charioteer rather than a great champion and has no real warrior status. While Cú Chulainn elevated himself to the role of warrior and defender of Ulster by *fír fer*, Fer Loga’s actions are markedly less heroic. ‘Cú Chulainn engages [the hound] in a hand-to-hand combat that accords fully with the martial principle of *fír fer* weakly translated as ‘fair play’, while Fer Loga smites it from an advantageous position in the chariot after the dog has seized one of the shafts beneath him’ (McCone, 1984a, 12). His method of killing the hound was not, then, as courageous as that of Cú Chulainn and did not conform properly to the warrior mould.

It is left thus to the charioteer to kill the hound. Neither Conchobar nor Ailill take any great part in the proceedings and, in this the final episode of the saga, both Ailill and Medb seem to be standing back and letting Fer Loga take the initiative. There is some exploration of the relationship existing between Cú Chulainn and his charioteer Lóeg in

Serglige Con Culainn and *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Nagy, 1997, 218), in both of which Lóeg offers advice to the hero, while in the *Táin*'s Fer Diad episode he saves his life by giving him the *gáe bolga*. Viewing the issue generally 'we see that the Irish *arae* 'charioteer' can be a possessor of key information as well as a guardian of balance and containment within a given situation' (Nagy, 1997, 218), (see also III.2.21.). While Fer Loga, as Ailill and Medb's charioteer, can be expected to be alert and ready to support his king, he would hardly be expected to take over from him as a fighter. That being so, he may be regarded as acting above his station in the present instance. This may also be viewed as a criticism of Ailill for failing to strike the dog himself.

II.2.19.2. The author pertinently emphasises the fact that Fer Loga was a charioteer, remarking: *is and do:n-áraitll Fer Loga .i.ara Ailella ocus Medba* (Thurneysen, 1935, 18, §19) 'it is there Fer Loga hit him i.e. the charioteer of Ailill and Medb', and again *is and do:n-árlaic Fer Loga isin fraích .i. ara Ailella* (Thurneysen, 1935, 19, §20) 'it is there Fer Loga let himself down into the heather i.e. the charioteer of Ailill'. In a saga where economy of words is used to great effect, this repetition of Fer Loga's inferior social status seems to be quite deliberate. When he takes on Conchobar, his method of attack also lacks valour, as he ambushes him from behind: *Ro:ling isin carpat tar cúl Conchobair co:rragab a chenn dara aiss* (Thurneysen, 1935, 19, §20) 'he leapt into the chariot behind Conchobar so that he seized his head from behind'. This does not do much for Conchobar's heroic image as king of Ulster. His role has been a passive one throughout the saga and his reaction to Fer Loga's ambush is totally submissive and humiliating. '*Emde, a Chonchobair!*' *olse. 'T'ógriar' ol Conchobar* (Thurneysen, 1935, 19, §20) "'Yield, Conchobar' he said, 'Thy full wish' said Conchobar'. His immediate surrender is craven for a man of his rank, especially as Fer Loga is essentially a servant, and thus constitutes dislocation in the social order.

With Conchobar humiliated and Fer Loga triumphant we must ask what the author is about. Having held the warrior ethos up to ridicule he presents us with an anti-climax wherein it is the charioteer who gains the upper hand rather than the king. However, the 'striking bathos of this concluding episode...can be seen as precisely the point...[as it] subverts the love of fighting as an end in itself by representing battle as a bagatelle in which, with luck, even the lowly born might distinguish themselves at their

betters' expense, a scenario hardly calculated to appeal to an aristocratic audience' (McCone, 1990, 78). Moreover, in cautiously drawing pertinent parallels between Fer Loga's incident and Cú Chulainn's 'boyhood deed' the author can be regarded as devaluing the great hero of Ulster. While it might be considered inappropriate to do so directly, Cú Chulainn can be seen to be present by implication, thus resolving Gantz's perplexity (1981, 170) as to the absence of Cú Chulainn from this tale. If so, this might be seen as the high point of the story in that the author finally belittles the greatest of all heroes, Cú Chulainn, albeit indirectly (McCone, 1990, 77-79). He is parodying the slaughter of the hound in the Boyhood Deed by having a charioteer take the place of Cú Chulainn. Having killed the hound, Cú Chulainn then took over the martial characteristics of the hound himself: 'this passage of the dead Otherworld hound's attributes to its slayer by a kind of sympathetic magic effects the transformation of Sétanta the child prodigy into Cú Chulainn the fully fledged hero capable of guarding all Mag Murthemne and thus represents a marked heightening of already astounding martial prowess' (McCone, 1984a, 11). However, whereas with Cú Chulainn this transition is permanent and results in the perfect warrior, in Fer Loga's case it is only temporary and highly questionable.

It may be worth noting that Ailill and Medb's charioteer is not named in *TBC I* but appears as Fer Loga in the LL *Táin*. The author of Recension II has thus made an interesting alteration to the text. In Recension I it is Cuillius, Conchobar's charioteer, who was entrusted by him with the task of spying on Medb and Fergus and secretly removing the latter's sword from its scabbard. Their collusion in this is displayed in the sentence *tibid cechtar de fria chéle* 'they exchanged smiles' (O'Rahilly, 1976, 33, l.1050, trans. 154). In Recension II, however, no reference is made to any act of stealth and we are merely informed that *tópacht Ailill in claideb assa intig 7 dobretha claideb craind dia inud* 'Ailill had snatched the sword from its shield and put a wooden sword in its place' (O'Rahilly, 1967, 68, l.2489-90, trans. 208). Before the final battle Fergus' sword is returned to him in Recension I without reference to the giver: *asbert Ailill re araid 'Domiced in claideb cuilleis toind' ...Is iarom dobreth a c[h]laideb do Fhergus* 'Ailill said to his charioteer 'Bring me the sword that cuts (men's) flesh' ...Then his sword was given to Fergus' (O'Rahilly, 1976, 121, ll.4017-22, trans. 233-4). The same episode in Recension II is presented thus: *Is and atbert Ailill rá araid badessin .i. ra Fer Loga:*

‘Domraiched craum claideb choilles toind, a gillai’...Táinic Fer Loga reime 7 tuc in claideb laiss ba búaid caintaisceda 7 fo chaindil chain lassamain 7 tucad in claideb i lláim Ailella 7 tuc Ailill i lláim Fhergusa ‘Then said Ailill to his own charioteer, Fer Loga: bring me quickly the sword that wounds men’s flesh, o fellow...Fer Loga came forward and brought the sword in all the beauty of its fair presentation, shining bright as a torch and the sword was given into Ailill’s hand and Ailill gave it into Fergus’ hand’ (O’Rahilly, 1967, 130, ll.4712-19, trans. 266). Perhaps Recension II is drawing on *SMMDT* here, giving Ailill and Medb’s charioteer a distinction he was not accorded in Recension I. However, the author did not see fit to give Fer Loga the credit for taking Fergus’ sword in the first place and his mention at the end of the tale is purely in a subservient capacity. It is almost as if he is underlining Fer Loga’s proper position after his questionable triumph in *SMMDT*. ‘One important tendency towards the elaboration of the story of the *Táin* in the Book of Leinster, as compared with *TBC I*, is that male or warrior skills and attributes are exalted’ (Greenwood, 1994, 54, see also I.1.13.1.). It is doubtful whether the author of *LL Táin* would have agreed with *SMMDT*’s exaltation of a charioteer, and his omission of Cuillius’ role in Recension II may be testimony to that.

II.2.19.3. Another point which may be worth mentioning is the relevance of the name Fer Loga. If Loga is taken as the genitive singular of the IIIb, masculine noun ‘Lug’ as in Lug mac Ethnenn (McCone, 2005, 258) the name translates as ‘Man of Lug’. Lug was the supernatural father of Cú Chulainn as stated in the *Táin*: ‘*Iss messe do athair a ssídib .i. Lug mac Ethlend*’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 65, l.2109) ‘I am your father from the *síde* i.e. Lug mac Ethlend’. Deichtine is addressed by a man in her sleep in *Compert Con Culainn* thus: *asbert fria robad torrach úad...7 ba hé totharlae inna broind...7 ba hésse Lug mac Ethnenn* (Van Hamel. 1933, 5, §5) ‘he said to her that she would be pregnant from him...and it was he who came into her womb and he was Lug Mac Ethnenn’. ‘Fer’ can refer to ‘man’ or ‘son’ as illustrated in the title of the text *Aided Óenfhir Aífe* ‘The Death of Aífe’s Only Son’. We may thus infer that Cú Chulainn might theoretically also be referred to as Fer Loga. Given the general implication that Fer Loga is a downgraded version of Cú Chulainn, the name chosen for the charioteer is surely deliberate.

II.2.20. To copperfasten the satirical effect of this image the author has Conchobar grant Fer Loga his wish in return for his life. ‘*Níba mór,*’ *ol Fer Loga* ‘.i. mo brith latt co

Emain Macha ocus mná óentama Ulad ocus a n-ingena macdacht do gabáil chepóce cecha nóna immum co n-érbrat: Fer Loga mo lennán-sa (Thurneysen, 1935, 19, §20) ‘‘It will not be much,’’ said Fer Loga, ‘i.e. my bearing with you to Emain Macha and the lone women of Ulster and their marriageable daughters to sing a chorus every evening around me so that they may say ‘Fer Loga is my darling’’. Having thus transmuted himself into a quasi-warrior Fer Loga now receives the traditional female adulation attributable to a hero. For instance, in *Túarascbáil Delba Con Culaind* of the *Táin* Rec I or ‘The Description of Cú Chulainn’s Appearance’, the hero’s battle exploits are cause for the following reaction by the females in the enemy’s ranks: *is and sin frisócbat mná Connacht forsna buidne 7 fordringtís mná firu do déscin crotha Con Culaind* ‘Then the women of Connacht climbed up on the hosts and the women of Munster climbed on men’s shoulders that they might behold the appearance of Cú Chulainn’ (O’Rahilly, 1976, 72, ll.2367-8). Fer Loga, however, is given an entirely empty acclamation as the women act only under duress: *ba écen ón, ar ní laimtis cena la Conchobar* (Thurneysen, 1935, 19, §20) ‘that was a necessity, for they did not dare otherwise with Conchobar’. The adulation is feigned and thus humiliates the women in their turn. It is also temporary: *ro:lécéd Fer Loga dar Áth Lúain star dia bliabna ocus dí gabair Conchobair leis co n-allaib óir friu* (Thurneysen, 1935, 19-20, §20) ‘a year from that day Fer Loga was let loose west beyond Athlone and two horses of Conchobar’s with him with gold bridles’. He is not a legitimate hero. The transmission of the hound’s martial virtues to Fer Loga has not been complete. The link has been broken by the lack of *fír fer* in his victories over the hound and Conchobar and so his ill- deserved triumph is to be transitory, and he is to return to being a charioteer. The potent myth of Cú Chulainn’s slaying of the hound in the *Táin* has been undermined and satirized. Society has been destabilised as a result of a futile battle over a hound and the right to carve a giant pig. After a year Fer Loga is returned to his previous status, thus rendering his adventure ultimately futile too.

3. Conclusion.

II.3.1. *SMMDT* is a tale which moves rapidly while at the same time retaining our interest by delaying important resolutions until the end. This is due in no small way to its structure (see II.2.1.), which McCone (1990, 60) employs to illustrate some features of Propp's (1958) method of analysis of the folktale. Propp views the folktale as 'any development proceeding from villainy...or a lack..., through intermediary functions...to a dénouement...Each new act of villainy, each new lack creates a new move. One tale may have several moves...One move may directly follow another, but they may also interweave...Special devices of parallelism, repetitions, etc., lead to the fact that one tale may be composed of several moves' (Propp, 1958, 92). *SMMDT* displays this structure by combining 'periodic resolution of various difficulties with suspense concerning the postponed outcome of others', while the battle forms a fitting climax by 'resolving no less than three issues at once' (McCone, 1990, 60): Who will get the hound, to whom will the owner give the hound and who will win the battle to avenge the insult to the Connachmen over their meagre portion of the gigantic pig? 'Coming as it does after a great watershed in the narrative, the Fer Loga episode appears as something of an anti-climax winding the story up but this too may have a deliberate purpose' (McCone, 1990, 60). Rather, this episode may be viewed as a *pièce de résistance*. It may appear to be a deliberate narrative anti-climax on the part of the author but nevertheless marks the culmination of the moral satire on the warrior ethos since the great Cú Chulainn is its object, albeit indirectly.

Intertextuality is the key to appreciating the satire behind the Fer Loga incident. This episode has parallels with *Aided Con na Cerda* (*Táin* Rec.I, 17-8, ll.540-607) and *Aided Cheltchair Meic Uthechair* (Meyer, 1906). Each of these 'involves the slaying of a ferocious hound taken to embody the martial spirit' (McCone, 1990, 63) and the three hounds in question all come from the same litter (McCone, 1984a, 1). *SMMDT* and *Aided Con na Cerda* both illustrate how the hound's martial characteristics are transferred to the hero after its death. In *Aided Cheltchair Meic Uthechair*, however, the hound becomes unstable and starts attacking 'his own people and their property with the result that Celtchar is forced to kill it but himself dies in the process. Here the effects of the

slaughter on its perpetrator are manifestly negative’ (McCone, 1990, 64). In *Aided Con na Cerda* the boy Sétantae kills the hound of Culann the smith ‘in fair combat and earns his adult identity as Cú Chulainn...the warrior *par excellence*, by temporarily replacing the dead hound as protector of property until a whelp from its litter should be old enough to release him’ (McCone, 1990, 64). Fer Loga is a mere charioteer who ‘slays Mac Da Thó’s hound Ailbe from an advantageous position and goes on to get the better of the Ulster king Conchobar by attacking him from behind. Conchobar is forced to save his life by agreeing to let Fer Loga spend a year at his court being treated as a real warrior, the women of Ulster being obliged to regale him with a nightly refrain of ‘Fer Loga is my darling’. Thereafter Fer Loga returns to Connacht to resume his proper profession’ (McCone, 1990, 64). The structural similarity between these latter two tales is striking and may be considered deliberate on the part of the author. By comparing them it is observed that ‘the Cú Chulainn story clearly involves the permanent and beneficial fusion of the hound’s attributes with those of its slayer to produce the perfect warrior, but in the Fer Loga episode a series of permutations serves to impair the effects of killing the dog, rendering them transitory and largely bogus’ (McCone, 1990, 64). It seems highly unusual that Ailill and Medb would allow someone of Fer Loga’s status to take the initiative in this way and, furthermore, the episode portrays both kings in an embarrassing light if the tale is to be understood as heroic. Fer Loga’s implicit stand-in for Cú Chulainn may be identified in his name’s meaning ‘son of Lug’ (see II.2.19.2.). The temporary promotion of Fer Loga to a position comparable to that of Cú Chulainn only to return him to his previous occupation may be seen as ‘precisely the point of this conclusion’ (McCone, 1990, 78). The LL *Táin*’s portrayal of the previously unidentified charioteer of Ailill and Medb (see II.2.19.1.) may also illustrate the author’s unease with Fer Loga’s jumped-up status in *SMMDT*.

The topsy turvy situation depicted in the Fer Loga episode invites us to reconsider the boasting contests. They represent ten of the twenty sections into which Thurneysen’s edition is divided and cover the different stages of a warrior’s life in a framework that begins and ends with an initiatory *gabál gaiscid*. Intertextuality is an issue, since we encounter in *SMMDT* characters and customs whose heroic status is documented in other tales. A comparison with these reveals the intention of the author of *SMMDT*. His

humiliation and denigration of what would have been considered marks of heroism of their bearers are unrelenting, extending to an injury not encountered anywhere else in early Irish literature (see II.2.14.). These motifs have been thematically integrated into the text, progressing in gravity (see II.2.13.-II.2.15.2.). The vaunting of the successive warriors appears inappropriate when viewed in terms of how their injuries or those of their fathers were actually received. Cet's aggressive arrogance is finally given its comeuppance when he is dramatically confronted by Conall with his own brother's decapitated head (see II.2.16.2.), the author viewing the scars of battle not from the angle of the triumphant doer but from that of those affected as victims. The behaviour of these questionable heroes also appears morally reprehensible by virtue of illustrating 'a veritable catalogue of serious sins' (McCone, 1990, 78: see II.2.17.). All of this 'thoroughly unchristian behaviour' (McCone, 1990, 78) proves futile, as, in the final analysis there are no winners in *SMMDT*. While the Ulstermen may have won the battle, their triumph has been rendered useless by the hound's death. This subversive jewel in the crown of the Ulster Cycle thus serves to detract from its overall glory.

Conversely, the boasting episodes themselves constitute an indispensable lead-up to the Fer Loga episode, which may then be seen as marking a fitting climax to the tale's satire. All of the competing heroes have been made to look foolish up to this point. While most of them would be considered of no more than moderate importance within the Ulster Cycle, Conall Cernach and Lóegaire Búadach are rated second and third respectively in prowess after Cú Chulainn according to *Fled Bricrend*. Lóegaire is the first champion to be humiliated by Cet after the latter's emergence as the leading contender for the right to carve, and the experience on his first expedition depicted in *SMMDT* bears little relation to his achievements in *Fled Bricrend* and elsewhere (see II.2.8.). Although Conall brings the boasting contests to a conclusion by defeating Cet, his unfair and gluttonous behaviour as carver leads directly to a far more serious conflict by provoking a battle with a large number of casualties (see II.2.17.). Another figure who may be seen as belonging to the same upper division as Lóegaire at the beginning, and Conall at the end of the contests, is Cúscraid, King Conchobar's eventual successor according to tradition. His is the penultimate contest with Cet and the last one in which the latter triumphs (see II.2.15.1-2.), casting doubt on Cúscraid's suitability for kingship.

However, important though these three figures are in the Ulster Cycle, the fact remains that Lóegaire and Conall are some way behind the incomparable Cú Chulainn as warriors and that Conchobar is the actual king and social pinnacle of the province of Ulster in this and many other tales. Thus up to the Fer Loga episode we have been dealing with figures from the second division, so to speak.

As far as the first division is concerned, the Ulstermen's king, Conchobar, has played a fairly unobtrusive role in the tale so far, sending messengers to request the hound, agreeing to contests as a means of deciding who will carve the pig and expressing delight when Conall Cernach makes his appearance. He has, however, an important role to play in the Fer Loga episode, albeit a humiliating one (see II.2.19.2.). The most important man in Ulster is here portrayed as a coward. The other most important figure in Ulster is the champion Cú Chulainn but he is absent from the tale. Fer Loga's name is, however, an echo of Cú Chulainn's own and his behaviour in relation to the hound represents a deliberate downgrading of features in the crucial *Aided Con na Cerda* episode in which he obtains his very name 'Hound of Culann'. The Fer Loga episode thus satirises the top hero in the province indirectly but unmistakably and its top dignitary very directly indeed. While this episode may still validly be regarded as a deliberate anti-climax from a heroic narrative standpoint, it has an equally obvious climactic function as regards the reputation of the figures it satirises. The tale thus ends with a flourish on a final satirical high note.

II.3.2. The trend in modern criticism of *SMMDT* has moved from emphasis upon pure Celtic heritage to recognition of deliberate irony designed to undermine the warrior cult. Thurneysen's claim that 'it gives a vivid picture of the warlike spirit of the time' (1935, i) has been superseded by the acknowledgement that it could be a 'jape' parodying the *Táin* in particular (Ó Corráin, 1985, 85-6). McCone's discussions of *SMMDT* over the years have paralleled these developments towards recognition that certain elements in the tale reflected warrior practices past and present but were harnessed to contemporary concerns. His discussion of *SMMDT* and the Fer Loga episode (McCone, 1990, 60-4 and 77-8; 1984a, 11-12; 2006) as a deliberate anti-climax adapted in the clerical interest to produce a moral satire marks the culmination of this process.

The two already mentioned direct Christian allusions in *SMMDT* (II.2.12.) probably serve to give the reader a jolt in the midst of this scene of extreme warrior behaviour. The biblical resonances of the description of the cauldron in the first section would presumably also have served as a pointer to a Christian frame of reference. Certain aspects of the warrior code were strongly disapproved of by the church in the pre-Norman period (McCone, 1990, 218). Accordingly, clerics may well have sought to employ literary means in order to counter this abhorrent behaviour. To this end, the monastic author of *SMMDT* took concepts with pre-Christian pagan roots and re-evaluated them, ‘the upshot frequently being an antique shell...capable of housing a new or significantly modified ideology attuned to ecclesiastical requirements’ (McCone, 1990, 218).

Ó Riain remarks that medieval Ireland’s Christian *literati* ‘were manifestly skilled in disguising their clerical provenance. Otherwise, the traditional view of the literature as an essentially pre-Christian body of materials would never have been possible’ (1992, 66). It has thus taken some time for what may now be seen as the author of *SMMDT*’s satirical intent to be appreciated by modern scholars. *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* may be the earliest medieval Irish example (or at least the oldest surviving example) of a primarily satirical text in its entirety but, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, it does not stand alone. We have already seen *Mellgleó n-Iliach* (see I.1.13.-I.1.14.) as a possible satirical episode contained within the *Táin* itself.

None of the six manuscripts containing *SMMDT* seems to be a compilation. Though short, this saga presents a coherent narrative in all versions. While *Táin Bó Cúailnge* can be seen as an epic (O’Rahilly, 1967, xiii), *SMMDT* is of a different order. ‘The difference between the *Táin* and short sagas like *Scéla Mucce Meic Da Thó*...is not merely, or even mainly, a matter of relative length; the difference in scale, in subject matter, and in treatment of subject matter bespeaks a difference of genre between the *Táin* and the short saga’ (Poppe, 1997, 4, n.15). Mac Gearailt’s contention that ‘the brevity of Old Irish saga- texts, e.g. *Compert Con Culainn* or *Scéla Mucce meic Dathó*, gives the impression that the compiler abridged the available material’ (1988, 349) cannot, therefore, be sustained. In the light of this, the related text *Aided Cheltchair Maic Uthechair* could perhaps also be viewed from a satirical perspective. Celtchar is

represented there as a less than perfect hero on account of the manner in which he gets the better of his opposition, thus devaluing the idea of heroism: he spears the aged Bláí in the back and employs various ruses to dispatch his three great adversaries thereafter. McCone's (1984a, 17) argument that *Aided Cheltchair* deliberately skews and inverts patterns in the *macgnímrá* narrating Cú Chulainn's slaughter of the hound (O'Rahilly, 1976, 17-19, ll.540-607) would also lend itself to such an interpretation, opposing Celtchar as flawed 'anti-hero' to Cú Chulainn as perfect hero.

Once *SMMDT* emerges as a satire first and foremost, containing as it does the required element of humour, we may be encouraged to look afresh at other texts. As intertextuality is an increasingly recognised facet of early Irish literature (Ó Corráin, 1990, 21-32), satirical elements might presumably be transferred or borrowed from one text to another. As it stands, *SMMDT* can plausibly be dated as far back as the tenth century at least, and its overall satirical purpose perhaps represents a new literary development in medieval Ireland at about that time. The next chapter presents a variation on a theme as, unlike *SMMDT*, *Serglige Con Culainn* explicitly satirises the ultimate hero, Cú Chulainn.

III. Serglige Con Culainn.

1. Introduction.

III.1.1. The text as it has come down to us exists in two manuscripts, *Lebor na hUidre* (LU) and TCD H.4.22. The bulk of LU is usually ascribed to Máel Muire son of Célechar, whose *probatio pennae* occurs twice in the manuscript (Best and Bergin, 1929, ix). ‘The death of Maelmuire at the hands of marauders in the church of Clonmacnois, recorded by the Four Masters under the year 1106, has provided a terminus before which the manuscript must have been compiled, and thus given *Lebor na hUidre* a good claim to be considered the oldest manuscript written exclusively in Irish to which an almost exact date could be assigned’ (Best, 1912, 162-3). H.4.22 is dated roughly to the seventeenth century (Dillon, 1953a, xi) and, although this manuscript had been used for variant readings with LU, its complete text was first published by Dillon (1947) with a view to resolving the controversy about its relation to LU (Dillon, 1947, 139). In his introduction to this text of *Serglige Con Culainn*, Dillon (1947) examined Zimmer’s (1887) variant readings of the text in order to decide whether he agreed with Zimmer’s conclusion that H.4.22 was independent of LU, and initially conceded that certain variants could be seen to support its independent status (1947, 143). However, he deduced that on closer examination these variants were early forms attributable to the scribes of H.4.22 themselves (1947, 146), who thereby manifested a good knowledge of the older language. Dissenting from Thurneysen’s view that H.4.22 derived from an early version of the LU text, Dillon (1947, 145) concludes that the exemplar of H.4.22 was LU itself ‘thus establishing direct relationship between the two manuscripts’. Thus H.4.22 was ultimately based on LU and cannot be considered an independent version. The following discussion will be based on Dillon’s 1953 edition which gives the LU text with variant readings from H.4.22 in the footnotes.

The LU text of *SCC* is the work of two scribes, Máel Muire (M) and an interpolator (H). Máel Muire is generally believed to have been the original scribe of *SCC*, interpolations having been made by H at a later period. Best and Bergin make the following assessment of the latter’s impact upon *Lebor na hUidre* as a whole: ‘The

intervention of H is throughout rude and violent. Not only single words and lines, but whole columns and pages have been erased by him, and leaves intercalated, to make way for the particular recensions which he favoured. He set to work with great determination and, it must be said, with no small interest in the texts' (1929, xvi). While Máel Muire's work can be fixed with the help of his colophon, the other scribe is evidently later but more difficult to date. Ó Concheanainn (1974, 284-8) has argued a case for Máel Muire being identified with hand H rather than M, which would date H to c.1100 and make M still earlier. Be that as it may, most scholars concur that H was not long after M. 'Whatever the precise details, it seems probable that the scribal activity of [Lebor na hUidre] fell within a period extending from about the middle of the eleventh to the middle of the twelfth century' (McCone, 2000, 3).

SCC is found on four leaves (43*a*-50*a*) of LU. According to Best (1929, xxxi) the first two leaves of the LU text of *SCC* (p.43-46) are in the hand of the interpolator (H), the remainder, (p. 47-50) being in the hand of M but with certain interpolations by H. Therefore, only pages 47-50 'are written, for the most part, by the original scribe (M), while pp.43-46 are two leaves written and inserted by the interpolator (H), which have been substituted for the old first pages. The extent of this is uncertain...H, however, erased and rewrote some passages from M resulting in some uncertainty regarding how much of the material supplied by [him] is new, or how much he has restored of the text erased by him' (Eng. trans. of Thurneysen, 1921, 413). In terms of the sectioning of Dillon's edition this would mean that H was responsible for §§1-29 and M the remainder apart from a certain amount of interpolation by H. Above the title on folio 43*a* of LU is the heading *Slicht Libair Budi Sláni* 'Version of the Yellow Book of Slane' written in a later hand (Best and Bergin, 1929, xxxi) and indicating that H's text originally may have come from this manuscript. Thus *SCC* is a combination of two versions, one in the hand of M and the other in that of H. H's disruptive effects are especially noticeable in *SCC*, where the two versions are not smoothly joined and we do not have a complete text of either of them. Dillon (1953a, xiii) follows Thurneysen's precedent and refers to M's version as A and H's version as B. 'Thurneysen observed that the language of B is not later than the ninth century, while that of A includes forms which point to the eleventh

century' (Dillon, 1953a, xiii). Thus, although A is the earlier version as far as the compilation of LU is concerned, linguistically it appears to be later than B.

Certain areas of the text are problematical owing to the issue of duplications and discrepancies arising from the compilatory nature of the extant text. There are three instances of this: Eithne Ingubai is referred to as Cú Chulainn's wife in the first part of the tale and Emer is his wife later on, Cú Chulainn's recovery from his *serglige* and his meeting with Lí Ban occur twice (§§12, 13 and 31), as does Lóeg's journey to the otherworld (§§13 and 32), (Dillon, 1953a, ix). A further problem is presented by the *Briathartheosc* episode. Dillon (1941-2, 124-5) discusses the difficulties arising from this excerpt, which does not seem to fit smoothly into the tale. He states: 'Thurneysen points out that the whole passage is written by the interpolator on an inserted leaf, so that the question is whether to regard it as due to the compiler, who would simply have introduced a separate tale here, or as part of B. Thurneysen prefers the latter opinion...Why Thurneysen prefers the B recension here is not clear to me...It seems to be best to regard the *teosc* as a separate tale... inserted here by the compiler who was the interpolator's source'. This episode will be discussed in greater detail as we move through the text. Dillon's conclusions as to the demarcation of the two recensions will be followed. Where differing opinions have been expressed, these will be discussed in relation to the relevant part of the text.

III.1.2. *Serglige Con Culainn* is generally perceived as an *echtrae*. Dillon (1948, 118) lists it as such, his justification being that a journey to the Otherworld is the chief motif; '[t]he hero of the Ulster Cycle is here the hero of an Adventure'. In the introduction to his edition (1953a, ix) he explains: '[t]he story of Cú Chulainn's visit to the Other World has a special claim on our attention, because of its long descriptions of the Irish Elysium, here called *Mag Mell* 'the Plain of Delights''. For him, the main focus is Lóeg's poetry in praise of the Otherworld and the love poetry uttered by Fand when taking her leave of Cú Chulainn. At the same time, however, he recognises that the saga contains certain unusual and appealing episodes such as Cú Chulainn's bestowal of the magic birds on all the women except his wife (§6), and the account of Lóeg's amusing conversation with Lí Ban (§14). Carney (1955, 293) views it 'as a mere jumble of picturesque incidents adapted from earlier literature, and as a whole it has no moral to teach and no consistent

underlying philosophy'. Gantz (1981, 153) also refers primarily to its incoherent nature, citing its conflation of two different versions as a probable cause for this: 'The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn and the Only Jealousy of Emer is one of the more remarkable Irish tales: part myth, part history, part soap opera'.

Carey (1994) discusses *Serglige Con Culainn* within the context of the Ulster Cycle and its part in that tradition. He finds that for the author of Version B 'the *Serglige* was of interest primarily as a story in the Ulster Cycle; and he drew upon other Ulster narratives, in particular the *Táin*, to provide added detail and a more vivid atmosphere...The A author's attitude seems to have been more complex. For him the most interesting parts of the tale were those which dealt with the native Otherworld; and he developed these into a poetic vision of his own, drawing upon other sources in the process' (1994, 84). Ó Cathasaigh (1994) abstracts descriptions of the narrative world from the tale which evince images 'not only of Ulster's heroic past, but also of the Otherworld, and of the conditions necessary for a Golden Age in Ireland' (1994, 87), while also concentrating on what he terms the 'narratorial intrusions' manifested by the mention of demons at the beginning and end of the saga.

Findon (1997, 107) sees this tale as 'one of the most unusual tales in medieval Irish literature... [I]t .. opens a window onto the emotional lives of its female characters. Through the device of a potion of forgetfulness, *The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn*...contrives to tell an anomalous tale within an established tradition without jeopardizing the essential outlines of that tradition'. It may be deduced from these modern critiques that *Serglige Con Culainn* has been generally viewed in a straightforward manner. All acknowledge to some extent that there are unusual elements within the tale, while both Dillon and Findon seem to regard the Otherworld motif as foremost in importance. That said, Findon's critique does not confine itself solely to the roles of Emer and Fand, and she feels that '[w]hile the narrative refers to Cú Chulainn's reputation as the superhuman hero of the tribe...it constantly undermines that reputation' (1997, 116), suggesting that 'some understanding of irony was in operation at least by the eleventh century, if not earlier' (1997, 115). Although some attention will be paid to the role of women in this tale, the main focus here in relation to *SCC* will be Cú Chulainn himself. This is because much of the development of the plot and unfolding of events in

the saga is triggered by his uncharacteristic behaviour. While Findon concentrates particularly on the speeches of Emer and Fand and the role of women's words in the tale, the focus of this chapter is mainly on Cú Chulainn and his reactions. Therefore attention will be paid to these words only where they impinge on the central argument

2. Textual analysis.

III.2.1.1. The saga opens with a description of the prolonged Samain celebrations by the Ulstermen at Mag Muirthemni. These continued for a week: *tri lá samfhuin ocus tri laa iarma ocus lathe na samna feisne; ní rabe isin bith ní dognithe in n-eret sin léu acht cluchi ocus chéti ocus ánius ocus aibinnius ocus longad ocus tomait* (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §1, ll.1-5) 'three days before Samain and three days after it and the day of Samain itself; during that time there was nothing in the world that would be done by them but games and assemblies and pleasure and delight and eating and feasting'. Samain was traditionally considered a time of change; it was the first day of winter as also the first day of the new year. According to Rees and Rees (1961, 89-90) 'a supernatural power breaks through in a most ominous way on November Eve and May Eve, the joints between the two great seasons of the year...Hallowe'en, the Calends of winter, was a solemn and weird festival. The *síd*-mounds were open on this...night, and their inhabitants were abroad in a more real sense than on any other night...At Hallowe'en the elimination of boundaries between the dead and the living...between the present and the future all symbolise the return of chaos'. *Echtrae Nerai* is also set at Samain and its strange connotations are described in the following: *Ba mór iarum a dorchtai na haidci sin, ⁊ a grandatai, ⁊ doaidbitis demnoie ind oidci sin dogrés. No teged gach fer ar huair huaídip immach dia fromud ina haidci sin ⁊ ba hopunn ticced issin tech doridisi* (Meyer, 1889, 214, §2) 'Great was the darkness of that night and its horror, and demons used appear always on that night. Each man of them used go out in turn for his testing that night and it was quickly that he would come back into the house'. Consequently this introduction and setting would signify potential danger and disruption of the norm to the reader. It was a liminal period when contact between the mortal and the otherworldly was possible (Gantz, 1981, 12).

We have thus been introduced to a traditional setting in early Irish literature in *SCC*, which then proceeds to a detailed description of one activity in particular. We are told why Ulstermen met at this time each year: *ba hairi no fertha léu fo bíth tabarta do chách a chomraime ocus a gascid do grés cecha samna* (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §2, ll.8-9) ‘the reason it used always be held by them was on account of the bringing to everyone of his contest and of his valour every Samain’. This gathering was an opportunity for warriors to boast of their battle exploits.

While in *SMMDT* we encountered the motif of head-hunting and the prestige it afforded a warrior, here we have the unusual feature of tongues as trophies: *ba bés léu dano di ág inna comraime ferthain ind óenaig .i. rind aurlabra cech fhir no marbtais do thabairt inna mbossán. Ocus dobertis aurlabrai na cethrae do ilugud na comram hi sudiu* (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §2, ll.9-11) ‘it was a custom with them to hold the assembly for the sake of the contest, that is, to bring in their wallets the tip of the tongue of every man that they used kill and they used to bring the tongues of cattle to increase the contests there’. ‘The use of severed tongues rather than severed heads as proof of heroic exploits is not attested...elsewhere in the early literature’ (Carey, 1994, 78). Not alone are the tongues of the slain publicly exhibited, but we observe that their numbers are bolstered by the non-heroic and presumably deceitful addition of the tongues of animals (*aurlabrai na cethrae*) as well. ‘Clearly any such trick, although perfectly in keeping with the early Irish concept of honour which dictated aggressive boasting to impress the ever-judging audience at all costs, would invalidate the whole contest’ (O’Leary, 1986, 22). This dishonesty is counteracted however: *ar imsoítis a claidib fríu in tan dognítis gúchomram* (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §2, l.15) ‘for their swords used to turn against them when they used to make a false contest’. Justice is thus seen to be invoked when the instruments used in the performance of these acts literally speak for themselves: *deithbir ón, ar no labraitis demna fríu dia n-armaib conid de batir comarchi forro a n-airm* (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §2, ll.16-7) ‘fitting that, for demons used to speak to them from their weapons so that from it their weapons were sureties for them’. A warrior’s sword/spear was an integral part of him, an extension of his arm so to speak, and his reputation largely depended on its reliability.

Borsje (1999, 228-9) refers to a certain resemblance between *SCC* and *Cath Maige Tuired* in terms of their description of ‘living’ or demonic weapons. *Cath Maige Tuired* describes a certain ritual which can be seen as a practical part of warfare i.e. the cleaning of a sword after use: *tofloslaicc Ogma in claideb ocus glanais hé* ‘Ogma unsheathed the sword and cleaned it’ (Gray, 1982, §162, 68, trans. Borsje, 228). We may refer here to Cet’s statement in *SMMDT*: *is mé ro:glan mo goo fodéoid, a Muinremuir* (Thurneysen, 1935, 11, §12) ‘it is I who have at last cleaned my spears’, which also intimates a ritualistic cleaning after battle. This ritual having been performed, *Cath Maige Tuired* then attributes the same power of speech to the weapon as was done in *SCC*: *is and sin roindis an claideb nach ndernad de, ar [ba] béss do claidbib an tan-sin datorsilatis doadhbadis na gnímha dogníthea dib in tan-sin...Is aire immorro nolabraidis demna d’armaib isan aimsir-sin ar noadraddis airm ó daínib isin ré-sin ocus ba do comaircib na haimsire-sin na hairm* ‘then the sword told what had been done by it, because it was the habit of swords at that time to recount the deeds that had been done by them whenever they were unsheathed; now the reason why demons used to speak from weapons then is that weapons used to be worshipped by men and were among the sureties of that time’ (Gray, 1982, §162, 68-9, trans. Borsje, 228-9). Carey (1994, 78) also cites this passage and compares it with §2 of *SCC*, recognizing ‘verbal correspondences ...[which] indicate that the relationship of the two passages is a literary one: either one text drew upon the other...or both took their pagan lore from some other written source’. It is sufficient for present purposes to bear in mind that swords were the hallmark of a warrior and, in these instances, were empowered with speech understood to be that of demons.

III.2.1.2. Dillon (1953a, 30 n.15) refers to a tradition of swearing on swords and Borsje (1999, 227) affirms there are many examples of this in early Irish sagas. Thus we may presume these champions to have prefaced their boasts by taking oaths on their swords. This was a public arena, the *raison d’être* of the *óenach*, and so if false oaths were made it was tantamount to a public humiliation, ‘the most potent social sanction in early Ireland’ (O’Leary, 1986, 17). As their swords represented a supernatural sanction (Borsje, 1999, 225), these warriors were doubly compelled to tell the truth. In suggesting

that those present deceitfully increased their trophies, the author seems to be deliberately casting aspersions on their integrity.

These two introductory paragraphs are significant in that they are written in the imperfect tense. The author thus is at pains to establish a distance between himself and the time of these events. Carey (1994, 77-84) and Borsje (1999, 224-48) have discussed the probable pagan origins of demons and Borsje identifies a different belief system represented by the last two sentences of §2. The first of them relates to events as they used to happen: *ar imsoítis a claidib fríu in tan dognítis gúchomram*. The second is prefaced with a judgement on the first: *deithbir ón*. Borsje (1999, 229) sees here two distinct attitudes consisting of a narrative and a commentary; ‘the commentary both explains and creates a distance. The commentary interprets the cleaning as a tributary ritual performed by people in gratitude for the revelations of a sword...weapons are guarantees for the truth about battle deeds. Weapons know what has been done with them and either they or demons can report that’.

Scowcroft (1995, 127-128) sees the motif of the collecting of tongues as trophies in a metaphorical way. Drawing attention to this particular paragraph, he identifies therein ‘an elaborate web’ which is ‘thematically related’. For example, the web is introduced by *comram* (‘mutual telling?’), then we have *rind aurlabra* meaning ‘point that speaks’, representing the tongue of the slain and *aurlabrai na cethrae* ‘tongues [literally ‘speech-faculties’] of quadrupeds’, which climaxes in a *gúchomram* (false telling/boast). ‘The phrase also echoes and unites the *comram* and *gaisced* that Ulster warriors bring to the *óenach*, the ‘point that testifies’ representing *gaisced* (*rind*) engaged in *comram* (*aurlabrae*)’ (1995, 129). What we have here is truth or justice being enacted by weapons on behalf of heroes. *Rind* is noted by Dillon (1953a, 1, n.1) as a correction in the manuscript and *aurlabrai* is commented upon by him as being remarkable in the sense ‘tongues’ (1953a, 30, n.12) but Scowcroft argues that, when they are taken together, the phrase makes ‘metaphorical sense’ (1995, 128, n.31). He views this passage as literary invention on the part of the author, stipulating that ‘medieval Irish narrative comprises more than a record of ‘history and mythology’- as the result not only of etymological speculation, explicit or implicit, but of figurative language as well’ (p.129).

The fact that tongues as trophies are not attested anywhere else in the literature would seem to strengthen his argument.

III.2.1.3. The motif of *demna* is also found at the conclusion of this tale and, as at the end of §2, the author uses it to distance himself from the preceding related happenings: *conid taibsiu aidmillti do Choin Chulaind la háes sidi sin. Ar ba mór in chumachta demnach ria cretim, ocus ba hé a méid co cathaigtis co corptha na demna frisna doínib ocus co taisféntais aíbniusa ocus díamairi dóib, amal no betis co marthanach. Is amlaid no creteá dóib. Conid frisna taidbsib sin atberat na hanéolaig síde ocus áes síde* (Dillon, 1953a, 29, §49, ll.844-9) ‘so this is the disastrous vision shown to Cú Chulainn by the demons. For the diabolical power was great before the faith, and it was so great that devils used to fight with men in bodily form, and used to show delights and mysteries to them, as though they really existed. So they were believed to be; and ignorant men used to call those visions *síde* and *áes síde*’ (trans. Ó Cathasaigh, 1994, 89). This has been generally viewed by critics as a complete subversion of what has gone before. Ó Cathasaigh (1994, 89) however, sees it as an ‘adroit underpinning of the narrative’, feeling the author wished these illusions to be interpreted as real for those who experienced them at that time. Ó Cathasaigh sees condemnation only in the words *síde* and *áes síde* used to describe these illusions; ‘the *anéolaig* who are accused of perpetrating this usage are presumably the narrator’s less enlightened contemporaries’ (1994, 89), who would quite possibly have been pagans. This passage is reminiscent of the Latin colophon in *LL-Táin* which includes the phrase *praestrigia demonum* (l.4913) ‘diabolical visions’ and reflects the same attitude towards its text as found here (Carey, 1994, 79). This however, was not the only view put forward. ‘The approach of pre-Norman Ireland’s monastic *literati* to supernaturally endowed figures in their *senchus* was varied’ (McCone, 1990, 148) and we only have to cite the passage at the end of *Scél na Fír Flatha* for an opposite view; ‘the ecclesiastical scholars say that every time a wondrous apparition (*taidbse ingnad*) used to be shown to the royal rulers...it was a godly ministration (*timthirecht díada*) and not a devilish ministration (*timthirecht demnach*)’ (McCone, 1990, 149).

III.2.2. Zimmer, Thurneysen and Dillon all concur regarding the first two paragraphs of the saga, taking the first seven lines (§1) to be from the B Version and the next nine lines

(§2) from the A Version (Dillon, 1941-2, 128). Thus both versions are consistent with a Samain setting as one paragraph is interpreted as being parallel to the other, whereas the references to demons are attributed to the A Version. If so, Version A will have been responsible for the inclusion of these references ‘which, even as they undertake to inform the audience concerning the pagan past, characterize it as remote, alien and deluded’ (Carey, 1994, 79). However, although the author of *SCC* endeavours to distance himself from the events just related, and presents them in terms that appear to put them in an unfavourable light, it should become apparent as the saga unfolds that there is not much evidence for them being a manifestation of evil.

§3 has been allotted to the A recension by Dillon, after discussing Thurneysen’s view that it was from B. Uncertainty has arisen due to the fact that Fergus is mentioned as being absent here but is present later on (§9). Thurneysen suggested that Fergus simply arrived later but Dillon points out that Zimmer’s original proposal that §§2 and 3 follow one another logically is probably right, the delay referring to the main event of the contest of tongues in the preceding paragraph: ‘*ní firfider, ol Cú Chulainn, ‘co tí Conall agus Fergus*’ (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §3, l.20) ‘it shall not be held’, said Cú Chulainn, ‘until Conall and Fergus arrive’. The motif of the contest ends abruptly here, not to be mentioned again, and the delay is not resolved - ‘what one is led to expect is of course the delayed arrival of the two heroes, perhaps also an explanation of the delay’ (Salberg, 1992, 167-8). However, if looked at from another angle, this episode highlights the close relationship existing between Cú Chulainn and these two Ulster champions: *fo bíth ba haiti dó Fergus agus ba comalta Conall Cernach* (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §3, l.21) ‘because Fergus was his foster-father and Conall Cernach a foster-brother’ and by implication it serves to demonstrate that Cú Chulainn acted completely alone subsequently, without the guidance and counsel of male intimates of equal status.

III.2.3.1. If §4 is read directly after §1 it makes better sense, as Zimmer observed (Salberg, 1992, 167), and this would then perhaps constitute the beginning of the saga from the B recension. *A mbátar and iarom tairnid énlaithe forsin loch ocaib. Ní bátar i nÉire énlaithe ba chainí* (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §4, ll.24-5) ‘when they were there then a flock of birds comes down upon the lake near them. There were not in Ireland birds more lovely’. We note the use of the historical present in *tairnid* as the author now draws us

into the tale. *Compert Con Culainn* (Van Hamel, 1933, 3, §1) provides us with a little background information regarding such birds in the Ulster Cycle: *ar ba bés leusom forim én* ‘for it was a custom with them the chasing of birds’, because *na gelltis conná fácbatis cid mecnu na féir ná lossa i talam* ‘they used to graze so that they used not to leave roots nor grass nor herbs in the ground’ and so *inlaait noí cairptiu dia tofunn* ‘they yoke nine chariots for their hunting’. Thus Cú Chulainn’s reluctance to chase the birds in *SCC* appears unusual where it is the women who wish for the birds: *én cechtar mo dá gúaland... gabais cách díb immarbáig a mmuin a céli im gabáil na n-én* ‘a bird for each of my shoulders...each of them began a dispute along with the other about seizing the birds’ (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §4, ll.25-7).

‘Birds as ornaments on women’s shoulders do not appear to be attested elsewhere, apart from two related instances in the *Táin*’ (Carey, 1994, 80). The first is as an explanation of the placename *Méde ind Éoin*, where Cú Chulainn killed a bird sitting on Medb’s shoulder (O’Rahilly, 1967, 35, ll.1272-79) and the second is a first recension description of Medb with *dá én óir for a gúalaind* (O’Rahilly, 1976, 97, ll.3206-7) ‘two gold birds on her shoulder’. Conchobar’s wife, Ethne Aitencháithrech, is the first to request a pair of birds for her two shoulders in *SCC*. As she is the wife of the king, it would seem obvious that this request would be acceded to. However, Cú Chulainn’s wife, Ethne Ingubai, wishes to be the first to receive the captured birds: *má gabthair do neoch, is damsa ceta gébthar* (Dillon, 1953a, 1-2, §4, ll.29-30) ‘if they are caught for anyone, it is for me that they shall be caught first’. There seems to be a certain rivalry going on here based on the status of the women’s husbands. Findon (1997, 66): ‘[t]he real dispute seems to be between the wife of the king and the wife of the illustrious hero’.

Gabais cách díb immarbáig a mmuin a céli im gabáil na n-én (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §4, ll.26-7) ‘Each of them began arguing with the other about seizing the birds’ but the phrase *a mmuin a céli* is better translated as ‘on the back/strength of her husband’. O’Leary (1987, 29) views this passage as an ‘identification of a woman’s honour with that of her husband...[when] the wives of the heroes boastfully argue about whose husband will catch [the birds]’. Early Irish law stipulates that a woman is ‘generally without independent legal capacity...her father has charge over her when she is a girl,

her husband when she is a wife...She is not capable of sale or purchase or contract or transaction without the authorization of one of her superiors' (Kelly, 1988, 75-6). Thus the higher the husband's status the more she can share in his glory. While the point about honour may be conceded, there is no evidence in the words of the text that Ethne Aitencháithrech wishes anyone other than Cú Chulainn to seize the birds for her.

III.2.3.2. It is Leborcham, the servant woman, who volunteers to ask Cú Chulainn to grant the women's wishes and restore calm: *rigasa úaib do chuinchid Chon Chulaind* (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §4, ll.32-3) 'I shall go from you to ask Cú Chulainn'. His reaction is impulsive and unwarranted, even if Leborcham is considered of lowly status. In *Talland Étair* she is referred to thus: *mug 7 cumal ro:bátar i tig Chonchobair is sí gein rucad etarru .i. ind ingen Leborcham* 'a slave and a slavewoman who were in Conchobar's house, she is the child who was born to them, namely, the girl Leborcham' (Ó Dónaill, 2005, 46, ll.87-8, trans.55). She is moreover Deirdriu's *confidante* in *Longes Mac n-Uislenn: Is i llis fo leith ro:alt connach:acced fer di Ultaib cosin n-úair no:foad la Conchobar ocus ni:baí duine no:léicthe issin les sin acht a haite-si ocus a mumme ocus dano Leborcham, ar ní:éta gabáil di ssidi ar ba bancháinte* 'In a court apart it is that she was brought up in order that no man of the Ulstermen might see her up to the time that she should spend the night with Conchobar, and no person ever was allowed into that court except her foster father and her foster mother and Leborcham; for the last-mentioned one could not be prevented, for she was a satirist' (Hull, 1949, 45, §6, ll.86-9, trans.62). That being so, her status and reputation might have merited more respect than Cú Chulainn granted. Her role in *Talland Étair* is an important one since she supplies Conchobar with food when the Leinstermen initially defeat him. She later proceeds north to inform the women of Ulster of the plight of their menfolk: 'Conchobar's wife Mugain asks Leborcham whom exactly she has seen. Leborcham begins to list them, telling of the sorry state of some and the prowess of others but ultimately she reassures the women of Ulster that the survivors of the battle are on their way back to Emain Machae in triumph' (Ó Dónaill, 2005, 4 and text 47-8, ll.130-75).

In *SCC* Cú Chulainn seizes his sword to ply it on Leborcham: *atetha a chlaideb do imbirt furri* (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §5, l.35). Another example of Cú Chulainn taking a sword to a woman was in his confrontation with the warrior-woman Scáthach in

Tochmarc Emire: nochtais a chlaideb ém 7 doberar a rind fo chomair a cridi ocus asbert ‘bás úasut’ (Van Hamel, 1933, §71, 52) ‘truly he unsheathed his sword and its point is put against her heart and he said ‘death to you’. This episode illustrates more typical behaviour on the part of the hero where he is in complete control over a woman: ‘he is almost always the victor over women, whether through the aid of a helper or through his own strength and ingenuity’ (Findon, 1997, 181 n.38).

III.2.4. Cú Chulainn’s impatience and disrespect are manifested further when he declares: *ní fogbat merdrecha Ulad a n-aill acht foraim én dóib do thabairt fornd indiu* (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §5, ll.36-7) ‘the whores of Ulster find nothing else to impose on us today but the hunting of birds for them’. If Cú Chulainn’s impatience stems from the delay in proceedings, it was he who dictated the postponement of the assembly against the wishes of the Ulstermen. Senchae, ‘a wise counsellor of Ulster’ (Dillon, 1953a, 92), provided the compromise when he suggested: *imberthar fidchella dún coléic ocus caniter drécha ocus agat clesamnaig* (Dillon, 1953a, 1, §3, ll.22-3) ‘let us play fidchell meanwhile and let songs be sung and let jugglers play’. Thus Cú Chulainn’s bad humour is of his own making and even with this scurrilous attack on the women of Ulster Leborcham remains calm and reasons: *ní cóir duit ém...fúasnad fríu, ár is tríut atá in trís anim fil for mnáib Ulad .i. guille* (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §5, ll.37-8) ‘truly it is not right for you raging upon them, for it is through you that there is the third blemish upon the women of Ulster i.e. blindness in one eye’. The saga continues: *Ar it é téora anmi fil for mnáib Ulad .i. cluine 7 minde 7 guille. Ar cech ben ro charaster Conall Cernach ba cloén, cach ben dano ro charastár Cúscraid Mend Macha mac Conchobair dobered forminde for a erlabrai. Atá samlaid, cech ben ro charastar Conn Culaind no gollad iarom a rosc fo chosmailius Chon Culaind ocus ara sheirc* (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §5, ll.39-44) ‘for the three blemishes which are on the women of Ulster are crookedness, stammering and blindness. For every woman who loved Conall Cernach was crooked. Every woman moreover who loved Cúscraid the Stammerer of Macha, son of Conchobar, used to bring a stammer upon her tongue. Likewise, every woman who loved Cú Chulainn used to blind her eye in resemblance of Cú Chulainn and for love of him’.

There is a similar reference to this curious motif in *Talland Étair*. Scowcroft (1995, 146) makes mention of it in relation to *SCC* and *Talland Étair*: ‘the

guille of Cú Chulainn, the *cloíne* of Conall Cernach and the *minde* of Cúscraid Mend Macha are imitated as a form of flattery by the women who love them'. Talland Étair's version reads: *A trian ro: charsat Conall batis clóin ocot acaldaim. A trian ro:charsat Coin Chulainn batis guill ocot acadlaim. A trian ro:charsat Cúscraid batis mind ocot acallaim* (Ó Dónaill, 2005, 50, ll.215-7). In the LL version of this tale *ocot acaldaim* is written *cotacall-*. Dillon (1953a, 30 n.39) refers to Thurneysen's interpretation of this as 'until they could meet him', and to O'Brien's (ZCP viii 76) expansion to '*cot acallaim* 'when talking to you'. Ó Dónaill (2005, 61) thus adheres to O'Brien's evidently correct interpretation and translates the above: 'The third that loved Conall were crooked when talking to you. The third that loved Cú Chulainn were purblind when talking to you. The third that loved Cúscraid stammered when talking to you'. It thus appears that we are not meant to interpret these blemishes as permanent. Rather they are passing imitations. There is, however, a subtle difference in the wording of *SCC*, where we are informed that the women are crooked, stammering and blind, the author's use of the verbs *do:bered* and *no gollad* indicating self-mutilation. Leborcham's words are also clear: *ar is triut atá in tres anim fil for mnáib Ulad .i. guile*, and her use of *anim* (blemish) intimates a permanent disfigurement. It appears that the author would have us believe the unlikely scenario of women injuring themselves permanently and deliberately for love of these heroes.

In relation to Cú Chulainn, this blindness mimics an instance when he undergoes *ríastrad*; in other words when he is in danger of going out of control. The author of *SCC* then cites the actual process by which he attains this deformity: *ar bá dán dósom in tan ba n-olc a menma no slocad indala súil conná roched corr inna chind. Dotéirged indala n-ai immach comméit chori cholbthaigi* (Dillon, 1953a, 6, §5, l.44-6) 'for it was a gift of his when in a bad frame of mind he used to swallow one eye so that a crane could not reach it in his head. The other one used come out as large as a cauldron (capable) of (holding) a heifer'. This also calls to mind the association of the cyclops with warrior activity: 'the martial connotation of the cyclops is provided by the warrior hero *par excellence*...Cú Chulainn, who undergoes *ríastrad*' (McCone, 1996, 99). Thus the women of Ulster love Cú Chulainn and wish to flatter him by appearing like him when in a bad mood. While this apparent self-maiming by the women is an accepted motif in the

Ulster Cycle, the author may be seen to use it here very much as a back-handed compliment when Cú Chulainn's behaviour in *SCC* is taken into account.

The irony deepens if the grounds for this motif in *Talland Étair* are considered: *La sodain fo:ceird Cú Chulainn bedg immach. Roínti in slúag inna ndeud. Fechair cath and fo chétóir. Trom immurgu in gress ro:lásat. Cródae co-n-id:apbad, amnas a mbúrach ro:fhersat in churaid 7 ind láith gaile. Con:acabtha trá in di urgail ó theirt co nónai. Maidid iarum for Laigniu co:turgabsat múr nderg fri Ultu* 'With that Cú Chulainn springs forth. He routs the host from behind them. A battle is fought there at once. Severe indeed was the attack they had raged. Bloody until it ended, cruel was the rage which the heroes and the warriors gave forth. The two lines of battle were maintained, then, from terce to nones. The Leinstermen are defeated, so that they raised a red wall against the Ulstermen' (Ó Dónaill, 2005, 46, ll.108-11, trans. 56). In this text Cú Chulainn has been instrumental in the Ulstermen's defeat of the Leinstermen thereby meriting the adulation of the women of Ulster. In *SCC*, however, no apparent justification is given for such flattery of the hero except, arguably, his reputation alone.

Talland Étair contains the following description of Leborcham: *ba dochrud danó a delb inna ingine .i. a di thraigid 7 a da nglún inna deud, a di escait 7 a di sháil remi* 'the girl's figure was misshapen, moreover, that is her two feet and her two knees behind her, her two haunches and her two heels were before her' (Ó Dónaill, 2005, 46, ll.88-9, trans. 55). Mugain addresses her *a ingen a lúath, a láeb* 'o girl, o swift one, o crooked one' (Ó Dónaill, 2005, 47, l.130). Leborcham's description above bears a striking resemblance to an aspect of Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*: *is and so cétríastartha im Choin Culaind co nderna úathbásach n-ílrechtach n-ingantach n-anaichnid de...Táncatár a t[h]raigthe 7 a luirgne 7 a glúne co mbátár dá éis. Táncatár a shála 7 a orcni 7 a escata co mbátár ríam remi* 'then a great distortion came upon Cú Chulainn so that he became horrible, many-shaped, strange and unrecognizable...His feet and his shins and his knees came to the back; his heels and his calves and his hams came to the front' (O'Rahilly, 1976, 68, ll.2245-2251, trans.187). The important difference between Leborcham and Cú Chulainn, however, is that she is permanently deformed, while his distortion is temporary and occurs only under extreme conditions.

If we again compare this motif in the two tales we note that *Talland Étair* stipulates firstly that it is the heroes who are blemished: *Ar ro:báatar téora ainmea la Ultu .i. Conall Clóen 7 Cú Chulainn Goll 7 Cúscraid Mend* ‘For the Ulstermen had three blemished ones, namely, Conall the Crooked and Cú Chulainn the Purblind and Stammering Cúscraid’ (Ó Dónaill, 2005, 1.212-14, 142 tr.60). Turning to *SCC* it is the women who are initially described as blemished: *téora anmi fil for mnáib Ulad*, ‘three blemishes which are upon the women of Ulster’. Thus our first image in this episode is of permanently disfigured women. Leborcham, being permanently deformed, represents the women as also being permanently disfigured. Thus the author of *SCC* wishes to emphasise the blemished appearance of the women and is surely ridiculing these women for being so foolish. Their resulting unattractiveness perhaps also suggests that the heroes whom they favour were not attractive either, in Cú Chulainn’s case at least when undergoing *ríastrad*.

III.2.5. §6, however, sees Cú Chulainn complying with Leborcham’s wishes and ordering Lóeg to yoke up his chariot in order to catch the birds. Then *ataig táithbéim dia chलाईub dóib co ruiletar a mbossa ocus a n-eti dind usciu* (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §6, ll.48-50) ‘he struck them a stunning shot of his sword so that their claws and their wings adhered to the water’. When it comes to dividing up the birds, his wife is left until last and there are none left to give her: *conná rabi ben nád ríssed dá én diib acht Ethne Ingubai a hóenur* (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §6, ll.51-2) ‘so that there was not a woman who did not receive two birds but Ethne Ingubai alone’. Having wished to be granted the honour of receiving them first, Ethne reacts to this outcome in a manner that must be seen as gracious in the extreme. Cú Chulainn presumes she is angry: ‘*is olc do menma*’, *ol Cú Chulaind fria*. ‘*Ní holc...úair is úaim fodailter dóib. Is dethbir dait...ní fil diib mnaí náchit charad no ná beth cuít dait. Úair mád messi, ní fil cuít do nách ailiu innuimsa acht duitsiu th’óenur*’ (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §6, ll.53-6) ‘you are in a bad temper’ he said to her. ‘It is not bad...because it is from me they are distributed to them. It is fitting for you. There is not of them a woman who would not love you or have a part for you. But as for myself, there is not a part in me for any other but for you alone’. It is as if Ethne has gallantly foregone her prior claim and recognised her position as the wife of the much-desired hero of Ulster. There may also be an implied reproach here regarding his easy attractiveness to

women in comparison to her steadfast and singular love for him. O’Leary (1987, 29) looks at this incident from the perspective of honour, where Ethne Ingubai again identifies herself as holding the same position as Cú Chulainn. Thus she sees herself in the prestigious position of also being the distributor. However, her seeming unselfishness is lost on Cú Chulainn, as his reply makes clear: ‘*Nábad olc do menma trá...día tísat éoin Mag Murthemni nó Bóind, in dá én ba háildem díb duticfat*’ (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §6, ll.56-8) ‘Let your temper be not bad then,...if birds come to Mag Murthemne or to the Boyne, the two most beautiful birds will come to you’.

III.2.6. At this juncture it may be pertinent to discuss the two names given to Cú Chulainn’s wife in this tale, namely Ethne Ingubai and Emer. Although we have not reached the part of the tale where Ethne gives way to Emer, nevertheless it is the B Version which refers to her as Ethne Ingubai, although there is one single allusion to a woman of this name in the A Version (Dillon, 1953a, 20, ll.575-6) ‘in a quatrain where elision confirms that her epithet is not *Ingubai* as generally printed, but *in Gubai* ‘of the lament’ with unstressed article:

Atchonnarc in cnoc ro buí
Álaid-ben Eithne in Gubai;

‘I saw the hill where there was a beautiful woman, Ethne of the lament’ (Carey, 1995a, 160). It is further stated that in a Middle-Irish description of Conchobar’s household (*Scéla Conchobair maic Nessa*) Ethne Ingubai appears as Cú Chulainn’s aunt, a sister of Sualtam and wife of Elcmar. ‘The link with Elcmaire and with the *síde* suggests an identification of Eithne in Gubai with the goddess Bóand. Although generally portrayed as the wife of Nechtan, Bóand appears in *Tochmarc Étaíne* as the wife of Elcmaire, and Eithne is given there as her principal name’ (Carey, 1995a, 160-1). Carey thus sees grounds for believing that this Ethne was ‘deeply rooted in the mythology of the Boyne landscape’ (1995a, 163) and, as Cú Chulainn has just mentioned the Boyne as the next probable spot where the birds may be caught (and these turn out to be from the Otherworld), this link is not without attraction. The reason why the B Version should have Ethne Ingubai as Cú Chulainn’s wife eludes us, however. Carey (1995a, 163) suggests this author was merely transmitting what he had already found in his source

while pointing out that ‘Cú Chulainn’s marriage to Eithne may be compared with the tradition that the hero carried on an affair with Feidelm Fholtchain, another of Elcmaire’s wives’ (Carey, 1995a, 163). Be that as it may, the epithet *in Gubai* ‘of the lament’ seems appropriate for the wife of Cú Chulainn in the unenviable position in which she finds herself in *SCC*, namely of having to witness her husband’s love for another woman.

III.2.7.1. In §7 Cú Chulainn gets his opportunity to fulfil his promise to Ethne: *níbo chian iarom co n-accatar dá én forsind loch ocus rond dercóir etorro* (Dillon, 1953a, 2, §7, ll.59-60) ‘it was not long then until they saw two birds upon the lake and a gold chain between them’. Their song put the host to sleep. Differences in detail from the previous birds indicate that these birds were from the Otherworld and music which lulls the listener to sleep also indicates magical qualities. *Immram Brain* contains a similar motif: *Imluid Bran laa n-and a óinur i comocus dia dún, cocúala a ceól iarna chúl...Contuil asendath frissa ceól ar a bindi* (Meyer, 1895, 2-3, §2) ‘One day, in the neighbourhood of his fort, Bran went about alone, when he heard music behind him...At last he fell asleep at the music, such was its sweetness’. *Aislinge Óenguso* has a bird motif which indicates otherworldly association. When Ailill asks what special power Cáer Ibormeith possesses, he is told: *blíid i ndeíl b éuin cach la bliadnai, in mbliadnai n- aili i ndeíl duini* (Shaw, 1976, §12, 59) ‘she is in the form of a bird every day of the year. The next year she is in human form’. On the lake, albeit in human form, Cáer Ibormeith stands out from her silver-chained companions as she is described thus: *muince airgdide imma brágait fadisín ⁊ slabrad di ór fhorloiscethiu* (Shaw, 1976, §8, 54) ‘she herself had a silver necklace around her throat and a chain of burnished gold’.

Compert Con Culainn (Van Hamel, 1933, 3, §2) also describes the appearance of strange birds: *ba hálaind ocus ba cain in t-énlorg ocus in t-énamer boi leu. Noí fichit én dóib, rond argit eter cach dá én* ‘the birdflock and their bird-song are beautiful and fair. Nine score there were of them, a silver chain between each pair of birds’. These birds were instrumental in the events leading up to the birth of Cú Chulainn himself. *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* contains a similar motif where Conaire seeks to catch strange birds which seemed to be always out of reach: *no téigtis fot n-ahurchara riam ocus ní théigtis ní bud shíre* (Knott, 1936, 5, ll.138-9) ‘they used ever go the length of a cast and they used not go anything that would be further’. In this instance Conaire thus fails to

cast at them and one of them reveals his true identity to him: *is mise Nemglan, rí énlaihi do athar ocus ar-garad dít díbrugud én ar ní fuil sund neach napad dír dait ó a athair nó máthair* (Knott, 1936, 5, ll.145-7) ‘I am Nemglan, king of your father’s birds, and it was forbidden to you to cast at birds since there is not here anyone who is not related to you from his father or mother’. In other words, by virtue of his supernatural birth, Conaire has kinship with these birds. Although Cú Chulainn’s father did not appear as a bird, his failure to recognise these birds as otherworldly seems strange under the circumstances, given his own supernatural affiliations. Ó Cathasaigh refers to both Conaire and Cú Chulainn in the following statement: ‘[t]he hero...is at once the son of a god and of a human father; he is mortal and he lives out his life among men, but otherworld personages intervene at crucial moments of his life’ (1985, 80).

III.2.7.2. Cú Chulainn is, however, warned about the birds by Ethne, an Otherworld personage herself if we accept Carey’s theory. *‘Dia coistithe frim’ ol Ethne, ‘ní rigtha chucu, ar itá nách cumachta for a cúl na n-én sa. Atethatár éoin damsa chena’* (Dillon, 1953a, 2-3, §7, ll.61-3) ‘If you would listen to me’ said Ethne, ‘you would not go to them, for there is some power behind these birds. Birds can be caught for me besides’. Here again we witness Ethne’s unselfish nature in rescinding her previous request, reasoning that there will be other opportunities. By contrast, Cú Chulainn turns on her in an aggressive fashion, demanding: *‘In dóig ba dom éligudsa ón?’* (Dillon, 1953a, 2-3, §7, ll.61-3) ‘Is it likely that was for denying me?’ (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §7, l.63). For a second time Cú Chulainn has failed to appreciate Ethne’s finer feelings and the concern she manifests for him. All he seems to understand is that she must think he cannot catch them. Her anxiety is answered by his order to Lóeg to put a stone in his sling for him. He acts as if his masculinity is under threat and in this bullish frame of mind he fails to hit the birds not once but twice, concluding *‘Am trúsa trá!’* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §7, l.67) ‘I am a doomed man, indeed!’ He continues: *‘ó gabussa gaisced níro lá imroll mo urchur cussindíu’* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §7, ll.67-8) ‘since I took up arms, my shot has not missed its mark until today’. His third attempt only succeeds in part: *fochairt a chroisig forro co lluid tré sciath n-ete indala héoin la sodain* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §7, ll.68-9) ‘he threw his spear at them, then, so that it went through the wing of one of the birds thereupon’. The

picture thus portrayed of Cú Chulainn contradicts that of similar situations in other sagas as witnessed by Cú Chulainn's own statement.

In his *Macgnímrada* Cú Chulainn demonstrates his wondrous skill in catching birds: *Lát[h]raid Cú iarom cloich mbic forna heónu co mbí ocht n-eónu díb. Inlúa afrithisi cloich móir, co mbí dá én déc díib. Tria tháithbemmend trá insin uli* 'Cú Chulainn threw a small stone at the birds and brought down eight of them. Again he threw a big stone and struck twelve of them. All of this was done by his 'return-stroke'' (O'Rahilly, 1976, 24, ll.785-8, trans. 147). *Tochmarc Emire* provides us with another example of Cú Chulainn attacking birds. Having refused the offer of Derbforgaill's hand from her father king Rúad as reward for his defence of her against the Fomorians, the hero arranged to meet her instead after a year. But when he went to the appointed place all they saw were two birds on the water: *atchiat dá n-én forsin muir. Dobert Cú Chulainn cloich ina thailm ocus nos díbraic na héonu. Rethit ind fir cucu iar mbéim indara éoin díb* (Van Hamel, 1933, 62, §84) 'They see two birds on the sea. Cú Chulainn put a stone in his sling and cast at the birds. The men ran to them then after his striking of one of the birds'. Here again Cú Chulainn fails to recognise the true identity of these birds. *Ó ráncatar íat, is ed bátar and dá bandeilb is caimiu baí forsin mbith. Is ed baí and Derbforgaill ingen Rúaid ocus a hinailt* (Van Hamel, 1933, 62, §84) 'When they came to them what was there were the two most beautiful forms in the world. What was there was Derbforgaill, daughter of Rúad and her nurse. Derbforgaill complains to him: *is olc in gním dorónais...is dot insaigid táncamar, cía ron cráidis* (Van Hamel, 1933, 62, §84) 'it is a bad deed you have done...it is to meet you that we came, although you have violated us'. His effort at making amends was to suck the stone out of Derbforgaill's wound. Accordingly, one may surmise that normally Cú Chulainn has no difficulty in catching birds. When he misses, this generally means he has failed to recognise them as messengers from the Otherworld on a mission of peace.

III.2.8.1. The birds having moved out of reach in *SCC*, *lotair foa lind* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §7, l.70) 'they went down into the pool'. Cú Chulainn takes himself off to sit against a pillar-stone. Sleep overcame him: *dofuit cotlud fair* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §8, l.72). We then understand him to experience a dream or vision, as later in the text (§12, l.123) he refers to it himself as an *aislinge*. *Co n-accai in dá mnaí cucai. Indala n-aí brat úaine impe.*

Alaili brat corcra cóicdiabail im shude (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §8, ll.72-4) ‘He saw two women come to him. One of them had a green cloak around her. The other had a purple five-folded cloak around her’. These women did not speak to him but smiled and then proceeded to beat him: *Ocus bátar fri ciana móir oca sin.i.cechtar dé imma sech cucai béus dia búalad combo marb acht bec* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §8, ll.76-8) ‘And they were a long while at this i.e. each one of them in turn for his beating so that he was nearly dead’. Structurally, then, the first part of this episode presents the women asking Cú Chulainn for the birds and being threatened with violence by him before he is induced to get the birds. The second part sees him seek to catch the birds despite his wife’s statement that she does not want them and warning to him of the danger in so doing. He subsequently fails to catch the birds and is then subjected to violence by two women. It may be suggested that these women were Lí Ban and Fand who first manifested themselves as birds, much as Derbforgaill and her maid initially manifested themselves in *Tochmarc Emire*. Since, however, that visitation had gone awry in *SCC* as a result of Cú Chulainn’s failure to recognise the birds as otherworld messengers, the women come to Cú Chulainn again in this vision and beat him as punishment for his initial treatment of them. Cú Chulainn neither recognised these birds as Otherworld creatures nor took heed of Ethne’s warning. In *LU* and *H.2.44* this warning is uttered by both Ethne and Lóeg, but Dillon (1953a, 2, n.1) omits *or Láeg* in his edition stating it is obviously an error due to the context. However, there is no good reason why *or Láeg ocus ol Ethne* should not stand as it accentuates Cú Chulainn’s refusal to accept advice and his order directly afterwards to Lóeg to prepare his sling for him illustrates the disdain in which he held such advice: ‘*Gaibsi cloich isin tailm, a Loíg*’. *Geibthi Lóeg iarom cloich ocus dobeir isin tailm* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §7, ll.64-5) ‘Take a stone in the sling, Lóeg’. Lóeg then took a stone and placed it in the sling’.

III.2.8.2. §9 sees the re-emergence of Fergus, who takes control of the situation and orders the Ulstermen not to disturb Cú Chulainn’s sleep. With that he woke up but was unable to speak (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §9, ll.81-2) *níro fét iarom a n-accallaim*. This, therefore, is another facet of his punishment, and *berair ass iarom co mboí co cend mbliadna isin magin sin cen labrad fri nech etir* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §9, ll.85-6) ‘he was carried away then so that for a full year he was in that place without speaking to anyone

at all'. Within this section we have one of the contradictions mentioned by Dillon (1953a, ix) in his introduction. Although we are first told that Cú Chulainn is unable to speak, the next few sentences (ll.82-85) have him ask to be brought to In Tête Brecc: *nom berar dom shergligu .i. don Tėti Bricc* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §9, ll.82-3) 'let me be carried to my sick-bed, that is, In Tête Brecc'. When Lóg suggests he be taken to Emer in Dún Delca, he answers him firmly: *Aicc! Mo breith don Tėti Bric* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §9, ll.82-84) 'No! Take me to In Tête Brecc'. This is also the first instance of Cú Chulainn's wife being called Emer, and so we may ascribe this to the A recension with Zimmer, Thurneysen and Dillon (1941-2, 122, n.4).

III.2.9.1. In §10 Cú Chulainn's wife, Ethne Ingubai, is standing by him along with Fergus, Conall Cernach and Lugaid Réoderg, when they receive a visitation. *Tánic fer chucu isa tech ocus dessed forsind airiniuch na imdai i mboí Cú Chulaind* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, §10, ll.90-1) 'A man came to them into the house and sat upon the side of the couch where Cú Chulainn was'. He flatters the hero by remarking that in his health he would be a surety against all Ulster but now he has no fear of the Ulstermen for *inid i lobrai ocus i n-ingás dano atá, is móo de as chomairche airthiu* (Dillon, 1953a, 4, §10, ll.94-5) 'when it is in weakness and sickness that he is, he is more a surety against them'. Dillon notes *ingás* as meaning 'sickness from wounds' (1953a, 31, n.94). The visitor proceeds to address Cú Chulainn in verse, promising him his sickness will not last long once he accepts an invitation to the place seen in his vision. He speaks of Lí Ban and the daughters of Áed Abrat, who would heal him if he were present. He also reveals the wish of one of the latter, Fand:

Robad chridiscél la Faind

Coibligi fri Coin Culaind (Dillon, 1953a, 4, §11, ll.105-6)

'It would be Fand's heart's desire to be lying with Cú Chulainn'. This visit is but a preliminary meeting, as Lí Ban is to come herself and speak with Cú Chulainn on the night of Samain. It must be noted here that no mention is made yet of helping Labraid against his enemies. Rather, besides the love of Fand, Cú Chulainn is to be enticed by a standard description of the Otherworld itself:

robad inmain lá mád fír
ricfed Cú Chulaind mo thír:
r-a mbíad arcat ocus ór,
ro mbíad mór fina do ól (Dillon, 1953a, 4, §11, ll.107-10)

‘It would be a charming day if it were true, that Cú Chulainn would come to my country: he would have silver and gold, he would have much wine to drink’. Bran is informed of *móini, dússi cach datho...ool fino óingrindi, carpait órdi ...carpait arggait /ocus crédumi cen on* (Meyer, 1895, §13-14, 8-9) ‘wealth, treasures of every hue...drinking the best of wine...chariots of gold...(and) chariots of silver and of bronze without blemish’ by his Otherworld visitor. Nerae was impressed by his visit to the Otherworld, stating on his return: ‘*Roua a tírib cáinib, co sétuib ocus muinib móruib, co nn-imboth bruit ocus biid ocus sét n-ingnad* (Meyer, 1889, 224) ‘I was in fair lands with great treasures and precious things, with plenty of garments and food and of wonderful treasures’. The man reveals that he is Óengus son of Áed Abrat and therefore brother to both Lí Ban and Fand. His visit had the effect of restoring Cú Chulainn’s speech, for after Óengus left: *atraig Cú Chulaind ina shudi iarom ocus labrais iar sin* (Dillon, 1953a, 4, §12, l.121) ‘he then sat up and spoke after that’.

III.2.9.2. The saga now takes on the character of an *echtrae* proper, with the motif of the Otherworld being introduced. Tales in this category include *Echtrae Chonnlai*, *Immram Brain* (also called *Echtrae Brain Maic Fheabail*) and *Echtrae Láegairi*. All share certain characteristics with *SCC*. In each of them a visitor arrives from the Otherworld, whether he/she be in human or birdlike form, his/her presence is made known by a strange phenomenon. In *Echtrae Chonnlai* the woman was only visible to Connlae, in *Echtrae Láegairi* the man came out of a mist, and in *Immram Brain* and *SCC* beautiful music was heard. The messengers in *Echtrae Chonnlai* and *Immram Brain* are both women, but the visit is made by a man in *Echtrae Láegairi*. While Connlae is revisited a month later by the woman before he makes up his mind in *Echtrae Chonnlai*, Bran responds without delay to the woman’s appeal and there is no significant time-lapse in the case of *Immram Brain*. Láegaire makes his decision immediately to follow Fíachnae. *SCC* also contains certain elements of an *immram*, echoing *Immram Brain*. The Otherworld is generally

represented as ‘a country where there is neither sickness nor age nor death, where happiness lasts forever and there is no satiety; where food and drink do not diminish when consumed; where to wish for something is to possess it’ (Dillon, 1948, 101). *Echtrae Chonnlai* is regarded as the earliest extant *echtrae* (McCone, 1990, 79) and Carney (1955, 280-295) has argued persuasively that *Echtrae Chonnlai* and *Immram Brain* are Christian allegories, although their messages are manifested in different ways. ‘The Christian inspiration and message of *Echtrae Chonnlai* is palpable’ (McCone, 2000, 105) and ‘[a] superficially similar narrative framework up to the beginning of the voyage is exploited by the author(s) of *Echtrae Chonnlai* and *Immram Brain* in order to highlight fundamental differences in their heroes’ attitude, experience and behaviour’ (McCone, 2000, 111). This difference in attitude is nevertheless geared to a similar Christian message (McCone, 2000, 109-19). However, no such claims have been made for either *SCC* or *Echtrae Láegairi*.

III.2.10. Both Dillon (1948, 116) and Carney (1955, 295) mention *Echtrae Láegairi* as having much in common with *SCC*. This tale is found in the Book of Leinster and has been edited by Jackson (1942), who dates the language of the prose parts to the ninth century: ‘[t]he neuter article is still fully preserved...(and) the superlative *-em* still exists’, while ‘with the verse the situation is different. Here one is already on the threshold of the Middle Irish period,...[t]his would mean that the story was originally composed without the poems, which were added afterwards’ (Jackson, 1942, 378-9). Be that as it may, the principal motif is of someone coming from the Otherworld to request help from a mortal to fight his enemies, the love of a woman then being given as a reward. Láegaire chooses to remain in Mag Mell and forsakes his mortal life as the son of the king of Connacht (Crimthann Cass) in return for the shared kingship of the fairy mound with Fíachnae mac Rétach. Here we have an echo of *Echtrae Chonnlai* where the hero also chooses to quit his mortal life for that of the Otherworld. Láegaire’s final words to his father are:

oín adaig d’aidchib síde

ní thibér ar do ríge (Jackson, 1942, 386, ll.126-7, trans. 387)

‘one night of the fairy nights I will not exchange for your kingdom’. The tale opens at Birdlake in *Mag Aí: oc Énloch for Maig Aí* (Jackson, 1942, 1, 1.380), where the Connachtmen were holding an assembly. Through the mist a man was seen coming towards them. *Bratt corcra cóicdiabulta imbi. Da shleig cóicrinni i n-a láim. Sciath co mbuali óir fair. Claideb órduirn for a chriss. A mong órbuide dar a aiss* ‘A purple five-folded cloak about him; two five-pointed javelins in his hand; a shield with a rim of gold on him; a gold-hilted sword at his belt; his golden-yellow hair down his back’ (Jackson, 1942, 380, ll.4-6 trans. 381). Thus far both tales display a certain amount of similarities but the chief difference at this point is the manner in which the Otherworld visits are received. In *Echtrae Láegairi*, Fiachnae is welcomed by Láegaire, who is given the epithet ‘Lí Ban’. Jackson notes this correspondence to *SCC*: ‘The name occurs in various tales, e.g. *Serglige Conculaind*, as that of a fairy, ‘Brightness of Woman’. Of a man, it must mean rather ‘Delight of Women’ (Jackson, 1942, 386, note on 1.7). Láegaire says: *Fochen don laech nad athgénamar* ‘Welcome to the warrior whom we do not know’ (Jackson, 1942, 380, 1.8, trans. 381), the hitherto unknown visitor being a common motif of *echtraí* in general. As Fiachnae asks for help in fighting Goll son of Dolb, he recites a poem describing the beauties of his world and what is there for the person who gives him assistance. With that he turns away and Láegaire declares: *mebol dúib ...cen chobair ind fhir ut. Fo-n-ópair-side coecait láech in-a diaid* ‘shame on you not to help yonder man. With fifty warriors he makes for him in his wake’ (Jackson, 1942, 382, ll.64-5, trans. 383). Thus Láegaire’s immediate reaction implies his readiness to come to Fiachnae’s aid.

III.2.11.1. After the departure of Óengus, Cú Chulainn then proceeds to tell the company about the vision (*aislinge*) which he had the previous Samain and turns to Conchobar for advice: ‘*Cid dogéntar di shudiu, a phopa Chonchobair?*’ (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §12, ll.124-5) ‘What shall be done regarding this, papa Conchobar’. Conchobar replies that he should go back to the same pillar-stone where he experienced the vision. Thus Cú Chulainn returned there and saw the green-cloaked woman approach him *co n-accai in mnaí bruit úani chucai* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.127-8). She is pleased he has come, saying: *maith sin, a Chú Chulainn* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, 1.128) ‘that is good, Cú Chulainn’. He, however, is not so pleased to see her: *ní maith dún ém cid for túrusi chucund innuraid*

(Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.129) ‘not good for us indeed your journey to us last year’. Before she may relate her message she must allay his fears about a repeat beating: ‘*ní du for fogail ém*’, *ol sí ‘dodeochammárni, acht is do chuinchid for caratraid’* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.130-1) ‘it is not for your injuring that we have come, but for the seeking of your friendship’. The woman introduces herself as Lí Ban, wife of Labraid Lúathlám ar claideb, and says she has been sent by Fand, since: *ros léci Manandán mac Lir ocus dorat seirc duitsiu iarom* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.132-3) ‘Manannán mac Lir has abandoned her and she has given her love to you’. She then goes on: *timarnad duit iarom óm chéliú...dobéra deit in mnaí ar debaid n-óenlaí leis fri Senach Síaborthe ocus fri Echdaig nÍuil ocus fri Éogan nInbir* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.134-6) ‘a message has been sent to you from my husband ...he will give the woman to you for one day’s fighting with him against Senach Síaborthe and Eochaid Íuil and Éogan Inbir’. Cú Chulainn has thus been given two reasons for accepting an invitation to the Otherworld. Lí Ban has proposed another important reason which should appeal to the warrior spirit in the hero. Cú Chulainn’s response, however, is unenthusiastic: *nímtha maith ém..do chath fri firu indiu* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.136-7) ‘it is not good for me to fight against men today’. Lí Ban reassures him that this lethargy will not last and tries yet again to persuade him to make the journey: *is dénta dait ar Labraid aní sin, ar is é láech as dech di ócaib domain* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.139-40) ‘this thing you should do for Labraid, for he is the best of the world’s warriors’. Having been told that Labraid dwells in Mag Mell, Cú Chulainn agrees to let Láeg travel there with Lí Ban to investigate: *d’fhis in tíri asa tudchad* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.142) ‘for the finding out of the country from which you have come’.

III.2.11.2. Comparing this response with that of *Echtrae Láegairi* we note the speed with which Láegaire hastens to the aid of Fíachnae without any added pressure to do so. Also, although he receives the love of Fíachnae’s daughter as reward, this inducement was not mentioned when Fíachnae came to Láegaire: *do chungid chobartha iarum do-dechad-sa; ocus do-bér urrann argait ocus urrann óir da gach aoin fher diaid áil do chinn techta lem* ‘to ask for help, then, have I come; and I will give a payment of silver and a payment of gold to every single man who desires it, in return for going with me’ (Jackson, 1942, 380, ll.15-6, trans. 381). There is, however, a love element present in the fact that

Fíachnae is conducting this battle to get his wife back after she was abducted by Eochaid mac Sáil. Thus, in one tale we have the abduction, in the other the abandonment of a woman.

III.2.12.1. §14 is described as a ‘humorous account of Láeg’s conversation with Lí Ban’ (Dillon, 1953a, ix). Lí Ban is not unduly keen on Láeg as substitute for Cú Chulainn for, as a charioteer, he is a mere menial. Fer Loga’s actions at the end of *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* provide him with a surprising but ‘temporary elevation to the status of a warrior of note’ (McCone, 1984a, 11), but the final line of the saga stipulates: *ocus ro:lécéd Fer Loga dar Áth Lúain síar dia bliadna ocus dí gabair Conchobair leis co n-allaib óir friu* (Thurneysen, 1935, 20, §20) ‘and Fer Loga was sent westward past Athlone a year to the day and two of Conchobar’s horse with him with gold bridles on them’. Thus Fer Loga is seen to return to his menial role of charioteer in the closing sentence, suggesting things are once again back to normal. Lí Ban proceeds to treat Lóeg as an underling: *geibthi ar gúalaind. ‘Ní raga ass trá, ...indíu i mbethu, acht manit ainge ben’* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §14, ll.145-6) ‘she grabbed him by the shoulder. ‘You will not go out of here today alive unless you have a woman’s protection’’. This little exchange displays an extraordinary inversion of gender roles with regard to protection. ‘An important principle of Irish law is the right of a freeman to provide legal protection ...to another person of equal or lower rank’ (Kelly, 1988, 140). Thus Lóeg is not too happy with a protection that equates him with or places him lower than a woman. His reply uses the legally recognisable term for protection *comairce* (Kelly, 1988, 307) and demonstrates his unease with his new role: *níbo ed as mó ro gnáthaigsem dún custráthsa...banchomarchi* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §14, ll.147-8) ‘a woman’s protection is not that which we have been accustomed up to now’. The use of the 1st person plural seems to suggest he speaks here for both himself and Cú Chulainn, who feel out of their depth with regard to the recent turn of events. Lóeg’s lack of enthusiasm prompts Lí Ban to state ruefully: *appraind ocus bith appraind nach hé Cú Chulaind fil it richt indossa* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §14, ll.148-9) ‘it is a pity and a lasting pity that it is not Cú Chulainn who is in your place now’. Lóeg’s ironic retort reveals he is aware that he has been thrust into this role by Cú Chulainn: *bád maith limsa dano combad hé no beth and* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §14, ll.149-50) ‘I should like it, moreover, if it were he who would be here’.

III.2.12.2. We may here consider the situation in *Echtrae Fergusa maic Léti* (Binchy, 1952, 33-48) when Fergus’s protection of Eochu Béalbuide was violated by his killing by Asal, son of Conn Cétchathach and the four sons of Buide mac Ainmirech. *Et doget snáduth Fergusa ime 7 a muintir. Siacht Fergus co sluagaib a díguin. Dobreth iarum a riar dó 7 roictha fris .iii. .iii. cumal .i. cumal do or 7 argat 7 tír .iii. cumal tír Cuinn Cétcoraig...7 duine cam do fognam .i. Dornn ingen Buidhi .i. siur do macaib Buidhe ditngegnatar* ‘And Fergus’s protection was violated by the slaying of him and his followers. Fergus came with armies to avenge the violation. Eventually his own terms were given to him, and there were paid to him thrice seven *cumals*, the land of Conn Cétchorach...and a human *cumal* (bondwoman) to serve him, to wit Dorn daughter of Buide, a sister of Buide’s sons who had violated his (Fergus’s) protection (Binchy, 1952, 37, §3, trans. 40). If the mighty Fergus’s protection could be violated, then presumably the woman Lí Ban’s could also. Lóeg’s concern for his own safety, dependent as it is on a female’s protection, is understandable.

III.2.13.1. Nevertheless Lóeg headed off with Lí Ban until they came alongside the island: *co ráncatar tóeb na indse* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §15, l.151). On the lake they saw a boat of bronze, which they proceeded to take over to the island. ‘This island is a feature of the B recension, in A the journey is over land’ (Dillon, 1941-2, 123, n.6). Here it introduces a very brief *immram* or ‘voyage’. In *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* this motif occurs as Mac Con Glinne is about to embark on his journey to see the Fáithliag: *Ocus lotmur dar cend Sléibi Imi conn-acamar in curchín beg be[o]chlaidi bóshaili indeocharimill in lochai* (Meyer, 1893, 119) ‘And we went over Butter Mountain and saw the juicy little coracle of corned beef on the border of the lake’ (see IV.2.13.1.). Lóeg and Lí Ban then go to the door of a house and Lí Ban enquires after Labraid Lúathlám ar Claideb. We note that when speaking of him she sings his praises in terms of his valour and prowess:

*as chend mbuden mbúada-
búaid úas chret charpait glinni-
dercas rinní rúada.* (Dillon, 1953a, 6, §15, ll.156-8)

‘he who is head of victorious troops, triumph aloft the body of a steady chariot, who bloodies red blades’. This reiterates what was said of him in §13. They are informed that Labraid is away gathering troops in preparation for battle. Labraid is thus a great warrior-king who could be placed in the same category as Cú Chulainn, the great warrior who gives kingly advice to Lugaid in the *Briathartheosc*.

On entering the house they are welcomed with a standard description of an Otherworld interior: *co n-accatar tri cóecto imdad is tig, ocus tri coícait ban indib* (Dillon, 1953a, 6, §16, ll.164-5) ‘they saw three fifties of beds in the house and three fifties of women in them’. On the Island of the Guardian Cat in *Immram Curaig Máele Dúin* the travellers find ‘an uninhabited house with food, liquor and beds ready for them’ (Oskamp, 1970, 45). The welcome in *SCC*, though gracious, is hierarchically driven. ‘*Fo chen duit, a Loíg, di ág neich las tudchad ocus ó tudchad, ocus dit dáig fesni*’ (Dillon, 1953a, 6, §16, ll.166-7) ‘Welcome to you, Láeg, for the sake of the one with whom you have come and from whom you have come and for your own sake’. Due respect is thus shown to Labraid’s wife Lí Ban, then to Cú Chulainn, the renowned warrior whom they have invited, and lastly to the latter’s servant Lóeg. It seems to be recognised that he is but a messenger. Lí Ban then ushers him off to see Fand, the reason for his journey, and she welcomes them in like manner: *feraise-side fáelte fríu fón innas chétna* (Dillon, 1953a, 6, §16, ll.171).

III.2.13.2. The author now holds back the action to expand upon the etymology of the name *Fand* and what it symbolises. ‘[T]he Irish literati were much given to word-play, especially in explanation of names’ (Ó Cathasaigh, 1977-9, 138). Firstly he introduces the name of Fand’s father, Áed Abrat, stating that it comes from *áed*, ‘fire’, ‘which is then explained as ‘fire of the eye’ namely ‘the pupil’ (Dillon, 1953a, 32, n.171). His daughter’s name is the word for the ‘tear’ which passes over it, *Fand ..ainm na dére dotháet tairis*, which she was given because of her purity (*glaine*) and beauty (*coíme*). Dillon (1953a, 32, n.171) points out that *fand* meaning ‘tear’ does not occur anywhere else. ‘The passage seems to be a mixture of mythology and false etymology’. There is a possible equivalent of this name, however, in *Echtrae Láegairi: fóid ra Loegaire ind aidchi sin .i. Dér Gréine ingen Fhiachna, ocus do-breth coeca ban dá choícait laech* ‘there sleeps with Láegaire that night Dér Gréine (Tear of the Sun), daughter of Fíachna,

and fifty women were given to his fifty warriors’ (Jackson, 1942, 384, trans.385, ll.92-4). This similarity seems hardly to be a coincidence and suggests an acquaintance on the part of one author with the work of the other. Furthermore, Fíachnae’s wife in *Echtrae Láegairi* is called Osnad ingen Echach Amlabair ‘sigh, the daughter of Eochu Amlabar’ (Jackson, 1942, 387, note on l.79). These similarities are suggestive of direct borrowing and further resemblances between these two texts will emerge in what follows.

III.2.14.1. §17 opens with the sound of Labraid’s chariot approaching. Lí Ban senses that he is in bad humour: *is olc menma Labrada indium. Tíagam día accallaim* (Dillon, 1953a, 6, §17, ll.176-7) ‘Labraid’s temper is bad today’. Let us go to converse with him’. Lí Ban tries to soothe his ill-humour by greeting him with a rhetoric that contains alliterative descriptions of his greatness in battle, i.e.

*Comarbae buidne
snéde slegaige
slaidid sciathu...
föbartach fian fo chen* (Dillon, 1953a, 6, §17, ll.180-3)

‘Heir of a swift, javelin bearing band, he smites shields, attacker of warrior bands, welcome!’ This did not elicit an answer, however, and Lí Ban continues in the same vein:

*fochen Labraid Lúathlám ar claideb augra!..
saigthech do chath
créchtach a thóeb
cundail a bríathar* (Dillon, 1953a, 7, §18, ll.193-8)

‘welcome, Labraid Swift Hand on Sword of battle!...eager for battle, scarred his side, wise his speech’. *Níro regart béus Labraid. Canaid-si láid n-aili affridissi* (Dillon, 1953a, 7, §18, ll.204) ‘still Labraid did not answer. Again she sings another lay’:

*láechdu ócaib,
úallchu murib...*

tócbaid lobru,
tairnid tríunu. (Dillon, 1953a, 7, §18, ll.206-12)

‘more heroic than young warriors, prouder than chieftains, he raises the weak, he humbles the strong’. We thus have a mixture of warrior and kingship traits which will have a bearing later in the tale. Dillon lists Labraid as a fairy king (1953a, 93).

§19 sees Labraid cutting short Lí Ban’s eulogy of him. This speech is important for what it says about Labraid as a warrior. He does not wish her to continue as he points out that this is no way to enter battle, puffed up with too much pride. *Ní maith a n-asberi, a ben..Ní úal ná húabur dam* (Dillon, 1953a, 8, §19, ll.214-6) ‘What you say is not good, woman...It is not pride nor arrogance for me’. We now understand the reason for his being out of humour: his mind is preoccupied with the impending battle, as his foe has a powerful force behind him also:

Rechmi cath n-imrind, n-imda n-imamnas,
Imberta claideb nderg ar dornaib desaib,
Túathaib ilib óenchrídiu Ehdach Íuil. (Dillon, 1953a, 8, §19,
ll.218-20)

‘We shall go into a fierce and crowded fight of many spears, of plying of red swords against right fists, many peoples with the one heart of Eochaid Íuil’. What Labraid needs is military aid not praise, and Lí Ban quickly seeks to encourage him: *Bad maith lat do menma trá...atá Lóeg, ara Con Culaind, sund ocus timarnád duit úad doticfa slóg úad* (Dillon, 1953a, 8, §19, ll.223-5) ‘Let your mind be at ease so...Lóeg, Cú Chulainn’s charioteer, is here and he has sent you a message that he will bring you an army’. There is a key difference between Labraid’s welcome to Lóeg and that given to him previously: *fo chen duit, a Laíg, fo bith na mná las tánac ocus in cháich ó tudhad* (Dillon, 1953a, 8, §20, ll.225-6) ‘welcome to you Laíg, on account of the woman with whom you came and him from whom you came’. There is no *dit dáig fesni* (Dillon, 1953a, 6, §16, ll.167) ‘for you own sake’ which was included in the first welcome to Lóeg on reaching the island. This omission suggests certain coolness in this reception. Lóeg is not the one Labraid was

expecting and his following command to him betrays his eagerness that Cú Chulainn should comply with his wishes: *Dó duit do thig, a Laig...ocus ragaid Lí Ban it díaid* (Dillon, 1953a, 8, §20, ll.227-8) ‘Go home, Laig, and Lí Ban will follow you’. Lóeg therefore goes to Emain and tells Cú Chulainn his story. *Atraig Cú Chulaind iar sin na shudi oculus dobert láim dara agid oculus acallais Láeg co glé oculus ba nertiti leis a menma na scéla adfiadar dó in gilla* (Dillon, 1953a, 8, §20, ll.230-2) ‘Cú Chulainn sat up then and brought a hand over his face and spoke to Lóeg clearly, and his spirit was strengthened by the tales which the servant told him’. Dillon (1953a, 32-3, note on l.232) states that ‘*adfiadar*, pret. sg. 3 rel. of *ad-fét* ...is corrupt...Here admitting the diphthong as borrowed from the pres. stem, and the deponent inflexion, I should expect *adfhíadair*’.

III.2.14.2. There has been some disagreement among critics as to these last few lines. ‘Thurneysen considers the words *ocus ragaid Lí Ban it díaid* to be added by the compiler of this mixed text in order to justify the second visit of Lí Ban...which belongs to A; but we shall see that they fit well into the sequence of B. The following lines (3433-6) he also assigns to the compiler, apparently because they conflict with the *tecosc* episode immediately after, in which Cú Chulainn is still prostrate...with Zimmer (604) I regard the words *ragaid Lí Ban it díaid* and lines 3433-6 as part of B’ (Dillon, 1941-2, 123). Salberg (1992, 164-6) also discusses this phrase: ‘it would be more reasonable if Lí Ban were to *accompany* (her italics) Lóeg instead of following him. But when is Lí Ban supposed to have arrived? While the servant was talking? Is she supposed to have followed in his footsteps, so to speak, instead of accompanying him?...The declaration then ‘Lí Ban will follow thee’ definitely seems like an addition ’ (1992, 164-5). She thus agrees with Thurneysen that these few lines plus the *tecosc* episode are the work of the compiler and act as a bridge between recensions B and A. The issue of *ragaid Lí Ban it díaid* is only one of the perplexities relating to this mixed text and seems to be one of H’s inconsistencies where he neglected to make a seamless join. Lí Ban’s presence may help provide surety for Labraid that he will get the promised aid. At any rate, Lí Ban does appear at Airbe Roír in §31 where she has another conversation with Cú Chulainn. The issue of Cú Chulainn’s revival and then return to sickness in the *tecosc* finds logical explanation in Salberg (1992, 165): [t]here is not necessarily a contradiction between the fact that the hero ‘felt his spirit strengthened’ and that he still ‘lay sick’ a little later’. Ó

Cathasaigh (1994, 88), refers to this revival as a ‘temporary remission from his *serglige* as a result of Lóeg’s description of his adventures in the Otherworld’, and if we cast our minds back to Óengus’ visitation (§12), we will recall that Cú Chulainn also experienced a temporary recovery after this episode. It seems that when Cú Chulainn has contact with the Otherworld, either directly or indirectly, he undergoes a certain improvement. Accordingly, Cú Chulainn’s illness appears to be related to his invitation to the Otherworld. He will therefore suffer this debilitation until he complies with Labraid’s wishes and makes the journey.

As to the issue of Cú Chulainn’s ‘lovesickness’, *serglige* is translated as a ‘wasting sickness’ literally *serg* ‘wasting’ and *lige* ‘lying’ (Dillon, 1953a, 84). *DIL* (538) states: ‘*serg* I): (a) decline, wasting, (b) as quasi-vn.: act of lessening, declining, *serg* 2): withered, wasted, *sergad*: vn.of *sergaid*: (a) lessening, (b) act of withering’. It is not the same word as *serc* ‘love’ and, when viewed in conjunction with other *echtraí*, the wasting sickness emerges, as suggested earlier, as a debilitation brought about by Cú Chulainn’s inability to understand the Otherworld and by his attack on its representatives. A similar scenario is reflected in *Aislinge Óenguso*. *Caer Iborneith, ingen Etail Anbail a Sídaib a crích Connacht* (Shaw, 1976, 19) ‘daughter of Etal Anbail of the *síd* of the territory of Connacht’ appeared to Óengus, the son of the Dagda, in a dream and caused him to pine and waste away. His debility is also referred to as *sergg*: *blíadain lán dó os sí occa aithigid fon séol sin condid corastar i sergg* (Shaw, 1976, 44, §2) ‘a full year for him and she visiting him in that manner so that he wasted away’.

III.2.15.1. The ‘Instructions of Cú Chulainn’ or *Briathartheosc Con Culaind* ‘belongs to the group of *teosca*...of which *Tecosca Cormaic* is perhaps the best known example, and it can hardly belong to the story in its original form’ (Dillon, 1953a, x). ‘It seems to be best to regard the *teosc* as a separate tale composed for the glory of the hero, who is thus made wise as well as brave, and inserted here by the compiler who was the interpolator’s source’ (Dillon, 1941-2, 124-5, n.9). Gantz (1981) omits this part of the tale from his translation altogether. As previously stated (III.1.1.), Dillon (1941-2, 124-5, n.9) discusses Thurneysen’s view that it is part of B: ‘Thurneysen...points out that the whole passage is written by the interpolator on an inserted leaf, so that the question is whether to regard it as due to the compiler, who would simply have introduced a separate tale

here, or as part of B. Thurneysen prefers the latter opinion' (1941-2, 124, n.9). Zimmer also assigned it to Version B. Salberg tends to agree with Dillon that it is the work of the compiler, while at the same time allowing that 'it is imaginable that it may have come from B' (1992, 163n10). Carey (1994, 82) feels that the 'episode does not fit into the narrative sequence established by the section of B which precedes it', yet finds examples of Middle Irish usage contained within it to make an argument for it belonging to Version B. 'One distinctive late form found both in the episode and in the preceding text is *adfiadar* (ll.232& 251 of Dillon's edition): the two instances are only 25 lines apart in the manuscript, rendering the chances that this agreement is accidental fairly slim'. He also cites the use of the rare Old Irish term *res* for 'dream', referring to the prophetic inspiration at the *tarbfhes*, which occurs at only one other place in the text, namely l.80, which is part of Version B. Accordingly, he proposes that the *Bríathartheosc* belongs to B. Thus while some critics view this section as part of B, it is generally seen as an interruption in the tale, especially as the last words written on the reverse side of the inserted leaf (46) read: *imthúsa immurgu Con Culaind iss ed adfiastar sund coléic* 'of Cú Chulainn however, it will now be told here', signalling a shift of focus in the tale (Ó Cathasaigh, 1994, 88).

While deferring to Dillon's observations regarding the *Bríathartheosc*, Ó Cathasaigh nevertheless feels that its inclusion at this point in the tale may 'owe something to the Irish ideology of kingship' (1994, 88). He suggests that the 'Instructions' occur immediately after Lóeg has informed Cú Chulainn about the Otherworld and that this may 'reflect the notion found elsewhere in early Irish literature that the Otherworld was the source of the righteous kingship which would ensure a Golden Age of peace and plenty in Ireland' (1994, 88). He sees this descriptive passage as a depiction of conditions necessary for such a Golden Age.

By way of introduction to the *Bríathartheosc* episode, the author fills us in on a *tarbfheis* and its background. He explains that Tara had been without kingship rule: *ár bátar fir Hérend cen smacht ríg forro fri ré secht mbliadna iar ndíth Chonaire i mBrudin Dá Derca* (Dillon, 1953a, 8, §21, ll.237-8) 'for the men of Ireland were without the rule of a king for seven years after the death of Conaire in Da Derga's Hostel'. 'A suitable place in Irish pseudo-history had to be found for certain personages such as Conchobar

and Cúchulainn...It was, however, impossible to associate these personages ...with the reign of any particular ‘king of Ireland’. The difficulty was surmounted by supposing that there was... an interregnum in the kingship of Ireland during the years immediately following the death of Conaire Mór’ (O’Rahilly, 1946, 177). The text goes on to list the kings present at an assembly, explaining that Ulster was not represented as there was enmity between it and the other four provinces. ‘[W]e find the storytellers attempting to give some of the Ulidian tales a wider appeal by inventing the idea that the four other provinces were leagued against the Ulaid’ (O’Rahilly, 1946, 180). Dillon (1953a, 33, note on l.244) states that this enmity between the Ulaid and the other four provinces ‘may have a basis in fact. The question seems to be still open’, but a division along these lines does seem to have been established.

III.2.15.2. *Dogníther iarom tarbfhes léo and sin co fiastais esti cia dia tibérais rígi* (Dillon, 1953a, 8, §22, ll.244-5) ‘They made a *tarbfhes* there then, so that they might find out to whom they should give the kingship’. When describing this ritual, the author is careful to distance himself by using the imperfect tense: *is amlaid dognithe in tarbfhes sin, tarb find do marbad ocus óenfher do chathim a shátha dia eóil ocus dá enbruthi ocus chotlud dó fón sáith sin* (Dillon, 1953a, 9, §23, ll.246-8) ‘this is the way that the bull-feast used to be made, to kill a white bull and one man to eat his fill of its flesh and of its broth and to sleep under that sufficiency’. *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (Knott, 1936, ll.122-6, 4) contains a similar description of a *tarbfhes* as a prelude to Conaire assuming the kingship of Tara. Carey (1994, 79) holds that there can be no doubt but that *SCC*’s description of the *tarbfhes* derives directly from *TBDD*, with certain embellishments. After a spell of truth (*ór firindi*) is chanted over the sleeper (called *fear na tairbfheisi* in *TBDD*) the form of the man to be made king used to be shown to him in a dream: *atchithe do i n-aslingi innas ind fhir no rígfai de and* (Dillon, 1953a, 9, §23, l.249). In *SCC* the dream related to the kings was as follows: *móethócláech sáer sonairt co ndá chris derca tairis ocus sé ós adart fhir i sirc i nEmain Macha* (Dillon, 1953a, 9, §23, ll.251-2) ‘a youthful warrior, noble and strong, with two red circles about him and he over a man in sickness in Emain Macha’. When messengers give this account to Conchobar he recognises the description of the man to be Lugaid Réoderg, fosterson of Cú Chulainn, who stands at his sickbed.

Dillon (1953a, 33, note 1.258) includes this explanation of Lugaid’s epithet from *Cóir Anmann* (105): ‘*Lugaid Réo nDerg .i. sriabh ndearg .i. da sreibh dhearga bátar tairis .i. cris fó braigit ocus cris dara mhedhón. A cheann fri Nár ro dhiall, a bhruinne fri Bres, ó chris síis fri Lothar ro dell* ‘i.e. of red stripes i.e. there were two red stripes around his body i.e. a girdle about his throat and a girdle about his waist. His head resembled Nár; his chest resembles Bres; from his belt down he resembled Lothar’. *Cath Bóinde* relates how these sons of Eochaid Feidlech, Bres, Nár and Lothar ‘begat Lugaid of the three stripes upon their own sister...[and] *Aided Meidbe* gives a somewhat more detailed account in which the incestuous sister is named as Eochaid’s daughter Clothru’ (McCone, 1990, 119). He was thus a son of three fathers, hence Lugaid Réoderg, mac na Trí Find Emna, son of the Three Fair Ones of Emain. According to O’Rahilly (1946, 202) Lugaid Mac Con, who was the mythical hero of the Érainn, can be identified with various warriors with the name Lugaid, including Lugaid Riab nDerg. Lugaid also appears in *Aided Derbforgaill* (Marstrander, 1911) and *Tochmarc Emire* (Van Hamel, 1933) as the fosterson of Cú Chulainn. His name ‘appears in the list of prehistoric kings of Tara as successor of Conaire Mór...Originally, as could be shown, this Lugaid Réoderg was none other than Cúchulainn himself’ (O’Rahilly, 1946, 486). Be that as it may, Lugaid is here represented as one destined for kingship who is about to receive advice on how to rule from his warrior foster-father, Cú Chulainn.

III.2.15.3. What Cú Chulainn divulges here is advice based on wisdom. His instructions cover many areas in which a king must preside and give judgement, from dealing with enemies to treating elders with honour and respect. It also advises on how a king should conduct himself:

Nirbat tarrrechtach debtha déne dóergairce

Nirbat díscir doichlech díummasach

Nibbát ecal ocal opond esamain (Dillon, 1953a, 9, §25, ll.263-5)

‘Be not a seeker of fierce uncouth quarrelling. Be not vehement, churlish, arrogant. Be not timorous, violent, sudden, rash’. While these qualities are to be lauded and desirable in a just and upright king, they are not qualities which Cú Chulainn himself has recently

manifested. His behaviour has been directly contrary to this. Further on he charges Lugaid: *Bát umal munta ó gáethaib* (Dillon, 1953a, 10, §26, l.287) ‘Be humble in receiving instruction from the wise’. Cú Chulainn’s reaction to Emer and Lóeg, when they understood better than he about the strange birds, was hardly in keeping with these tenets. *Nípat úar chraidech im chardiu* (Dillon, 1953a, 10, §26, l.290) ‘Be not cold-hearted towards friends’. Óengus and Lí Ban have both visited Cú Chulainn as friends, but his reception of them has not been over-friendly and we will witness his rudeness to Lí Ban later in the tale. *Níbat comromach ar nábat miscnech* (Dillon, 1953a, 10, §26, l.299) ‘Be not contentious, lest you be hateful’. Although Cú Chulainn is giving advice to Lugaid in this excerpt, he would do well to take it to his own heart. While O’Rahilly (1946, 326, n.3) remarks that ‘though Cú Chulainn is normally best known as a warrior, the *bríathartheosc* illustrates his capacity for great wisdom’, his behaviour in this tale does not demonstrate this and reflects unfavourably on him when compared with the advice he gives to Lugaid. In short, he appears to be failing to practise what he preaches.

Although, as previously stated, the *Bríathartheosc* is generally believed to have been an interpolation, it can be seen to fit the tone of the saga at this point, Ó Cathasaigh (1994, 88) alluding to a Golden Age inaugurated by knowledge of the Otherworld. What is it, however, that Lóeg has told Cú Chulainn? He has informed him of his experience of the Otherworld and this has included his meeting with Labraid Lúathlám ar Claideb as Lí Ban expounded on his greatness as a warrior-king. Could Labraid be the king whose righteous kingship stands as a model for such a Golden Age much as later we will see how in his battle exploits he stands as a model for the perfect warrior? For Lí Ban has thus described him:

cundail a bríathar
brígach a chert,
carthach a fhlaith (Dillon, 1953a, 7, §18, ll.197-9)

‘wise his speech, vigorous his claim, friendly his rule’. Labraid has been portrayed as a good and righteous king and this is the person with whom Cú Chulainn is procrastinating.

After assuring Cú Chulainn that he would act as instructed - *noco teséba ní de* (Dillon, 1953a, 11, §27, l.306) ‘nothing of it will be lacking’, Lugaid proceeded to Tara where he duly became king. This brings to an end the *Briathartheosc* episode.

III.2.16.1. §28 picks up the main narrative with Lóeg being sent away again, this time to Emer, presumably in Dún Delca, where Lóeg wished to bring Cú Chulainn in the first place, only for this offer to be rejected (§9). Cú Chulainn says to Lóeg: *innis condat mná sídi rom thathigsaet ocus rom admilset, ocus apair fría is ferr a chách itósa ocus táet dom indnaigid* (Dillon, 1953a, 11, §28, ll.313-4) ‘tell her that fairy women have visited me and destroyed me and tell to her that I am getting altogether better and to come visit me’. Lí Ban has already promised him that his sickness would pass: *Bid gar-úar aní sin* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, l.137) ‘this thing will be short-lived’ (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, l.137). He seems to still misunderstand the reason for his inertia. Lóeg takes up his point as to the maltreatment he has suffered at the hands of the women:

condot rodsat...

condot ellat

eter bríga banespa (Dillon, 1953a, 11, §28, ll.320-3)

‘so that they have injured you, so that they have enslaved you, so that they have driven you among the forces of women’s wantonness’. The word used to describe these women is *genaiti*, meaning ‘demons’ (Dillon, 1953a, 36, note on l.318) and glossed *mná* in the text. The author is at pains to have us understand that these are Otherworld women, for the following line further elaborates, stating they are *genaiti áesa a Tenmag Trogaigi*, glossed .i. a Maig Mell (Dillon, 1953a, 11, §28, l.319). By referring to these women thus, both men appear to see them as fearsome and feel they possess a power which they cannot fathom. We have here an example of the ambiguity surrounding these women on the part of the author. Interestingly, while lines 3514-39 (LU) are in the hand of H, ‘Thurneysen (421, note 5) suggests that they are copied from the old M text’ (Dillon, 1941-2, 125, n.10), meaning that they would have come from A. Therefore it could be suggested that all reference to demons so far have come from Version A. In this visitation they have come in friendship, offering love and an opportunity for a hero to excel himself in what he knows best, although Cú Chulainn’s beating for his hostility to them has some

bearing on his attitude to them. The latter half of Lóeg's address is directed at trying to spur Cú Chulainn into action:

díuchtra a terbaig andregoin...
dia fócart lúth Labrada
a fhir rudi, atrai coropat mór (Dillon, 1953a, 11, §28, ll.324-31)

'awake from your sickness..when Labraid's vigour announced, o valiant man, arise so that you may be great'. Lóeg shows diplomacy in initially sympathising with Cú Chulainn's plight, but he also shows that he understands what may be the antidote when he tries to rouse the warrior instinct in him.

III.2.16.2. When Lóeg goes to Emer she gives him a scolding, not alone for his own sake, but for the champions of the Ulaid as well, whom she feels have also let him down. She has grown worried and impatient with Cú Chulainn's lethargy, as has Lóeg, but blames him particularly, as one who has knowledge of the *síd* (Ríangabur, his father, was of the *síd*; Dillon, 1953a, 36, note on l.333), for not hurrying to his aid:

A meic Ríangabur fó rír,
cid menic imthige in síd,
ní moch doróich let ille
icc meic delba Dechtere. (Dillon, 1953a, 12, §29, ll.339-42)

'Alas, o son of Ríangabur, though you often visit the Otherworld, you are slow in bringing hither a cure for the fair son of Dechtere'. Lóeg is unfortunate here as he has been doing as he was bid in a situation where he clearly feels uneasy. As *in gilla* his status is inferior and he has already made suggestions which have been ignored. Emer continues:

Atbathsat slúraig Shíde truim,
ro scarsatar a mórgluind:
ní thét a cCú dar cona
ó ro gab súan síthbroga.

‘The hosts of Síd Truim have perished, their great deeds have departed, their Cú does not overcome hounds since he took the sleep of the *síd*-abode’ (Dillon, 1953a, 13, §29, ll.367-79, trans. Hollo, 1998, 14). Hollo (1998, 15-22) examines this obscure reference to Cú Chulainn and his association with Síd Truim, concluding that this was the *síd*-mound where he was born. Thus his birthplace is in sympathy with him. It is where Lóeg and Cú Chulainn were both infants together and Lóeg was taken from the breast to make way for him. ‘In mentioning Síd Truim, Emer evokes for Lóeg the scenes of his infancy, in which he and Cú Chulainn were suckled at the same breast, and appeals to the bands of duty and affection that bind this charioteer and his master’ (Hollo, 1998, 21-2). In an indirect way, it could also suggest that Cú Chulainn himself should have a better understanding of the Otherworld than he does.

III.2.17.1. We are now dealing with what Dillon terms the ‘Emer recension’ (1941-2, 125, n.10) and this poem is thus part of the A Version, apparently written in the Middle Irish period: e.g. *ro scarsatar*, which would have been *ro scarsat* in Old Irish, must have been present in the original on metrical grounds. This lament pities Cú Chulainn for not securing help when he needs it and points out that he would rush to the aid of the other Ulster heroes if the circumstances were reversed. Emer cites *eter sídaib* (Dillon, 1953a, 13, §29, l.362) ‘among the *síd*’ as the place where a cure is to be found. She knows it does not lie with her:

*is sáith rem chridi is rem chnes,
día tísad díam a leges.* (Dillon, 1953a, 13, §29, ll.373-4)

‘I am troubled in heart and bosom whether his curing would come from me’. In pitying Cú Chulainn, Emer also includes herself as one deserving of pity, as she has spent:

*mí 7 rathe 7 bliadain
cen chothlud fó chomríagail
cen duini bad bind labra –
ni chúala, a meic Ríangabra.* (Dillon, 1953a, 13, §29, ll.383-6)

‘a month and a season and a year without sleeping in wedlock, without a person who would be sweet of speech, I have not heard, o son of Ríangabur’. Emer’s speech here opens up an area of women’s discourse, which ‘functions on an emotional level rather than a simply structural one’ (Findon, 1997, 122) and is a characteristic feature of the A Version (Carey, 1994, 83). This poem is cited by Findon (1997, 122-3) as evidence ‘about Emer’s emotional state as an abandoned wife. Indeed, as the narrative states earlier, her home itself has been rejected as a place of convalescence by her husband. Cú Chulainn’s request that he be taken to An Tête Brecc, rather than to Dún Delca where he and Emer live, may serve to highlight both his physical and emotional separation from his wife. It also reinforces the idea that Cú Chulainn’s sickness is not simply a physical ailment, but sexual desire for another woman (Fand)’. Findon sees Cú Chulainn’s debility as a ‘lovesickness’ which is manifested in him spending ‘a large portion of the tale sick in bed, stripped of the strength and sexual power which define him as the great Ulster hero’ (1997, 122). As previously mentioned (see III.2.13.1.) Óengus suffers from the same symptoms in *Aislinge Óenguso* when he is visited by an Otherworld woman: *Bliadain lán dó os sí occa aithigid fon séol sin condid corastar i sergg. Nícon epert fri nech. F-a-ceird [i sergg] iarum oculus ní fitir nech cid ro mboi* (Shaw, 1976, §2, 44-5) ‘A full year for him and she visiting him in that manner so that he wasted away. He did not speak to anyone. It caused him to waste away then and no one knew what was the matter with him’. Her disappearance thus caused his debility which Fingen, Conchobar’s physician, diagnosed as *sercc écmaise* ‘love in absence’ (Shaw, 1976, §3, 46). However, the only meeting Cú Chulainn has had with Fand is where she and Lí Ban have beaten him in a dream. Presumably it is to be understood that from this contact she has cast a spell on him, and his debility equals that of Óengus.

For her part, Fand appears to have fallen in love with his reputation, as Findabair did with Fróech’s: *Carthai Findabair, ingen Ailella 7 Medba, ara irscélaib* (Meid, 1974, 1, ll.10-1) ‘Findabair, daughter of Ailill and Medb, loves him for his great repute’. It is understandable that Emer suspects that he is lovesick for another because of his neglect of her, but the symptoms may have an added cause. Firstly, Cú Chulainn refused to be taken to Dún Delca immediately after the episode of his visitation from Lí Ban and Fand. He did not know who they were and he was in a state of shock, having been severely

beaten by them. This shock, it may be suggested, turned into an aversion of women in general under the circumstances, and when Lóeg wanted to take Cú Chulainn to Emer, his reaction reflected this preference for the security of male intimates.

III.2.17.2. When comparing the early childhoods of Finn and Cú Chulainn, Nagy (1984, 30) states: ‘Demne is raised primarily by female fosterers, as opposed to Sétanta, who leaves his mother in order to enter a period of fosterage supervised by social males’. Cú Chulainn therefore, did not have any dealings with women in his early life and in the *Macgnímrada* on his way back to Emain from his slaying of the sons of Nechta Scéne, his embarrassment by women becomes functional: ‘As he approaches the stronghold, he appears still to be in a heroic rage and about to attack the Ulstermen themselves. So the Ulsterwomen expose their breasts to Sétanta, and he hides his face; thus the Ulstermen can grab him and immerse him in water until his dangerous ardour cools’ (Nagy, 1984, 33-4). While Cú Chulainn was only seven at this time it is suggested that his early male-dominated upbringing left him with little understanding of women in his later life.

III.2.18.1. §30 sees Emer repeating what Lóeg had done in trying to urge Cú Chulainn out of his inertia:

Érig a gérait Ulad!

Rod dúschi súan slán subach!

Déci ríg Macha mochruth:

nít léci re rochothlud. (Dillon, 1953a, 14, §30, ll.391-4)

‘Arise o warrior of Ulster! Awake from sleep, safe and happy! Look early upon the king of Macha: do not let yourself into excessive sleep!’ She, like Lóeg, uses martial imagery to muster his energy and enthusiasm: *déca a chairptiu cinnit glend...déca a churadu combríg* (Dillon, 1953a, 14, §30, ll.397-9) ‘look at his chariots, they roll into the valley... behold his horses with vigour’. Emer is also behaving loyally, appealing to Cú Chulainn’s honour as an Ulster champion, and makes no mention of her own plight. While she calls forth images of Ulster to stir the hero, Lóeg has included the added challenge of Labraid: *Doa fócart lúth Labrada/ a fhír rudi, atraí coropat mór* (Dillon, 1953a, 11, §28, ll.330-1) ‘When the vehemence of Labraid has challenged, strong man, arise that you may be great’.

After this, Cú Chulainn becomes invigorated again: *dorat láim dara agid ocus ro chuir a mertnigi ocus a thromdacht de* (Dillon, 1953a, 15, §31, ll.414-6) ‘he brought a hand over his face and put from him his weariness and his heaviness’. He heads for Airbe Roír where he sees Lí Ban approaching. We have now a second journey made by Lí Ban to Cú Chulainn. The line ‘*cisi airm hi tá Labraid?*’ *ol Cú Chulaind. ‘Ní handsa’, ol sí* (Dillon, 1953a, 15, §31, ll.419-20) “‘where is the place in which Labraid is?’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘Not difficult’ said she’ is in the hand of H. This paragraph is seen as a probable duplication of §13 in which Cú Chulainn asks exactly the same question of Lí Ban (Dillon, 1953a, ix). After this opening, we have a poem (also partly written in the hand of H), in which Lí Ban endeavours to coax Cú Chulainn to the Otherworld:

*Atá Labraid for lind glan
 día n-aithiget buidi ban:
 niba scíth let techt dia túaid,
 mád ar fhis Labrada Lúaidh.* (Dillon, 1953a, 15, §31, ll.421-4)

‘Labraid dwells upon a clear pool, which companies of women visit. You will not regret going to this people, if it be to know Labraid the Swift’. She does not linger on this motif, however, and uses it to initiate the praising of Labraid’s heroic qualities: *bruid idnu buden mbáeth, brisid sciathu lenna láech* (Dillon, 1953a, 15, §31, ll.431-2) ‘he breaks the weapons of frenzied troops: he rends the shields and armour of warriors’. Labraid has *folt fair amal flesca óir* (Dillon, 1953a, 15, §31, l.439) ‘hair upon him like strands of gold’ and further on *mong buide fair álli dath/ ubull óir ocá iadad* (Dillon, 1953a, 16, §31, ll.472-3) ‘a yellow mane upon him of beautiful shades/ a golden apple closing it’. The Otherworld woman in *Echtrae Chonnlai* describes Connlai thus: *Barr buide for-dut:tá óas gnúis chorcordai, bid ordan do rígdalbae* ‘The yellow head of hair which is upon you above a purplish face, it will be a distinction of your kingly appearance’ (McCone, 2000, 142-3). We therefore may interpret Labraid’s description as indicative of his role as king.

III.2.18.2. The poem (§31) suggests that the author had access to, or was influenced in some way by, both *Echtrae Láegairi* and *Immram Brain*. The line *fiada claidib thana deirg* ‘before his thin red sword’ (Dillon, 1941, trans. 39) is echoed in *Echtrae Láegairi*

in the line *ba-sa fiada claidib glais* ‘I was master of a blue sword’ (Jackson, 1942, 386, l.125, trans. 387). Jackson draws attention to the similarity between the two phrases (1942, 389, note on l.125). ‘But the O.I. *fiadu*, ‘lord’, seems always to be used of God; and whether it can mean an earthly lord...is doubtful’ (Jackson, 1942, 389, note on l.125). *DIL* (303) gives its meaning as ‘lord, master, possessor’, especially of God and states it is used frequently in the Homilies and *Félire Óengusso*. However, *fiadu* does not appear to be used in a religious sense in either text here. The interpretation thus preferred by Dillon (1953a, 66) involved the preposition ‘before’, but ‘the objections... are serious; *fiad* governs the dative, not the genitive; and in the case of *ba-sa fiad a claidib glais* the translation would make poor sense’ (Jackson, 1942, 389, note on l.125). In *SCC deirg* is clearly gen. sg. and fixed by rhyme with *ceirp*, also gen. sg. according to Dillon (1953a, 54 and 60). Thus if *fiada claidib thana deirg* were translated as ‘master of his thin red sword’, this curious turn of phrase, similar in both texts, would be even more striking. Suffice to say that we have here a circumstantial parallel that appears to be used in the same context.

In *Echtrae Láegairi*, as part of Fíachnae’s inducements to attract Láegaire to the Otherworld he offers *urrann argait ocus urrann óir da gach aoin fher diand áil do chin techta lem* ‘a payment of silver and a payment of gold to every single man who desires it, in return for going with me’ (Jackson, 1942, 380, ll.16-7, trans. 381) which finds a parallel in this poem in *SCC*: *srían muinci dergóir fria graig...turid airgit ocus glain* (Dillon, 1953a, 16, §31, ll.449-51) ‘a bridle of red gold ornament upon his horses...pillars of silver and of crystal’. Carey (1994, 83) points to another phrase *riada curach ocus graig, sech inis hi tá Labraid* (Dillon, 1953a, 15, §31, ll.443-4) ‘there are boat-races and horse-races by the island where Labraid is’ which is paralleled in *Immram Brain* in *concna curach fri carpat, isin maig des Findarcat* ‘curragh contends with chariot, in the plain south of Findarcat’ (Mac Mathúna, 1985, ll.27-8). We thus observe recurring *echtrae* motifs throughout this section of *SCC*.

III.2.19. By this stage it could be presumed that Cú Chulainn has been exhorted enough to make the trip. Instead of accepting Lí Ban’s second invitation, however, Cú Chulainn retorts: ‘*noco ragsa...ar chuiruid mná*’ (Dillon, 1953a, 16, §32, ll.453) ‘I will not go...at the invitation of a woman’. We may recall Lí Ban’s initial greeting of Cú Chulainn: ‘*Ní*

du for fogail ém dodeochammárni, acht is do chuinchid for caratraid' (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.130-1) 'It is not for your injury that we have come, but for the seeking of your friendship'. This is the 2 pl. form of the personal pronoun, a high, exalted register here used when addressing Cú Chulainn, by way of deference and goodwill. His ungracious reply may be explained by the fact that he still harbours a fear of these women and a suspicion of their intentions. Lí Ban quickly suggests Lóeg come then instead *d'is cech réta* (Dillon, 1953a, 16, §32, l.454) 'for the knowledge of everything', to which Cú Chulainn replies curtly: *Tíat iarom* (Dillon, 1953a, 16, §32, ll.454-5) 'let him go then'. When Lóeg and Lí Ban arrive at Óenach Fídgai, the dwelling place of Áed Abrat, he is there waiting with his daughter Fand.

It may be observed that Lóeg's journey is by land this time. When Lóeg accompanied Lí Ban to visit Labraid on the previous occasion (§15), he travelled in a bronze boat over a lake to an island: *co n-accatar in lungine crédume forsind loch ara cind. Tiagait iarom isin linga ois tiagait isin n-insi* (Dillon, 1953a, 5-6, §15, ll.151-3) 'they saw a bronze boat upon the lake in front of them. They then went into the boat and came to the island'. This is another example of an inconsistency produced by the amalgamation of two versions in this tale, with §15 a product of the B Version, and this one (§32), a product of the A Version. Salberg, (1992, 171) seeks to resolve the dilemma thus: 'it would certainly be possible to answer it simply by reminding the reader that the concept of the Otherworld as a wonderful isle...is such a *cliché* of Irish literature that no reference to it is really of decisive value, even if the description of how Lóeg goes to Labraid's country in ch.32 certainly gives no hint of a voyage'. It is one of the duplications mentioned in III.1.1 and may thus be taken as the A version corresponding to that of B encountered in §15.

While not forgetting to welcome Lóeg for coming, Fand expresses her anxiety over Cú Chulainn's failure to appear '*Cid dia mbaí Cú Chulaind cen tíachtain?*' (Dillon, 1953a, 16, §32, ll.458-9) 'Why did Cú Chulainn not come?' Obviously she has been awaiting his arrival *ar is indíu curthir in cath* (Dillon, 1953a, 16, §32, l.461) 'for the battle is to be fought today'. She urges Lóeg to return immediately to Cú Chulainn and bring him back. Thus Lóeg must act as messenger since the need to get Cú Chulainn is pressing.

III.2.20.1. At the beginning of §33 we are told that Lóeg went to Cú Chulainn in the company of Fand, *ocus Fand malle fris*. This phrase has been added in the margin of LU by H and was thereafter written into the text by H (Dillon, 1953a, 16, n.2). This has caused perplexity among critics as to the comings and goings of Lí Ban and Fand, since it is later stated that *luid Cú Chulaind lee iarom is tír* (Dillon, 1953a, 20, §35, l.577) ‘Cú Chulainn landed with her then’, perhaps implying a journey over water. He is subsequently welcomed by Fand. Dillon (1941-2, 126n13) feels ‘it is best to suppose *Fand* is ...a mere error for *Lí Ban*...the words cannot be used as evidence for the A recension’ being a marginal addition. Lóeg’s tack with Cú Chulainn this time is firstly to announce: *is mithig techt... úair itá in cath oca ferthain indíu* (Dillon, 1953a, 16, §33, ll.464-5) ‘it is time to go...for the battle is being fought today’. We then have one of the long poems about the Otherworld for which this tale is renowned (Dillon, 1948, 118). Indeed, Carey (1994, 82) sees the *Serglige*’s portrayal of the Otherworld as ‘obviously a central feature of the tale as a whole’. If we compare this poem of the A Version with Lóeg’s earlier one from the B Version (§28), we notice that Lóeg dispenses with any upbraidings here and concentrates solely on the attractions of the Otherworld itself in order to tempt Cú Chulainn to make the journey. Many of the motifs in this poem are taken from voyage literature, with *Immram Brain* a particularly obvious influence. We may take two verses from each tale as examples:

SCC *Atát arin dorus tíar*
 insinn áit hi funend grían,
 graig ngabor nglas, brec a mong,
 is araile corcordond. (Dillon, 1953a, 17, §33, ll.490-3)

‘before the entrance to the west, where the sun sets, there is a herd of grey horses with brightly-coloured manes and others purple-brown’

Immram Brain: *Graig óir budi and fri srath*
 graig aile co corcardath,
 graig aile ualann tar ais

co n-dath nime huleglais. (Meyer, 1895, 9, §15)

‘yellow golden horses are on the green turf there, other horses of purple hue, other horses with wool upon their backs, with the colour of sky-blue’.

SCC *Atát arin dorus sair*
tri bile do chorcor-glain,
dia ngair in énlaithe búan bláith
don macraídh assin rígráith. (Dillon, 1953a, 17, §33, ll.494-7)

‘before the entrance to the east, three trees of purple glass, from which birds sing softly, unceasing, to the children from the royal fort’. Meyer (1895, 37) describes the above as similar to the stanza below, except there is no reference to the hours:

Immram Brain *Fil and bile co mbláthaib*
forsangairet eóin do thráthaib
is trí cocetul is gnáth
congairt uili cech tráth. (Meyer, 1895, 7, §7)

‘there is there a tree in blossom on which birds sing to the hours, usually it is in harmony they call together every hour’. Otherworld descriptions in *SCC* include the following:

Atá crand i ndorus liss,
Ní hétig cocetul friss,
Crand airgit ris tatin grían...

Atát and tri fichit crand,
Comraic nát chomraic a mbarr,
Bíatar trí cét do chach crund
do mes ildarda imlum.

Dabach and do mid medrach...
maraid béos, is búan in bás,
conid bithlán do bithgrés. (Dillon, 1953a, 17-8, §33, ll.498-513)

‘There is a tree at the entrance of the fort, the singing from it is not ugly, a silver tree on which the sun shines...there are sixty trees there, their tops almost meeting, three hundred are fed with plentiful, unhusked mast from every tree. There is a vat there of intoxicating mead...it lasts forever, the custom is lasting, so that it is always full’. An excerpt from *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* illustrates some parallels: *Imrit rempa iarsin co tarfas doibh inis ingnad ele 7 doire áluinn edrocht d’abluibh cobra innti. Sruth fíráluinn tre lár in doire. Antan immorro nogluaised in ghaeth barrghar in doiri ba binne ina gach céol a canadh. Rothomuilset hua Corra ni dona hublaib 7 atibhset ní dontsruthfhina, cur’ sásad iat fo cétair, conar’ airigset cnead ná galar inntib* ‘They row then until another wonderful island was shown to them, with a beautiful bright grove of fragrant apple trees therein. A very beautiful river (flowed) through the midst of the grove. When, however, the wind would move the treetops of the grove, sweeter was their song than any music. The Húi Corra ate somewhat of the apples and drank somewhat of the river of wine, so that they were straightaway satisfied, and perceived not wound or disease in them’ (Stokes, 1893, 42, §47, trans. 43).

III.2.20.2. Having painted this idyllic picture for Cú Chulainn, Lóeg continues by describing a beautiful girl whose beauty surpasses that of the women of Ireland. We understand her to be Fand as she enquires after Cú Chulainn: *in tic i lle óenmac dígrais Dechtere?* (Dillon, 1953a, 18, §33, ll.528-9) ‘Will the eager son of Dechtere come hither?’ Lóeg ends his lay by intimating that he was close to falling in love with her himself and that he would give his all to dwell in that place, *dámbad lim Ériu ule..dobéraind..ar gnáis in bale ránac* (Dillon, 1953a, 19, §33, ll.534-7) ‘if I had the whole of Ireland..I would give it...for the frequenting of the place to which I came’. This sentiment is echoed in *Echtrae Láegairi* when Láegaire bids farewell to his father forever and returns to the Otherworld: *oín adaig d’aidhib síde/ ní thibér ar do ríge* ‘one night of the Otherworld nights I will not exchange for your kingdom’ (Jackson, 1942, 386, ll.126-7, trans. 387).

Cú Chulainn's reply *is maith sin* (Dillon, 1953a, 19, §33, l.538) 'that is good' appears to give Lóeg encouragement. He insists: *is cóir dul dia ríachtain* (Dillon, 1953a, 19, §34, ll.538-9) 'it is right to go for its seeking'. He then delivers another lay telling of additional attributes of the *síd*. However, this time it contains references which are given a Christian significance in the concluding lines about Adam and original sin, e.g.:

*Síl nÁdaim cen imarbos
delbaid is Fainne rem ré
ná fil and a llethéte.* (Dillon, 1953a, 19, §34, ll.558-60)

'the seed that is Adam without transgression, the beauty that is Fand's, there is not its like in my time'. These motifs are to be found both in *Immram Brain* and in *Echtrae Chonnlai*. As the Christian orientation of these two sagas has been established, it may be of significance that some of their motifs have been borrowed here. In *Immram Brain* and *Echtrae Chonnlai* the motifs are spoken by the women visitors from the Otherworld, portraying a paradisaical world of peace and plenty, symbolising heaven (Carney, 1955, 294).

*Do:dechad-sa a tírib béo, i-nna:bí bás na peccad na imarmus
do:melom fleda búana cen frithgnam.
Cáincomrac lenn cen debuid.
Síd már i:taam, conid de suidib no-n:ainmnigther áes síde.*

'I have come from the lands of the living, in which there is neither death nor sin nor transgression. There is harmony with us without strife. It is great peace in which we are so that it is from these we are called people of peace' (McCone, 2000, 131-136). In the first two speeches of *Echtrae Chonnlai* 'the woman emphasises the eternal and moral qualities of the lands of the living: the absence of death, old age, wrongdoing, original sin, strife, toil and woe in a pervasively peaceful environment' (McCone, 2000, 110).

III.2.20.3. To Carey (1994, 82-3) it seems evident that there are innovations here in A: 'not only do they belong to the late Middle Irish period, but they echo names and phrases

from the prose of B. The A author has replaced a third-person account of Lóeg's mission to the Otherworld, as found in B, with poems in which Lóeg himself describes his experiences', concluding that 'the Otherworld as such appears to have interested the author of Version A more than it did the author of Version B' (1994, 83). While it may be observed that there are seven uses of the verb *atá/atát* in Lóeg's first poem about the Otherworld (§33), there are also examples of verbs in the first person singular e.g. *ránacsa, fúarusa, dochúadsa*, and the final verse evokes deep personal feeling: *Dámbad lim Ériu ule/ 7 ríge Breg mbude/ dobéraind, ní láthar lac/ ar gnáis in bale ránac* (Dillon, 1953a, 19, §33, ll.534-7) 'If I had the whole of Ireland and the kingdom of Brega of the tallow hills, I would give it, no weak resolve, to be intimate of the place from which I came'. Thus Carey's citing of impersonal verbs as evidence of B's lesser interest in the Otherworld is not convincing.

The descriptions above are similar to those which put Connlae into a state of contemplation concerning the Otherworld, to which he ultimately travelled. The final poem in *Echtrae Chonnlai* is spoken by the woman to Connlae and includes the lines: *Im loing glano co-t-rismis/ ma ru:ismis síd mBóadaig...is ed a tír subathar/ menmain cáich to:n-imchella* 'In my ship of crystal may we encounter it, if we should reach the peace of Bóadag...It is the land which gladdens the mind of everyone whom it encompasses' (McCone, 2000, 187-192). Subsequently *fo:ceird iar suidiu Connle bedg n-úadib co:mboí issin nói glandai* 'thereupon Connlae took a leap from them so that there was escape in the pure ship' (McCone, 2000, 193-5). Similarly in SCC Lóeg's poem (§34) produces the final push for Cú Chulainn: *Luid Cú Chulaind lee iarom is tír ocus bert a charpat les co ráncatár in n-insi* (Dillon, 1953a, 20, §35, ll.577-8) 'Cú Chulainn went then into the land with her and took his chariot with him so that they reached the island'.

III.2.21.1. The last two lines of §34 to the end of §38 are in H's hand, this being his last interpolation in the tale. After Cú Chulainn has been welcomed by Labraid and especially by Fand, he asks: *Cid dogéntar sund hifechtsa?* (Dillon, 1953a, 20, §35, l.580) 'What is to be done here now?' Labraid and Cú Chulainn then go to survey the host, deeming it great, *ba dírim léo in slúag* (Dillon, 1953a, 20, §35, l.583) 'the host was innumerable to them'. Immediately, Cú Chulainn's reaction is to send Labraid away: *eirg ass hifechtsa* (Dillon, 1953a, 20, §35, ll.583) 'go away now', presumably so that he himself may take

on the host single-handed. There is a similar motif in *Echtrae Láegairi*, but with subtle differences. After the battle has been fought and Fiachnae and Láegaire have both defeated Goll son of Dolb, it remains for Fiachnae's wife to be rescued and returned to him: 'C'áit i tá in ben?' or Láegaire. 'A-tá i ndún Maige Mell', ol Fiachna, '7 leth in tshluaig impe' 'Where is the woman?' said Láegaire. 'She is in the fort of Mag Mell', said Fiachnae, 'with half the army around her' (Jackson, 1942, 382, ll.73-4, trans. 383). Thereupon, Láegaire says to Fiachnae: 'Anaid sund con-ta rós-sa mo choícait' 'Wait here until I get at them with my fifty' (Jackson, 1942, 382, ll.74-5). *Ro bás immurgu oc gabáil in dúine*. 'Bid bec torbai', or Láegaire; 'do-rochair for rí ocus do-rochratar for coim. Lécid in mnaí i-mmach ocus tabar slán dúib taris'. *Do-gníther ón*. 'However the capture of the fort was already in progress. 'It will be small profit', said Láegaire, 'your king has fallen and your nobles have fallen. Send the woman out and let quarter be given you for it'. That is done' (Jackson, 1942, 382, ll.76-8, trans. 383).

The episode in *SCC* helps feed Cú Chulainn's reputation as a fearsome warrior, his dismissal of Labraid carrying with it a note of arrogance and excessive self-esteem, and Láegaire's action is brave and magnanimous by comparison. Cú Chulainn's reputation is further enhanced by the appearance of two magic ravens, a symbol of forthcoming death. 'The major characteristic of ravens in the early literature is of evil, death and destruction. In addition, a strong image repeated in many of the stories is that of ravens as prophets, foretelling the future – which was itself usually linked with death' (Green, 1992, 177-8). *Aided Con Culainn* contains a short sequence where ravens appear just as the hero is dying: *táinic a richt fuince .i. fennóigi a frithibh forarda na firmaminti ósa cind, 7 do druit anuas d'éis a chéile no co ráinic a comgaire dó, 7 do léig a trí sgrécha comóra ósa chin* 'there came a shape of crows i.e. ravens from remote places very high in the firmament above his head and it moved down one after the other until it came near him and it let out three great screeches above his head' (Van Hamel, 1933, 113, §42). After the killing of Cú Chulainn in *Brislech Mór Maige Murthemni* the same motif occurs: *conid iar sin dolluid ind ennach for a gualaind* 'so that it is then the scald-crow went upon his shoulder' (Best and O'Brien, 1956, 450, l.14056). The host in *SCC* recognise the significance of the ravens' arrival: 'Is dóig', ol in shúag, 'in riastartha a

Hérend iss ed terchanait ind fhíaich’ (Dillon, 1953a, 20, §35, ll.586-7) ‘It is surely’ said the host, ‘that it is the frenzied one from Ireland whom the ravens foretell’.

Cú Chulainn proceeds to display his prowess in battle: *ro marb tríar for trichait dib a óenur* (Dillon, 1953a, 21, §36, l.591) ‘he killed thirty-three of them on his own’, including the Otherworld kings Eochaid Íuil and Senach Síabortha. It is as if Labraid stands back to let Cú Chulainn gain the glory and when he does appear on the scene, *mebais ríam forsna slógu* (Dillon, 1953a, 21, §36, ll.592-3) ‘the hosts fled before him’. Now it is Labraid’s turn to take charge. *Ro gáid Labraid dó anad dind imguin* (Dillon, 1953a, 21, §36, l.594) ‘Labraid requested of Cú Chulainn a staying of the slaughter’. Cú Chulainn’s destructive potential is voiced by Lóeg: *atágamar trá...in fer d’imbirt a fherci fornd úair nách lór leis di chath fúair* (Dillon, 1953a, 21, §36, ll.594-6) ‘we fear indeed...the man of wreaking his anger upon us because he thinks he has not had sufficient from the battle’. His reputation as *in ríastartha* is proved accurate and Lóeg, as one who knows him well, advises on the remedy: ‘*tiagar..ocus inlíte teóra dabcha úarusci do dibdúd a brotha*’. *In chétna dabach i tét fíchid tairse. In dabach tánaise nis fodaim nech ara tes. In tres dabach is comse a tes* (Dillon, 1953a, 21, §36, ll.596-9) ‘let them go...and let three vats of cold water be prepared for the extinguishing of his anger’. The first vat in which he goes boils over him. The second vat, none endures it on account of its heat. The third vat, its heat is moderate’.

III.2.21.2. This passage recalls a similar instance in the *Macgnímrada*. The *Táin* and *SCC* are the only two sources for this motif, and the texts are also ‘linked by some suggestive verbal parallels - especially so in the case of the Book of Leinster *Táin*’ (Carey, 1994, 80). Lowe (2000, 119-30) sees Cú Chulainn as an embodiment of conflict and instability, ‘[t]his is the aspect of his role that is unique, and which sets him apart from other warriors...The terrifying bodily upheaval that is the *ríastrad* or warp-spasm, the almost supernatural displays of aggression and the very immediate physical danger that Cú Chulainn poses to all those around him (including those from his own society), all undermine his status as the pre-eminent hero’ (Lowe, 2000, 121). Cú Chulainn has been reluctant to go to the Otherworld, and when he does go he is in danger of losing control in a battle frenzy. His actions are a complete contradiction. Lowe, however, does not consider Cú Chulainn responsible for his actions in *SCC*: ‘Cú Chulainn is manipulated

almost arbitrarily by supernatural beings...he does not shape events so much as he is shaped by them' (2000, 125). It is perhaps appropriate at this juncture to take stock of what has gone before. Most of the action has been played out by this stage and we are into the final episode. Cú Chulainn has finally fought the battle alone. In order to judge the author's representation of him, let us look at the other two main male figures in the text, Lóeg and Labraid.

III.2.22. As charioteer to Cú Chulainn, Lóeg enjoys a close relationship which alternates between identification with and distance from the hero. He is messenger, but he also 'controls the 'message' the hero conveys, just as he conveys messages relayed to or about him, and he is in a position to manipulate these communications' (Nagy, 1997, 223). His role is pivotal in *SCC* as he is the one who is sent to make the journey to the Otherworld and it is his impressions of it which help Cú Chulainn decide to go himself. 'Lóeg tells of his experiences in the otherworld, in the fashion of those many characters whose metaphysical travels render them indispensable storytellers. This account has a startling effect on the hero, who gets up, converses easily with Lóeg, and is renewed in his mind by what the charioteer has to say. It is as if the charioteer brings back for the hero a revivifying cure in the form of news from the otherworld' (Nagy, 1997, 217). He literally acts, albeit reluctantly, as understudy for Cú Chulainn and this places him in a position to function as a sign himself of the hero. Nagy states that this sign of the charioteer can be 'a reflexive sign enforcing, undermining, and controlling the significance of his passenger' (1997, 292). Thus, while Lóeg performs some of Cú Chulainn's functions, they have the effect of rebounding on the hero and his lack of action. Lóeg's positivity counterpoints Cú Chulainn's negativity. However, this reflexive sign can also be applied to Lóeg's position as counsellor to the hero. Cú Chulainn's ignoring of his correct advice serves to undermine the reader's confidence in him and, taken together, these features of the text suggest a satirization of the hero.

Labraid is a warrior-king of some repute and as such merits comparison with Cú Chulainn. This comparison, however, does not lie in their respective prowess in battle but in their differing attitudes to it. We have only two instances in the tale where we have the spoken words of Labraid, but they are sufficient to illustrate his superior nature as a warrior. The first example is when he interrupts Lí Ban's poem in praise of him on the

basis that a man preparing for battle should not indulge in pride, for he states: *nach ardaicnid mellchi mescthair ar cond* (Dillon, 1953a, 8, §19, l.217) ‘nor is my reason confused by intoxication of pride’. The second is that, although he acquiesces in Cú Chulainn’s dismissal of him at the outset of the battle, he subsequently returns to remonstrate with him to desist from slaughter. While Cú Chulainn seems to manifest an intoxication of pride, Labraid portrays himself as a man of reason and integrity. As can be seen, Cú Chulainn does not compare well with either of the other two male figures in the tale.

III.2.23. Immediately following Cú Chulainn’s immersion in three vats of water to cool his battle frenzy, we have a long praise poem to him uttered by Fand. If Labraid considered Lí Ban’s eulogy of him earlier (§17) a little out of place, one might be forgiven for thinking Fand’s glorification of Cú Chulainn at this juncture also a trifle inopportune. While Cú Chulainn appears to have single-handedly defeated Labraid’s enemies and would therefore merit Fand’s praise, his lust for battle got the better of him. Restraint by means of a cooling off process also encountered in his final *macgnímrád* or ‘boyhood deed’ in *TBC* (O’Rahilly, 1976, 25, ll.814-21) is required so that ‘he does not expend the surplus energy on the destruction of his own followers’ (Lowe, 2000, 125) and could perhaps be interpreted as an incongruous end to this pivotal episode in the tale. After all, this battle was the reason behind Cú Chulainn’s invitation to the Otherworld in the first place. Instead of a considered, well-thought-out attitude to battle we witness an excess of ardour and a complete loss of control on the part of the hero. Fand greets his return thus:

Cingid dar fíru in cach tind,

Imthéit i n-ág i n-eslind:

Ní fil do bar láechraid laind

As chosmail fri Coin Culaind. (Dillon, 1953a, 22, ll.634-7, trans. Dillon, 1941, 43)

‘He strides over men in every dispute: he goes into danger and peril. There is none of your fierce warriors like to Cú Chulainn’. However, she also says: *ní fuair a shamail di ríg/eter mín ocus anmín* (Dillon, 1953a, 21, §37, ll.617-8) ‘he has not found his like as a

king both gentle and harsh’, gentleness being an attribute not so far displayed by the hero in this tale. Much of this poem is given over to Cú Chulainn’s physical attributes: *fil for a chind...tri foilt ní hinaind a nd(a)th, gilla oac amulach* (Dillon, 1953a, §37, 22, l.626-9) ‘upon his head there are three hairs that are not of the same colour, a young beardless lad’,

Fil i cehtar a dá grúad
Tibri derg amal crú rúad:
Tibri úani tibri g(orm)
Tibri corcra dath n-étrom (Dillon, 1953a, 21, §37, ll.618-21)

‘There is in each of his two cheeks a red blush like red blood; a green blush, a blue blush, a purple blush of light colours’. She takes credit (along with Lí Ban) for encouraging his visit to the Otherworld:

Cú Chulaind dotháet i lle
Int ócláech a Murthemne,
Is íat dorat sund hi fat
Ingena Áeda Abrat (Dillon, 1953a, 22, §37, ll.638-41)

‘Cú Chulainn comes hither, the warrior from Muirthemne; those who have brought him here from afar are the daughters of Áed Abrat’. Actually, much credit for his compliance with their wishes lies with Lógé and his powers of persuasion. It was directly after Lógé’s poems in praise of the Otherworld (§33 and §34) that Cú Chulainn finally embarked on the journey.

III.2.24.1. The saga continues with Lí Ban reciting a brief rhetoric to Cú Chulainn that is similar in style and content to the one she addressed to Labraid in §17. She says:

Fo chen Cú Chulaind
Torc torachtaide...
Már a menma
Míad curad cathbúadach

Cride níad

Nertlíá gáise (Dillon, 1953a, 22-3, §37, ll.647-53)

‘Welcome Cú Chulainn, boar of pursuing...great his spirit, honour of battle-victorious champions, heart of a hero, strong stone of wisdom’. She also refers to his attractive appearance: *álaind a lí/ lí súla do andrib* (Dillon, 1953a, 23, §38, ll.657-8) ‘beautiful his colour, brightness of eye for women’. What these women find appealing in the hero are his youth and handsome appearance. He has not displayed characteristics such as gentleness and wisdom, which could suggest maturity.

Perhaps Cú Chulainn might have been expected to reject this eulogy, as Labraid had rejected Lí Ban’s earlier. Instead, he accepts the adulation of these two women without comment. Early Irish law considers the issue of over-praise, holding ‘that a poet’s praise should bear some relation to reality...a poet is not entitled to payment for a false praise-poem on the grounds that false praise is equivalent to satire’ (Kelly, 1988, 139). While it is not being suggested that these poems are directly satirizing Cú Chulainn, they do reflect on the speaker as well as the one spoken to. Fand and Lí Ban are effusive concerning Cú Chulainn’s beauty and valour in battle. Salberg (1992, 169) refers to their ‘extremely laudatory comments’ on the hero. Lí Ban has already been pulled up by Labraid over this. Both herself and Fand appear somewhat naïve in their judgement of Cú Chulainn. What is the author saying here about these women? He seems to exhibit an ambiguous attitude to women in this tale. Lowe (2000, 122), referring to Cú Chulainn’s behaviour in general, states that ‘his actions follow no logical course; they are irrational - proceeding not from deliberate or premeditated action but from bodily excitation and turbulence, as though he is the victim of forces beyond his control’. In §5 we have seen women portrayed in a ridiculous light as they maim themselves in imitation of Cú Chulainn when he undergoes his *riastrad*. Here in §37 and §38 we have women appearing to be rather foolish again. All they cite in praise of Cú Chulainn are his reputation and good looks. They are dreamy-eyed in the face of his youth and beauty and seem to have difficulty judging him in a balanced fashion. When dissatisfied with his reaction to their visitation as birds in §7, they came back to beat him within an inch of his

life for his attack upon them (§8). They are being portrayed as irrational. To some extent they project characteristics similar to that of the hero himself.

III.2.24.2. Immediately on the heels of Lí Ban's poem in praise of Cú Chulainn she asks him: *ceist cid dorónais, a Chú Chulaind?* (Dillon, 1953a, 23, §38, l.660) 'a question, what did you do, Cú Chulainn?' The remainder of §38 gives cause for confusion 'since it conflicts with what immediately precedes' (Dillon, 1941-2, 126, n.15). As Salberg (1992, 169) points out, it certainly is unusual that Lí Ban should praise the hero before she actually asks him what he has done. While this chapter is part of a continuous H interpolation running from the last two lines of §34 to the end of §38, it has been agreed by Thurneysen and Dillon (Dillon, 1941-2, 126n15) that two different versions are represented in this excerpt. They are also in agreement as to where one must put the transition: 'immediately after the end of the poem of Lí Ban in chapter 38, before her question' (Salberg, 1992, 168). While no great justification is given by these critics for the differentiation of two versions here (Salberg, 1992, 168-9), the information given in the description of the battle in §36 differs from that presented in this poem (end of §38). In the prose narrative of §36 neither Éogan Inbir nor Manannán is mentioned; 'Cú Chulainn there surprises Echaid (sic) Íuil at a spring washing his hands, and pierces his shoulder with a javelin. Alone he kills thirty-three of them. He then kills Senach Síabortha, and the host scatters at the approach of Labraid' (Dillon, 1941-2, 127). In the poem of §38, however, Cú Chulainn gives us to understand that he killed Echu Íuil while he was in a stronghold:

Tarlucus urchur dom shleig

I ndúnad Éogain Inbir.....

Rochúala cneit Echach Íuil

Is ó chraidí labrait bíuil..... (Dillon, 1953a, 23-4, §38, ll.662-3 and ll.678-9)

Mad fír co fír bes níp cath

Int urchur ma tarlacad (Dillon, 1953a, 24, §38, ll 680-1)

'I hurled a shot from my spear into the camp of Éogan Inbir...I heard the groan of Echu Íuil, it is from the heart the mouth speaks'. Dillon here differs from his earlier (1940,

281) edition of this poem in the wording of line 679, which is taken as: *i sochraidí labrait biuil* ‘lips move amongst friends’, an emendation suggested by Gerard Murphy (Dillon, 1953a, 24, n.1). This poem presents a number of difficulties (Dillon, 1940, 280), including the final two lines of the above. These Dillon hesitantly translates as: ‘If the truth were truly known, perhaps the cast which was thrown was vain’ (1940, 283). Findon (1997, 119) translates the same lines thus: ‘if it be a true attestation perhaps there may be no battle; if the cast was thrown’. The issue of whether there was any real battle or not seems to be generally in doubt. Further difficulty arises in verse 4:

Immimróus cipé cruth

In tan tánic mo lánluth

Óenfher dia trícha cét

Conda rucus dochom n-éc

Dillon’s (1941, 44) translation reads; ‘I made a circuit by some endeavour when my full vigour came, alone against their army, so that I put them to death’. Later Dillon (1953a, 42, note on l.677) suggested *conda* as ‘‘doglike’’; or, reading *condid*, ‘so that I brought him’’. The meaning here is crucial to our understanding of the phenomenon of Cú Chulainn’s slaughter of Manannán’s army. Salberg (1992, 169) feels that, except for Eochaid Íuil, ‘Cú Chulainn does not seem to have killed anybody else’. Therefore we must re-examine these lines. Taking *conda* as *co* plus Class C infixed pronoun 3sg.masc., in accordance with Middle Irish usage (McCone, 1997, 13), we may presume *conda rucus* to mean ‘so that I brought him’. And if we consider the line *óenfher dia trícha cét* to be a hanging nominative construction with *dia* translated as ‘of their’ rather than ‘against their’, we may translate the quatrain as follows: ‘I made a circuit, howsoever, when my full vigour came, so that one single man of their army, I brought him to death’ i.e. ‘so that I brought one single man of their army to death’ (this we may take to be Eochaid Íuil). This, then, seems to be the extent of Cú Chulainn’s slaughter on his own admission.

III.2.25. Thrice in the poem *Cú Chulainn* expresses doubt as to whether his aim attained its target. Besides the already quoted final two lines, the beginning of the poem contains the following

*Nocon fhetur, sochla sét,
In búaid dorignius nó in bét* (Dillon, 1953a, 23, §38, ll.664-5)

‘I do not know, famous path, whether it is a victory that I accomplished or a misdeed’. This is in reference to his casting into the stronghold of Éogan Inbir. Again *Cú Chulainn* seems unsure in verse 2:

*Cid ferr cid messu dom nirt,
Co sse ní tharlus dom chirt
Urchur anfis fhair hi céo:
Bés ná n-árlaid duni béo.* (Dillon, 1953a, 23, §38, ll.666-9)

‘Whether my strength is better or worse, up to now, for my entitlement, I have not hurled a cast of ignorance at a man in mist: perhaps a living person did not vanish (because of it)’. The mood of *SCC*’s poem is one of doubt and uncertainty. There is little evidence here of the hero described by Fand and *Lí Ban* earlier on.

As already stated, it is generally accepted that two versions are represented in this excerpt, Thurneysen believing that the first part comes from Version A and the second from B. Dillon (1941-2, 126) disagrees with Thurneysen, judging it to be the other way round. He states: the ‘whole passage is written very closely on erasure’ and according to him, Thurneysen presumed that ‘the interpolator erased the original A text and rewrote it smaller so as to fit in a B passage later’. However, Dillon himself holds that the interpolator ‘wished to substitute a long passage from B, and erased enough of the A text to fit in the interpolation and rewrite the part of A that he wished to retain’ (Dillon, 1941-2, 126). In dealing with this problem, Salberg (1992) undertakes an exhaustive mathematical study calculating how many lines and how much space the text would require if written by M and, furthermore, how many lines were involved in the text erased

by H, since we know that after this poem the interference of the interpolator ends. Suffice it to say that Salberg's conclusions agree with Dillon's, that the first part came from B and the second from A. As to the bearing this information has on the tale it seems to suggest that we have a much less confident hero in the A part, one who may only have killed a single person of the enemy's forces, Echu Íuil. Obviously we cannot know what has been omitted from either version but there is a serious contradiction between the two.

III.2.26.1. After this the tone of the tale 'shifts towards the psychological...as Fand and Emer fight over Cú Chulainn; the writing, which seems very literary at this point, is emotional but never sentimental' (Gantz, 1981,154). *Fóid Cú Chulaind iar sin lasin n-ingin ocus anais mís ina farrad... ocus is and doronsat comdail ic Ibur Chind Tráchtá. Ro innis do Emir aní sin* (Dillon, 1953a, 24, §39, ll.682-6) 'Cú Chulainn then spends the night with the girl (Fand) and stayed a month with her...and then they made a tryst at Ibar Cind Tráchtá. He told that thing to Emer'. This is stated in a matter-of-fact way, as if Cú Chulainn saw no reason why Emer should object to this. However, she manifested her feelings in no uncertain manner. *Dorónta scena acciside do marbad na ingine. Tánic ocus cóeca ingen lee connici in comdail* (Dillon, 1953a, 24, §39, ll.686-7) 'knives were made by her for the killing of the girl. She and fifty maidens with her, came to the tryst'. O'Leary (1987, 37-8), states that the 'sexual morality of early Irish saga literature was based on a definite double standard for men and women'. In *Tochmarc Emire Cú Chulainn* and Emer promised one another to preserve chastity while apart: *tingellais cách díb dia chéli coméit a ngenais acht mani fagbadh nechtar díb bás foí, co comristais doridisi* 'each of them promised the other to keep their chastity, unless one of the two of them might die for it, until they would meet again' (Van Hamel, 1933, 45, §59), Cú Chulainn, unlike Emer, fails to keep his side of the bargain. With no apparent feeling of guilt he sleeps with Scáthach, Úathach and Aife, 'and arranges a future tryst in Ireland with Derbforgaill, although this relationship is never consummated' (O'Leary, 1987, 38).

Thus in *SCC* Cú Chulainn appears casual and unconcerned in relation to the fact that Emer has a rival for his affections. *Ro boí Cú Chulaind ocus Lóeg oc immirt fuidchilli ocus níro airigset na mná chucu* (Dillon, 1953a, 24, §39, ll.687-8) 'Cú Chulainn and Lóeg were playing *fidchell* and did not perceive the women coming towards them'. As Fand warns of their coming, she refers to Emer's altered state; *glé ro soi gné Emer*

ingen Fhorgaill (Dillon, 1953a, 24, §39, l.695) ‘it is clear that Emer, daughter of Forgall has changed her form’. Cú Chulainn immediately comes to the defence of Fand against Emer. *Nít agara...ar do thesarcoinsiu ar andrib ilib imdaib hi cethairid Ulad, ar cia nos báigea ingen Fhorcaill a hucht a comalta im gním co cumachta, bás ní lim lamathar* (Dillon, 1953a, 24, §39, ll.696-700) ‘let you not fearfor your protection against all the numerous women in the four quarters of the Ulstermen, for although the daughter of Forgall puffs herself up in the midst of her foster sisters concerning a mighty deed, perhaps she may not dare with me’. Indeed, Cú Chulainn positively displays anger at Emer’s attempts to disrupt his tryst with Fand. *Not sechnaimsea, a ben, amal sechnas cách a chárailt. Ní rubimsea do gáe crúaid crithlámach nach do scían tím thanaidi nácht’ferg thréith thimairthech, ar is mórdolig mo nert do scor ó nirt mná* (Dillon, 1953a, 24, §39, ll.702-5) ‘I avoid you woman, as everyone avoids his friend. I cannot strike your hard hand-trembling spear nor your slender feeble knife nor your weak and restrained anger, for it is very grievous to release my strength on account of the strength of a woman’.

As O’Leary (1984, 38) points out ‘Cú Chulainn eventually does forgo his tryst with Fann, but more under the influence of Emer’s personality than from any sense that he has acted wrongly’. The author uses both Emer and Fand as verbal instruments to uphold honour and dignity. O’Leary (1987, 40-41) says that ‘for the Irishwoman chastity, in its most strictly limited sense, meant fidelity to the man to whom she was presently united...That it often meant more to her on a deeper level of personal honour is dramatically evident in the literature’. While it may be pointed out that Emer has not demonstrated jealousy before this in the saga despite referring to the shame of her husband’s lying in a *serglige* for love of another woman (§30), ‘a closer examination [here] will...show that her rage is precipitated by the manner in which Cú Chulainn has acted rather than by his actions themselves’ (O’Leary, 1987, 38). Cú Chulainn’s previous infidelities occurred while he was away or in private, but here we have the hero publicly favouring Fand over Emer. Honour was a public virtue in early Irish society (O’Leary, 1984, 115) and Emer’s honour is publicly being taken away in this episode. We note the fact that Emer has brought fifty maidens with her as witnesses and she emphasises the cause of her anger when she addresses Cú Chulainn thus: *Ceist trá...cid fódrúair*

latsu...mo dímiadsa fiad andrib ilib in chúicid ocus fiad andrib ilib na Hérend ocus fiad áis enig archena? (Dillon, 1953a, 24-5, §39, ll.706-8) ‘A question however...what has caused you to dishonour me before many women of the province and before many women of Ireland and before people of honour in general?’

III.2.26.2. Charles-Edwards (1978, 123-41) also discusses the role of honour in early Irish literature with particular reference to *Fingal Rónáin*, and points out that its background is ‘an essentially pre-state form of society’ (1978, 137). Such a society had to depend on public sanction to function properly, since, ‘in the absence of powerful government the responsibility for maintaining peace and stability lay almost entirely elsewhere’ (1978, 136). Honour and shame were the opposing public declarations of a person’s value in this society. Therefore ‘well-developed and vigorously applied concepts of honour and shame - namely the public valuation or judgement of individual character and conduct openly declared - [were] essential to any such form of society’ (1978, 137).

The need for public over private declaration is powerfully illustrated by Charles-Edwards (1978, 138) in the following: ‘It was important to make everything as public as possible: killing was undoubtedly a great evil, but it was not in the same league of wickedness as secret murder. If a man would only publicly admit to a killing then there were ways of coping with the situation, peacemakers, arbitrators and wise men who might be able to assess compensation, pacify the vengeful and mobilise the forces making for reconciliation. Against secret murder society was almost helpless’. Thus while Emer’s reactions may appear rather extreme in today’s society, they are rational when viewed in terms of their contemporary background and we begin to appreciate the importance to Emer of retaining her honour publicly.

Honour was defended fiercely by warriors in the literature (O’Leary, 1987, 27) and here in *SCC* we see Emer herself acting like a warrior by taking up weapons in her own defence. Cú Chulainn has publicly humiliated her and she is forced to take on a masculine role in order to combat this. However, the author of this tale is not exclusively interested in the physical side of things, and at this stage his concentration is more on the emotional aspect, as he has Emer finally resort to words rather than knives in her own support. Fand is a bystander in this episode, also witnessing Emer’s humiliation.

However, when, in the end, Cú Chulainn appears to choose Emer over her, this amounts to a public loss of honour for her too.

III.2.27. Emer appeals to Cú Chulainn: *Bés nípad rith latsú mo lécunsa, a gillai, cia no trialltá* (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §41, ll.709-10) ‘Perhaps my leaving would not be a course with you, lad, although you would try’ i.e. ‘Perhaps you would not succeed in leaving me?’ presumably. Cú Chulainn answers by citing the reasons why Fand would make an ideal *comchéle* (joint spouse) for Emer: *ar chétus in ben sa is sí in glan genmaid gel gasta dingbála do rí...co ndeilb ocus écosc ocus sóerchenél, co ndrúni ocus laímnda...co céill ocus chond* (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §42, ll.712-5) ‘firstly, this woman is clean, chaste, bright, nimble, worthy of a king...with a fair form and good appearance and nobility, with embroidery and handicraft, with sense and prudence’. Cú Chulainn sees no reason why he cannot be a hero and protector to both women at the same time and hopes that they will enter into a bond together. He manifests self-pride as he argues: ‘*A Emer...ní faigebasu curaid cáin créchtach cathbúadach bádam fíusa*’ (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §42, ll.717-8) ‘Emer...you will not get a warrior handsome, battle-scarred, battle- triumphant who could equal me’. There is a parallel here with the beginning of the tale, when Emer described herself as having to share Cú Chulainn with all the women of Ulster. Whereas these adored him from afar, Cú Chulainn is straining Emer’s tolerance now by again expecting her to share him, but this time as a husband.

Findon (1997, 111) recognises in the above lines a reference to early Irish marriage laws. She states: ‘implicit in Cú Chulainn’s defence of his decision to sleep with Fand is the idea that he has the legal right to have relationships with more than one woman at a time. The early Irish marriage laws list several forms of marital union of varying degrees of formality, and make it clear that a man could be married to ‘wives’ of different categories simultaneously. Naturally, such marriage practices did not meet with the approval of the Christian church’. Carey (1994, 84) sees reflected here a certain unease regarding early Irish marriage law which was to be manifested in the twelfth century church reforms. If so, the author has chosen to highlight this phenomenon mostly through the words of the women themselves.

Emer’s retort consists of a ‘series of gnomic sayings which purport to express well-known truths, but (she) harnesses them to her own personal complaint’ (Findon,

1997, 125). These state that new and novel can take precedence over the usual: *acht chena is álaind cech nderg, is gel cech núa, is cainn cech ard, is serb cach gnáth* (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §43, ll.719-21) ‘but besides, everything that shines is beautiful, every new thing is bright, everything out of reach is fair, and everything that is familiar is bitter’. Emer’s final words in the tale have the effect of turning her potential abandonment by Cú Chulainn into a resurgence of feeling for her: “*A gillai, ar sí ‘ro bāmarni fecht co cátaid acut ocus no bemmís dorísi diambad áil duitsiu’. Ocus robo dograch furri*” (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §43, ll.722-4) ‘‘Lad’ said she, ‘we were with you with dignity once and we should be so again if you would desire it’. And there was melancholy upon her’. These words from the heart cause Cú Chulainn to declare: *Dar ar mbréthir trá isatt áilsiu domsa ocus bídat áil hi céin bat béo* (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §43, ll.724-5) ‘Upon my word, you are dear to me and you will be dear as long as you live’. It is interesting to note that Emer combines dignity with the notion of desire here while it is *áil* that Cú Chulainn picks up on. The author creates a play on this word which results in both protagonists using it in very different ways.

III.2.28.1. With this admission of his continued sexual feelings for Emer, Fand voluntarily bows out of the contest. While Cú Chulainn describes his feelings in the language of desire, both Fand and Emer continue the discussion from the standpoint of honour and dignity (*cattu*). Cú Chulainn has effectively caused the public dishonouring of both women in turn, yet by their utterances they succeed in maintaining dignity and composure throughout the proceedings. It may be pertinent at this point to refer to an incident in *Fled Bricrend* when Cú Chulainn is confronted with the *bachlach*. He does not waver and run as did Lóegaire and Conall Cernach but rather utters the following: *as fer limp ecc comm inchaib* (Henderson, 1899, 126, §99) ‘I would prefer death with my honour’. It seems as if honour to Cú Chulainn is a male preserve to be flaunted publicly, and undermining another’s honour does not enter into the reckoning. Cú Chulainn shows himself to be an unworthy spouse to either woman, displaying a total lack of understanding as to their respective positions. Nowhere does he refer to the issue closest to the women’s hearts. In the final analysis it is Emer and Fand who decide between them who will remain with Cú Chulainn and who will relinquish him. Gwara (1988, 61) refers to the fact that ‘the notion of concupiscence and continence permeated religious thought

throughout the Middle Ages'. He cites the patristic attitude concerning the cause of sin, which held the theory that sin derived from *concupiscentia* and *incontentia*. According to Gwara (1988, 61) 'incontinence was the inability to control base desire'. In *SCC* we witness Cú Chulainn endeavouring to give in to his desires, whether it be on the battlefield or in relation to Fand. His lack of control is in stark contrast to the *cumang* demonstrated by the women, especially in the ensuing scene.

III.2.28.2. Fand addresses Cú Chulainn thus: *mo léucsa didiu* (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §44, l.726) 'leave me then'. Emer counters this remark with: *is córa mo léucsa* (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §44, l.726) 'it is more appropriate to leave me'. Neither woman intends to continue the relationship as a *comchéle*. Fand instinctively knows *messi léicfidir* (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §44, l.726) 'it is I who shall be abandoned', and this is humiliating for her, *ar bá nár lée a léucd* (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §44, l.729) 'for her abandonment was shameful with her'. The poem she subsequently utters is directed at Emer and is a dignified defence of her position. She acknowledges Emer's right to Cú Chulainn, and her own worth: *A Emer, is lat in fer/ ocus ro mela, a deigben* (Dillon, 1953a, 26, §44, ll.740-1) 'Emer, the man is yours and may you enjoy him, good woman'. However, she makes it clear that she herself knows what it is to be true: *mór fer ro boi com iarraid/ eter chlithar is díamair/noco dernad ríu mo dál/ dáig is misi rop irán* (Dillon, 1953a, 26, §44, ll.744-8) 'many men were seeking me between shelter and a hidden place, my tryst was not made with them, since I wished to be righteous'. We are to understand that Fand fell in love with Cú Chulainn only after her abandonment by Manannán. Indeed, previously Lí Ban intimated as much when talking to Cú Chulainn: *ros léci Manandán mac Lir ocus dorat seirc duitsiu* (Dillon, 1953a, 5, §13, ll.132-3) 'Manannán has left her and she has given her love to you'. Thus this is her second abandonment, leaving her emotionally and physically vulnerable. She is physically vulnerable as she is away from home: *robad fherr lim bith hi fus...ná dula ...co gríanán Áeda Abrat* (Dillon, 1953a, 25, §44, ll.736-9) 'I would prefer to be here than to go to Áed Abrat's palace' and in verse 5 she chides Emer whom she considers to have taken advantage of her isolated position: *cóeca ban tánac i lle/a Emer án fholtbuide/do thascrad ar Faínd, ní fó/ is dá marbad ar andró* (Dillon, 1953a, 26, §44, ll.752-5) 'you came hither with fifty women, o noble yellow-haired Emer, for the overthrowing of Fand, it is not good, and for her killing on account

of misery'. She lets it be known that she could muster three times this number of loyal supporters if she were in her own territory: *atát tri cócait rim lá/ do mnáib áille óentamá/ acum i ndún imma lle/ noco tréicfitis messe* (Dillon, 1953a, 26, §44, ll.756-9) 'I have three fifties of beautiful maidens as long as I live, together in a fort, who would not abandon me'. Although admitting defeat, Fand's delivery is such that it evokes respect as well as sympathy.

III.2.28.3. While Cú Chulainn forms a union with Fand in the Otherworld, he does not remain there. Fand is then obliged to follow Cú Chulainn to the mortal world where she finds herself alone and without support. Fand has deserted her kindred in favour of Cú Chulainn. Her male equivalent in this situation would have been the *cú glas*, the exile from overseas. In the law tracts there are three categories of men 'whose honour-prices are fixed according to the honour-prices of their wives: a man without land who has married an heiress, 'a man who follows his wife's buttocks across a boundary' (of a kingdom), namely an *ambue*, and finally a *cú glas*' (Charles-Edwards, 2000, 97). 'One way in which a man might become a *cú glas* was to have been a *muirchuirthe*, a man stranded from the sea. *Muirchuirthe* is used as a gloss on *cú glas*' in the law tract on *díre* and 'the natural assumption is that the *cú glas* had a lower status than the *ambue*' (Charles-Edwards, 2000, 98-9). Thus the *cú glas* is generally treated as an outcast in society and occupies the lowest rung on the social ladder. Irish law was unsympathetic to persons such as Fand: 'It is illegal – even for a cleric or layman of *nemed* rank – to give protection to various categories of absconder, e.g. a runaway wife or slave, a fugitive killer, an absconder from his kindred, etc.' (Kelly, 1988, 141). This contrasts with *Echtrae Chonnlai* where Connlai follows the woman never to return: *Imram moro do:génset nad:aicsea ó sin* '(It is) a voyage of the sea that they did and they were not seen thereafter' (McCone, 2000, 197-8). It also contrasts with *Echtrae Láegairi*, where Láegaire also makes the journey home, but only to inform his father of his intention to remain forever in the Otherworld. Láegaire has been won over by his experiences there while Cú Chulainn wishes to introduce Fand to his own society. In *Echtrae Láegairi* the transfer of a mortal to an Otherworld role is smooth and unhindered, in *SCC* the opposite move is fraught with problems, not least of which is the jealousy of Emer. Cú Chulainn

has shown himself to be an unstable element in society and his introduction of Fand to this society has exacerbated the situation.

III.2.29.1. In §45 the author sets about a solution to the problem. Fand's dilemma is revealed to Manannán, who proceeds to come to her side, albeit unseen by anyone but Fand alone, a motif that is also present in *Echtrae Chonnlai: Ní:acci nech in mnaí acht Connle a óenur* and *a rro:cólatar uili an ro:rádi in ben n-che:n-acatar* 'No one saw the woman but Connle alone' and 'when all heard what the woman had said and they did/could not see her' (McCone, 2000, 136-7 and 146-7). She is being reclaimed by her own and this allusion to Manannán's invisibility serves to emphasise the pair's Otherworldliness and an imminent return to their married state. It also intimates a certain superiority over mortals *nín acend nach meraige* (Dillon, 1953a, 27, §45, l.796) 'the foolish one does not see him', a phenomenon further endorsed by her remark to him '*t'imthecht seochainni co se/ ní acend acht sídaige* (Dillon, 1953a, 28, §45, ll.799-800) 'your coming past us now, only the Otherworld one sees'. This motif in *Echtrae Chonnlai* also suggests the superiority of the woman over the protagonist. On seeing Manannán, Fand is sorrowful: *is and sin ro gab etere móir ocus drochmenmain in n-ingin oc fégad Manandán* (Dillon, 1953a, 26, §45, ll.764-5) 'it was then a great regret and unhappiness seized the girl observing Manannán'. Fand's final lay addresses a number of pertinent issues. Firstly, the sight of him evokes in her a remembrance of things past, of a time when they were happy together:

Lá ro bása ocus mac Lir

Hi ngríanán Dúni Inbir

Ropo dóig lind cen anad

Noco biad ar n-imscarad (Dillon, 1953a, 27, §45, ll.775-8)

'there was a day myself and Mac Lir were in the sunpalace of Dún Inbir, it was certain with us, without staying, that we would not separate'. She refers to his eminent position, *úas domun dind* (Dillon, 1953a, 26, §45, l.769) 'over/above the world of hills', and calls him *Manandán mass* (Dillon, 1953a, 27, §45, l.779) 'noble Manannán'. She recalls the time that he brought her home as wife and how fitting their marriage arrangement was, as

they were equally matched in skill and wealth: *noco bérad orm ria lind/ cluchi eráil ar fuidchill* (Dillon, 1953a, 27, §45, ll.781-2) ‘he could not bring on me an extra game of *fidchell* in his time’. However, she sadly states:

mád indíu bá dígrais níall
ní charand mo menma múad:
is éraise in rét int sherc:
téit a héol cen immitech (Dillon, 1953a, 27, §45, ll.771-4)

‘if it were today lament would be keen, my proud spirit does not love him, love is a transient thing, its knowledge goes quickly’. Her reference to love as fleeting, while still remembering her initial feelings for Manannán, suggests she now regards love less seriously than she has hitherto. She states:

mad messe bá dethbir dam
dáig at báetha cíalla ban:
inti ro charus co holl
domrat sund i n-écomlond (Dillon, 1953a, 28, §45, ll.803-6)

‘as for me, it was right for me, because women’s senses are foolish, he whom I loved so greatly has brought me here into distress’. The experience of love with Cú Chulainn has left her questioning her own capability to discern and she pleads female weakness as the cause of her ruin. Although her feelings for Manannán are less than heretofore, this is where her duty lies: *ragat rim cheli fodéin/ dáig noco dingnea m’amréir* (Dillon, 1953a, 28, §45, ll.815-6) ‘I shall go with my own spouse because he will not act against my wishes’. The transience of love is here juxtaposed with the durability of marriage and is found to be wanting. She has been betrayed by *áil*. The long-term commitment in a marriage union is thus promoted.

III.2.29.2. In citing women’s foolishness as the reason for her having succumbed to Cú Chulainn, Fand seems to echo earlier instances in the tale where women have not appeared to act sensibly. For instance, when the women of Ulster maimed themselves in

support of their chosen Ulster heroes they must have appeared, no doubt intentionally, ridiculous, especially in relation to this motif as it is presented in *Talland Étair*. To go to such lengths for love of a hero, especially one as unstable as that presented here, suggests satire on the part of the author. Findon (1997, 117) refers to this passage thus: ‘Although... hyperbolic, employing the type of exaggeration frequently found in these early tales, Leborcham’s point is clear: Cú Chulainn’s attitude is improper’. While Findon (1997, 114-20) acknowledges ambiguity in relation to Cú Chulainn, she disregards it in relation to the women and apparently deems this hyperbole to be primarily devised to show-up the hero. ‘The fact that the women are *never* (her italics) represented in the ‘ironic mode’ allows the audience to perceive the implied meanings in the text and its criticisms of its own ‘heroic’ society’ (Findon, 1997, 116). However, other instances in the tale include when Lí Ban and Fand beat Cú Chulainn incessantly; and when Lí Ban eulogised Labraid overmuch so that she had to be silenced. It therefore seems that the author intends the women to appear emotionally over-charged, beating their hero initially and then gushing all over him. They are not balanced, and this prompts a comparison with Cú Chulainn himself. He starts out as hesitant and then goes over the top. Holding Cú Chulainn in such esteem reflects badly on the women and the author underpins this by satirizing them in certain situations. The author seems generally to view women as weak and easily led; Emer alone comes over as wise.

III.2.30.1. Although Fand admits to being foolish in her affection for Cú Chulainn, she lets it be known that she does not leave in disgrace; *aso sind úait co sochraid/...nár apraid is céim i cleith ...mád álic dúibsi fégaid* (Dillon, 1953a, 28, §45, ll.808-18) ‘behold we go from you with pride...say not it is a step in secret... observe if you wish’. The author permits Fand a respectful departure, one that preserves her dignity intact. She is not judged harshly in the text. Rather, there is implicit in the lay a critique of contemporary marriage laws (Findon, 1997, 136). These irregularities were illustrated by Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, in a letter written to king Toirdelbach Ua Briain in 1074:

However among many things that please us some things have been reported to us that displease us: namely, that in your kingdom every man abandons his lawfully

wedded wife at his own will without the occasion of a canonical cause; and with a boldness that must be punished takes to himself some other wife who may be of his own kin or of the kindred of the wife whom he has abandoned, or whom another has abandoned in like wickedness, according to a law of marriage that is rather a law of fornication (Gwynn, 1968, 4).

Although a document of the late eleventh century, this letter could possibly reflect the attitude of at least some clerical circles to marriage customs in Ireland some time before this date (Findon, 1997, 112). The Old Irish law tract *Bretha Crólige* (§57) while acknowledging a difference of opinion, offers an alternative view: *ar atá forcosnam la Féne cia de as techtta in nilar comperta fa huathad, ar robáttar tuiccsi de i (n)nilar lánamnusa, connach airissa a caithiugud oldás a molad* ‘for there is a dispute in Irish law as to which is more proper, whether many sexual unions or a single: for the chosen [people] of God lived in plurality of unions, so that it is not easier to condemn it than to praise it’ (Binchy, 1938, 44-47). This effort by Christian lawyers to justify multiple unions by giving an Old Testament parallel, simultaneously points to argument within the church regarding this issue as early as the eighth century. However, the fact that a second wife is referred to as *adaltrach* (Kelly, 1988, 71) suggests unease on the church’s part with polygyny and its ‘probably widespread’ practice (Kelly, 1988, 70). Fand’s dilemma could therefore mirror the dispute within the Irish church itself.

III.2.30.2. Having taken her leave of Cú Chulainn, Fand addresses her final words to Lóeg:

Éрге seo mithig damsa..

Is mór in tóchosol trá

A Laíg, a meic Riangabrá (Dillon, 1953a, 28, §45, ll.811-4)

‘This setting out is now timely for me... great is the loss, o Lóeg, son of Riangabur’. It is as though she instinctively feels he is one who can fully empathise with her, being of Otherworld parentage himself, and thus makes a fitting acknowledgement of his efforts on her behalf and also on Cú Chulainn’s behalf throughout the tale. Even though Fand departs

with grace, what has happened to her can be regarded as shameful. Elsewhere in early Irish literature, if a woman is shamed, particularly if this involved sexual matters, the only honourable recourse for her was death, whether she was guilty or innocent. Lúaine dies in *Tochmarc Lúaine ocus Aided Aithairne* because of the shame brought upon her by Aithirne and his sons. They compose a satire over her on account of her rejection of their sexual advances. The author has created a shameful situation in *SCC* but the outcome is unusual in that Fand is allowed retain honour. Similarly, abduction is a source of shame-induced deaths. This is evident in *Acallamh na Senórach*, wherein ‘a young woman abducted by Oisín is overwhelmed when she sees her father approach her’ (O’Leary, 1987, 36). She immediately puts her face to the ground and dies (O’Grady, 1892, 160). If we compare the episode of the abduction of Fíachnae’s wife in *Echtrae Láegairi*, she is returned to her husband without loss of honour. In fact, she chants a lay in which she relates how she fell in love with each of her captors:

*Ba mellchu lim dul (i n)dáil
I ngnáis Echada meic S(h)áil...
Iar sain carsor Goll mac Duilb*

‘Sweeter I thought it to go to a tryst in the company of Eochaidh son of Sál...after that I loved Goll son of Dolbh’ (Jackson, 1942, 384, ll .84-7, trans. 385). Thus the wife of Fíachnae bears no stigma as a result of her abduction and is permitted to disclose a personal insight into her situation, as is Fand in *SCC*. In both of these texts we witness an interesting inversion of the norm, and this shift serves to highlight the wrong done to these women.

III.2.31. The departure of Fand is wound up in §46 by her informing Manannán clearly of her intentions. As he initially abandoned her, it is seemly that he should leave the decision to her and asks; *maith, a ingen, in oc urnaidi Chon Culaind bía fodechtsa, nó in limsa doraga?* (Dillon, 1953a, 28, §46, ll.820-1) ‘well girl, will you be at waiting for Cú Chulainn or will you go with me?’. Although Manannán’s return has set things to rights, Fand’s reason for her decision may be viewed as an implicit reproach directed at his own earlier abandonment of her: *is letsu ragatsa, ocus ní irnaidiub Coin Culaind, ar rom thréc*

(Dillon, 1953a, 28, §46, ll.823-4) ‘I will go with you and I will not await Cú Chulainn, for he has abandoned me’. She imparts to him her heart’s preference: *fil uaib nech bad fherr lim a chéli do lenmain* (Dillon, 1953a, 28, §46, ll.822-3) ‘there is one of you I would prefer to follow than the other’. However, her ultimate reason focuses firmly on what is considered correct rather than what may be desired: *ocus arail and, dano, a degduini, ní fil rígain chátamail acotsu, atá immurgu la Coin Culaind* (Dillon, 1953a, 28, §46, ll.824-5) ‘and something else, good man, you have not a dignified queen, but Cú Chulainn has’. According to Findon (1997, 129) ‘it is worth noting that it is Fand’s decision to leave the hero, and *not* (her italics) any decision on his part, which brings about a turning point in the narrative’. The author’s solution is thus for each to reclaim their rightful partner.

III.2.32.1. Cú Chulainn has not figured strongly in the preceding few paragraphs of the saga but now in §47 the focus comes back to him. As he perceives Fand departing, he turns to Lóeg and asks: *Cret sít?* ‘How is that?’ Lóeg explains: *Fand ic dul la Manandán mac Lir ar nocorb álic duitsiu hí* (Dillon, 1953a, 29, §47, ll.827-9) ‘Fand is going with Manannán mac Lir because she was not pleasing to you’. It is as if Cú Chulainn has forgotten or regarded lightly his remark to Emer in §43, when he proclaimed his continued desire for her as long as she might live, and the devastating effect this was likely to have on Fand. It has still not occurred to him that he cannot have both women. What was he doing while the women were discussing him? While he could not see Manannán, Fand had addressed him directly when taking her leave of him. He does not seem to have been able to keep abreast of or appreciate the situation. Things have moved on and a solution has been reached without him having had any input into it.

The attention bestowed upon the women in the text meant that Cú Chulainn was not centre stage for much of the tale. Nevertheless we are made aware of his presence throughout, whether he is being discussed or addressed directly in a lay. In this manner, he manifests an inactive role, one which is extraordinary for the most eminent of the Ulster heroes. ‘Cú Chulainn’s very passivity in the story is enough to destabilize one of the guiding principles of society: marriage. Cú Chulainn is not merely a pawn in an Otherworld game; he becomes the ground on which that game is played out, and its consequences affect both worlds. He is a site rather than an active presence’ (Lowe, 2000, 126). ‘While the narrative refers to Cú Chulainn’s reputation as the superhuman hero...it

constantly undermines that reputation. His incredible strength is reduced to weakness, his vision and judgment are almost consistently faulty, and his dealings with women are fraught with disaster...[E]ven the other characters in the tale see much more clearly than he does and his reactions are frequently at odds with the reality presented' (Findon, 1997, 116). The author has cast him in a role which invokes criticism. While one agrees with Findon (1997, 114-20) that ambiguity towards Cú Chulainn is evident in *SCC*, its author may be regarded as a good deal stronger and more definite in his attitude. Where tradition may appear to be upheld in his reputation as hero, it is manifested in such extreme terms as to constitute satire. Taking this hyperbole together with Cú Chulainn's perceived inability to interact in a socially acceptable manner, we are looking at a deep-seated undercutting of all that he stands for.

III.2.32.2. His total lack of awareness is revealed in his following reaction: *Is and trá ro ling Cú Chulaind tri ardlémond ocus tri deslémond Lúachra co rraibí fri fotá cen dig cen bíad sechnón na sléibte, ocus is and no chotlad cech n-aidchi for Sliigi Midlúachra* (Dillon, 1953a, 29, §47, ll.829-32) 'It is then Cú Chulainn leapt three high jumps and three jumps to the south to Lúachair until he was a long time without drink or food throughout the mountains and it is there upon Slige Midlúachra he used to sleep every night'. This abstention from food and drink as a result of longing for the Otherworld woman echoes Connlae's own experience when the woman left him: *Bóí Conle iar sin co cend míis cen dig cen bíad, nabu fíu leiss nach tóare do thomuilt acht a ubull* 'Thereafter Connlae was without drink (and) without food until the end of a month and he did not deem any sustenance worth eating save his apple' (McCone, 2000, 160-1). Cú Chulainn is deranged and it is left to Emer to take the initiative and inform Conchobar of his state. His lack of control is manifested when he turns on the learned folk whom Conchobar sent to bring him back to Emain: *ro triallsom dano in n-áes ndána do marbad* (Dillon, 1953a, 29, §48, l.836) 'he attempted then to kill the learned men'.

While Manannán and Fand have resolved their basic problems, Cú Chulainn still requires a remedy for his sickness. This is duly found: *tucsat na druid dig ndermait dó* (Dillon, 1953a, 29, §48, l.839) 'the druids gave him a drink of forgetfulness', after quietening him by their *brechta druidechta* 'spells of druidry' (l.836). As the Otherworld has been the cause of Cú Chulainn's sickness in the text, so the representatives of

paganism are assigned the task of healing him. Emer too must achieve equilibrium in this way: *tucait dano deoga dermait a héta do Emir, ar nírbó fherr ro boí* (Dillon, 1953a, 29, §48, l.841) ‘they then gave drinks of forgetfulness of her jealousy to Emer, for she was no better’.

III.2.33. The final act establishing the need for a separation between the Otherworld and the mortal world is given to Manannán: *ro croth dano Manandán a brat eter Coin Culaind ocus Fhaind cronáro chomraictís do grés* (Dillon, 1953a, 29, §48, ll.842-3) ‘Manannán, moreover, shook his cloak between Cú Chulainn and Fand so that they would never meet’. Thus Manannán, having perhaps been the original reason for Fand’s infatuation with Cú Chulainn because of his abandonment of her, now draws things to a conclusion with his return and resumption of responsibility. ‘At the end of the story the battle over Cú Chulainn is only brought to an end when the god Manannán, himself directly affected by events, intervenes to re-establish order’ (Lowe, 2000, 126).

The last paragraph (§49) is by way of a warning against the demons and their influence over mortals. However, when we consider the portrayal of Fand in the tale, this caution appears to be more of an apology. The sympathy afforded Fand belies the demonic description *taibsiu aidmillti* (Dillon, 1953a, 29, §49, l.844) ‘destructive vision’ in the closing lines. Although Cú Chulainn’s help was sought initially by the Otherworld to help fight their enemies, the love motif outstripped it in importance in the end. ‘The remarkable space afforded to Fand as speaking subject in the text ultimately dilutes the negative aspects of her portrayal as dangerous otherworld siren’ (Findon, 1997, 132). The author demonstrates an overriding ambiguity towards the *síde*; ‘[e]ven as he imaginatively celebrated the fantastic beauties of the *síde*, he warned that they were devilish deceptions’ (Carey, 1994, 84). With the reappearance of the demon motif in the final lines, the author introduces a parallel to the beginning of the tale. These allusions to demons create a frame around the saga, leaving us with our first and last impression.

We have observed in the author’s depiction of the Otherworld certain motifs that are shared with other *echtraí*. Some of these reflect Christian concepts such as *síl nÁdaim cen imarbos* (Dillon, 1953a, 19, §34, l.558) ‘the seed of Adam without transgression’. ‘Here, as in other parts of the poetry, the influence of Immram Brain...is evident in the conception of the Otherworld people as the descendants of Adam before the Fall’ (Carney,

1953, 284). This may be cited as further evidence of the author's ambiguous attitude to the *síd* and highlights Cú Chulainn's extreme behaviour by comparison. The Christian connotations serve to underpin the satire by presenting him as both morally and socially unacceptable.

III.2.34. Looking at the views of other modern critics, let us direct our attention to those of Carney (1955, 287-90 and 292-5). His opinion is that the Bran/Mongán material was present in the mind of the author of the *SCC*, with *Immram Brain* and *SCC* displaying similarities 'which can best be explained as borrowings by the latter' (1955, 288-9). He cites from the *Serglige* 'the same picture of the Otherworld folk who are sinless because they escaped the stain of Adam's transgression; we find the birds singing the hours on the Otherworld trees; the races of coracles and horses' (1955, 289). Elaborating upon this, he cites the visit of Manannán to the real world to help Fiachnae in his battle with the Saxons, in return for the love of Fiachnae's wife as a motif taken up and inverted by the author of the *Serglige*. 'Cú Chulainn, the hero of the *Serglige*, is human. He visits Mag Mell, the Otherworld. He helps Labraid against his Otherworld opponents, and his reward is the love of Fand, Manannán's wife. This is almost the exact converse of the situation in *Compert Mongáin* with Cú Chulainn inflicting upon Manannán in the later tale the same outrage that Manannán had inflicted upon Fiachnae in the earlier' (1955, 289).

However, *SCC* borrows from other sagas besides *Immram Brain*. The motif of the Ulsterwomen maiming themselves in sympathy with the Ulster heroes whom they love is reminiscent of that found in *Talland Étaíre* (Ó Dónaill, 2005, 1.214-9, 50) with one important difference, that in *Talland Étaíre* the women are seen to merely mimic the deformities on occasion in order to reveal the object of their adulation. The motif of Cú Chulainn requiring three vats of water to cool his battle ardour is paralleled in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (O'Rahilly, 1976, 25, ll.803-18) and the *tarbhfhes* incident in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (Knott, 4, §11, ll.122-6). The fact that certain motifs have been taken from *Immram Brain* does not necessarily indicate that this text was used exclusively as a model. The motif of the Otherworld woman coming to woo a mortal hero is a common one in early Irish literature being found in *Tochmarc Étaíne*, *Echtrae Airt Meic Cuind* and *Echtrae Chonnlaí*, for example (Findon, 1997, 110). 'But in *The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn* the 'fairy mistress' expectations raised by Fand's overtures unravel as the tale progresses.

Cú Chulainn forms a union with her in the Otherworld but does not remain there. Nor can their relationship continue in the mortal world' (Findon, 1997, 111). The motif's development is hindered by circumstances, chief among them being the interference of Emer. Carney's identification of a parallel by inversion can certainly be recognised and may be significant. However, while viewing the *Mongán* story as having its basis 'in a fundamental human concept' (1955, 290), i.e. an analogy to the Incarnation, he feels that the situation in *SCC* 'must be secondary...[and] being produced mechanically, has no basic concept behind it' (1955, 292). Whether through inversion of or divergence from a theme, *SCC* does not adhere to any one model but the change of direction in the tale does fit the underlying satirizing of Cú Chulainn. While *Compert Mongáin* is but a short tale on a theme indicated by its title, *SCC* is a much lengthier saga comprising many themes. Manannán is much more central to *Compert Mongáin* than he is to *SCC* and although inversion may be recognised, there is a lot more going on in *SCC*. For instance, Cú Chulainn was invited to the Otherworld and his reluctance to comply generates much of the momentum of the tale. Cú Chulainn did not commit an outrage against Manannán as such, as he had abandoned Fand already. While superficial details can be regarded as inverted, it is suggested here that this may not be as relevant as Carney states. His concern is with Christian influence, but *SCC* can be approached from another angle with a view to identifying its basic significance.

III.2.35. 'The adventures of Loegaire son of Crimthann may best be taken as a derivative of *Serglige Con Culainn*, using as it does the pattern of a human hero going to the Otherworld to assist one Otherworld chieftain against another and obtaining the love of a woman as a reward' (Carney, 1955, 293). Again, Carney's critique is here dealing with the bare bones of the story. We need to delve deeper into the details of each of these visits in order to make a fuller assessment. *Echtrae Láegairi* conforms to the model of an Otherworld being (in this case a male, Fiachnae) coming to invite a mortal to his world. While there, Láegaire is given Fiachnae's daughter for a wife in return for helping Fiachnae defeat his enemies. We have standard Otherworld descriptions in the text similar to those found in *Immram Brain*, i.e. a sinless world where there is peace and plenty. Thus we may suggest that *Immram Brain* was known to the authors of both *Echtrae Láegairi* and *Serglige Con Culainn*. However, rather than viewing *Echtrae Láegairi* as a derivative

of *SCC*, it is suggested here that the reverse may be the case. While *SCC* follows this model of *Echtrae Láegairi* in its main aspects, the details in *Echtrae Láegairi* are largely inverted in *SCC*: i.e., the circumstances surrounding the invitation to visit and its reception; the details regarding the woman's plight (an abandonment in the case of *SCC* and an abduction in the case of *Echtrae Láegairi*); the control displayed by Láegaire in the battle scene and the total lack of it in Cú Chulainn's battle scene; the inversion at the climax with Láegaire opting to stay in the Otherworld and Cú Chulainn's return to the mortal world. In addition, there is a parallel in the authors' sympathetic treatment of both women's plight, giving an insight into their respective predicaments. In both texts space is created for the women's words to be uttered. It is again suggested here that what we have in *SCC* is a text modelled on *Echtrae Láegairi* in outline, with significant inversions in the detail. Basically, Láegaire is seen to have acted correctly while Cú Chulainn has acted incorrectly. The author of *SCC* expanded on the outline and developed a Fand episode. Like Connlac, Láegaire remains in the Otherworld and this may be interpreted as having Christian significance, as Carney convincingly claimed with regard to the *Immrama* in general (1955, 294).

3. Conclusion.

III.3.1. As stated at the beginning of the chapter (III.1.2.) *SCC* is generally perceived as an *echtrae*. According to Carney (1953, 285) 'this story seems to have provided a happy hunting ground for stalking primitive mythological concepts'. Although the Otherworld is a strong theme of the text, it is suggested that the satirising of Cú Chulainn is its main focus. *SCC* represents a novel type of *echtrae* in that Cú Chulainn does not act in the way expected of a hero of such a tale. The opening setting of *SCC* immediately launches the reader into the warrior world with its valorous, though potentially deceptive, displays. This introduces a tone of suspicion that is presumably intentional on the part of the author as Cú Chulainn becomes the epitome of such ostentatious heroism in the saga. Carney's view (1955, 293) that *SCC* 'is a mere jumble of picturesque incidents adapted from earlier literature and as a whole it has no moral to teach and no underlying philosophy' can be acknowledged only in so far as the author has borrowed heavily from other narratives.

Talland Étair, *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Aislinge Óenguso*, *Immram Brain*, *Echtrae Chonnlai* and *Echtra Láegairi* all seem to have influenced this text. The motifs adapted, however, have not been haphazard. Taking the motif of the adulation of the women from *Talland Étair*, for instance; what was a non-permanent flattering imitation of heroic victory in one text becomes a lasting self-mutilation in honour of a questionable hero in the other. By extension, the women acting in such a manner themselves appear ridiculous for being so deluded. The author seems to have inverted certain motifs in *Echtra Láegairi* and *Echtrae Chonnlai* for the purpose of undermining the hero, while also taking themes from *Aislinge Óenguso* and *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* for his own ends.

Comparing Cú Chulainn's behaviour to similar situations in other sagas seems to be part and parcel of the meaning behind *SCC*. His behaviour in comparison with that of other figures within the text such as Lóeg and Labraid also indicates satirical intent. Thus the author uses every opportunity to show Cú Chulainn up as an inadequate hero. His behaviour is responsible for much of the discord which ensues. He succeeds in causing distress to all the women with whom he comes in contact. He publicly dishonours both Emer and Fand. He inconveniences and embarrasses Lóeg because of his reluctance to go to the Otherworld. When he does eventually make the trip, he orders Labraid from the field of battle so that he may take on the enemy alone. Labraid has subsequently to intervene and enforce restraint to end his killing spree. He is either reluctant to act or loses control when he does act. He does not consider the consequences of his actions. He is driven by *áil* when he should exercise *cumang*. His desperate flight to the mountains demonstrates his total lack of awareness of what has been happening. He thus manifests a destructive element in society according to Lowe (2000, 119-30) and his portrayal can be regarded as indicative of the view of the warrior cult taken by some sections of the clergy at least. By echoing other texts the author indicates through satire that Cú Chulainn's behaviour is reprehensible.

SCC can be seen to deal with two main issues: the beginning of the saga focuses on Cú Chulainn as the hero whose reputation for prowess in battle earns him an invitation to the Otherworld, while the later part deals with his visit to and love for Fand, which includes the jealousy of Emer. Both issues have a bearing on each other. Findon

concentrates on the love theme and sees the women as an aspect of prime importance. Cú Chulainn's satirization, however, is realised by giving space for the women's words. As a character he is not given much to say in the saga, and when he does speak it is usually in short sharp sentences. Unlike the women, he is granted only one lay and this expresses uncharacteristic doubt and uncertainty (III.2.25.). Moreover, most of the lays are addresses to him. This distance created by the author furthers the potential for criticism of the hero. He is portrayed as lacking understanding in comparison with the women. Their insights encourage the reader to observe how deficient Cú Chulainn is psychologically. As the supreme Ulster hero Cú Chulainn is supposed to be the epitome of warriorhood, but in *SCC* he fails hopelessly to live up to this. As argued in chapter 2, *Scéla Muicce Meicc Da Thó* satirised the warrior ethos by taking certain key characteristics which it embodied and holding them up to ridicule, with Cú Chulainn figuring only indirectly by implication in the final Fer Loga episode. *SCC*, by contrast, involves him directly as a major figure, and we are encouraged to question the justification for his reputation on the basis of his irresponsible and, at times reprehensible behaviour. Both authors focus on the same subject but handle its satirization in different ways.

III.3.2. Returning to Carney's (1955, 293) conclusions about *SCC*, it may be pertinent to mention his reference to 'an eighteenth century satirical tale *Mac na Míochomhairle* (The Son of Evil Counsel)' in R.I.A. 23 L 24, 97-123 ('L'). It has a storyline similar to that of *SCC*, wherein a hero 'completely deficient in heroic qualities, but not lacking in amorous instincts, is beguiled into the Otherworld by a beautiful maiden' (1955, 293). However, he finds to his horror that, if he wishes to be her lover, he must fight a battle in support of her father. 'The comedy consists in showing the efforts of the 'hero' to anticipate his reward before the battle and each time being discovered and put to shame' (1955, 293). Carney deems it a 'conscious satire on the pattern developed by the author of *Serglige Con Culainn* and imitated in *Echtra Loegairi*' (1955, 293). If we accept that *SCC* was itself a satirically motivated derivative of *Echtrae Láegairi* or some similar lost *echtrae* in the classic mould, it would follow that the idea of a satire on this theme had been developed as early as the tenth century.

As already mentioned, *Echtrae Láegairi* has been dated by Jackson (1942, 377) to roughly the late ninth/ early tenth century and *SMMDT* may be regarded as a tenth century

text in view of certain linguistic forms evident in the poetry (Thurneysen, 1935, 3-4, §3). *SCC* is even more difficult to date as ‘the text which appears to be earlier is the one written by the Interpolator. It seems doubtful, however, whether B should be dated as early as the ninth century in its present form’ (Dillon, 1953, xiv). If we take the tenth century as a probable date for the latter two tales, it could mean that satire was a literary genre becoming known to and employed by the *literati* of this period. Just as the author of *SCC* seems to have taken motifs from *Echtrae Láegairi* or the like and manipulated them by inversion etc. for his own often satirical ends, so too the author of *Mac na Míochomhairle* appears to have extracted certain motifs from *SCC* and created his own further satire on them. Rather than it being seen as a satirical invention produced from a straightforward saga, this later tale could be regarded as building upon a tale already perceived to be satirical.

IV. The H Version of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*.

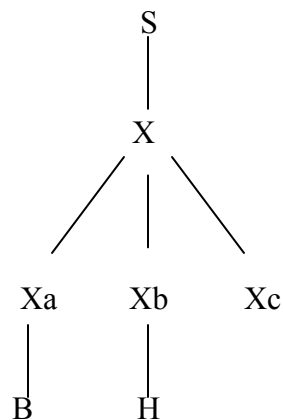
I. Introduction.

IV.1.1. There are two extant versions of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*. One is in the early fifteenth century manuscript *Leabhar Breac* which ‘was finished around 1411. It gives some insight into the kind of spirituality and theology that informed the learned Gaelic classes at that time. It appears to be heavily influenced by the strict spirituality of the Ceile De sect of earlier centuries known as the Culdees. It includes the Martyrology of Aengus Ceile De and has a set of rules for the Culdees’ (Slavin, 2005, 144). This version of *AMC* is referred to as B. Gwara (1988, 54) points out that ‘*AMC* is at once an anomalous and germane addition to this relatively unified compilation, and its manuscript context suggests that it shares some structural and thematic affiliations with the other writings in *Leabhar Breac*’. The other manuscript is H.3.18 (TCD), with ‘probably most of the volume... written in the sixteenth century’ and includes much legal material (Breatnach, 2005, 5). This text is known as H.

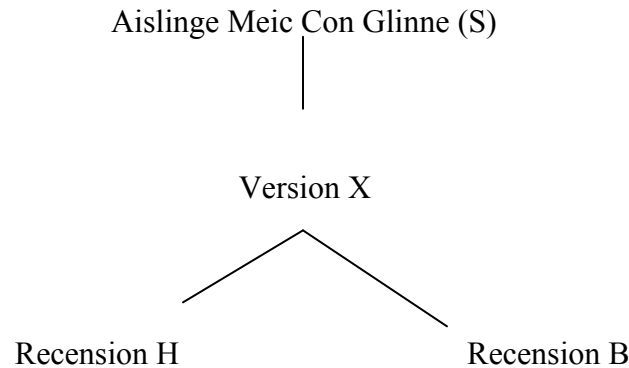
IV.1.2. Both B and H are written in Middle Irish and Jackson (1990, xxii-xxiii) outlines the difficulties involved in trying to date Middle Irish texts. In his estimation the language of *AMC* version B belongs to what he refers to as the Intermediate Middle Irish period and early Late Middle Irish period, ‘that is to say, if an approximate AD date is to be hazarded, somewhere in the last quarter of the 11th century’ (1990, xxiii). Previous to Jackson, Meyer (1892, x) cited *AMC*’s allusion to tithes as a basis for dating the work around the end of the twelfth century. This suggestion is rejected by Jackson stating: ‘Meyer was scarcely yet an expert in MI when his *AMC* was published, and his opinion on the date of its language is not supported by evidence... The fact is that the claim to the payment of tithes was well established in Ireland from at least the 7th century’ (Jackson, 1990, xxv). According to Dillon (1948, 143) *AMC* was ‘composed in the twelfth century, but is apparently constructed upon an earlier original’ and Murphy (1955, 56) also refers to the two extant texts as being twelfth century versions. Harrison (1989, 24) claims it was written ‘probably in the eleventh century’.

The only in-depth examination of the language of the two texts prior to Jackson, was made by Hull (1962-4). He conducted his analysis with a view to ascertaining which of the two texts was linguistically the older and followed a procedure whereby a comparison was made with ‘some other approximately coeval text’, in this case the LL *Táin*, a work which ‘was in all probability redacted before AD 1125’ (1962-4, 326-7). His findings indicate that B and the LL *Táin* are roughly contemporaneous while H is somewhat older than either (1962-4, 378). Hence *AMC* was ‘probably composed at the very beginning of the twelfth century, perhaps indeed, even somewhat earlier’ (1962-4, 378). These two linguistic examinations undertaken by Jackson and Hull, display a discrepancy in date of a mere fifty years. Although Jackson’s edition is of the B text, he does state that ‘the *content* of the version of H is prior, and that B is a secondary elaboration of a previous common ancestor tale (call it X) which H pretty faithfully preserved’ (1990, xxx). Herbert (2005, 65) concurs that H is prior to B and Gwara (1988, 53, n.2) declares himself convinced by Hull’s demonstration. Thus it is to be noted that B, although found in the earlier manuscript, seems to be generally regarded as a later and greatly elaborated version of the tale.

IV.1.3. In his introduction to Meyer’s edition (1892, xiv-xv) Wollner expresses the following view: ‘The author of H is a sober and modest man. He is a mere copyist, who adds nothing of his own, keeping strictly to tradition. His object is the faithful rendering of the story as it has been handed down’. The stemma below (Meyer, 1892, xxv) is Wollner’s representation of the text’s tradition, S being the Source



Jefferies, however, argues for a different textual tradition based on literary criticism: ‘[t]his methodology is founded upon the premise that whenever there is a significant number of elements common to the later recensions, those elements are likely to have been derived from an underlying exemplar. Through literary criticism it is possible to reconstruct an outline of Version X of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, the exemplar underlying both recensions H and B. Analysis of Version X in turn reveals that it was not the original text of the *Aislinge* but was based upon the original text (known as S), together with a considerable body of extraneous material which was conflated with S’ (1997, 8). His schematisation is given below:



Thus, in comparing the two opinions, we note agreement regarding the basic textual tradition except for the different status of H. According to Jefferies (1997, 9) ‘Recension H is no mere copy of X. It is an abridged version of the text’. He elaborates (1997, 9-10): ‘indeed, a comparison of the prose passages dealing with episodes common to Recensions H and B reveals that the author of H consistently abbreviated his material. One example will suffice here to illustrate this clearly: in B the woman who was to serve MacConglinne is described by thirty-five characteristics, whereas only five characteristics of the same woman are described in H’. Although Jefferies merely refers to these characteristics as line numbers in a footnote (1997, 10, n.16), a closer look may indicate a different interpretation. The five descriptions in H are: *Tabrad ben díen détgel desgel masbruindech cóemcolpthach dít* (Meyer, 1892, 125) ‘Let a quick, white-toothed, white-handed, fine-breasted, fair-thighed woman give you’. And now to the same motif in the B version of *AMC*: *toirbired ben dian dóit-gel ...rosc glas cain i n-a cind. Dá brá*

doile dub-gorma ós na rosca sin...Beóil deirg t[h]anaide; déta gela glanide i n-a cind, amal betís némaind (Jackson, 1990, 37-8, ll.1167-1170) ‘Let a quick, white-toothed woman give you...A fair blue eye in her head, two eyebrows as black as a beetle above those eyes, two red thin lips; bright white teeth in her head as though they were pearls’. It appears that B is here expanding on X, and Wollner himself (Meyer, 1892, xv) cites this very example as illustrating B’s tendency to get lost in detail. If we compare the above with the description of the woman at the beginning of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* we find a possible inspiration for B’s elaboration on a theme: *Batar duibithir druimne daeil na dá malaich. Batar inand 7 frais do némannuib a déta ina cind. Batar glasithir buga na dí shúil. Batar dergithir partaing na beóil* (Knott, 1936, §2, 1) ‘The two eyebrows were as black as the back of a beetle. Her teeth were like a shower of pearls in her head. The two eyes were as blue as a hyacinth. The lips were as red as Parthian leather’. Jackson (1990, xxxvii) suggested that B has utilised his acquaintance with other early Irish sagas here to elaborate on a theme, describing it as ‘a parody of similar runs in early Irish story about the beauty of a heroine, the best and best known being that describing Étaín in the 9th-century tale ‘the Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel’.

Jefferies’ second example takes the opening section of B, which explains in detail how Cathal Mac Finguine came to be possessed by a demon of gluttony, whereas H just states: *Cathal mac Findguine .i. rí mór Muman, co n-géire chon, col-longad chapail. Lon cráis robóe ina medón. Satan domeiled leis a c[h]uitigh* (Meyer, 1892, 114) ‘Cathal Mac Finguine, a great king of Munster, with the greed of a hound, with the appetite of a horse. A demon of gluttony was in him: Satan used to eat his portion with him’. B includes this information but goes on to explain how this came about due to Cathal’s love for Lígach, a sister of Cathal’s enemy Fergal Mac Máele Dúin, and furnishes the text with a prolonged episode. Jefferies (1997, 10) suggests that this detailed information ‘has been preserved by the redactor of B but was entirely omitted from Recension H’. This situation could, however, be explained at least as easily by putting things the other way around. If we look at the opening scene of LL *Táin* we see how the redactor chose to give reasons for Medb’s march on Ulster that were perceived to be lacking in Recension1 by inventing the ‘pillow talk’ (O’Rahilly, 1967, liii). The same approach may be applied to *AMC* on the assumption that version H was written in a compact, terse style and B’s

redactor then set about providing more background information to his introduction. It is to be noted that B is roughly three times the length of H. If Jefferies' suggestion that H (a 16th century manuscript) is an abridgement of X is to be accepted, it would mean that a copy of B (a 14th century manuscript) was in circulation before this took place. In other words, it might be suggested on Jefferies' scenario, that H was not an abridgement of X but an abridgement of B itself, especially as linguistically there is little between them in date. B, however, is noteworthy for its many contradictions and inconsistencies (Meyer, 1892, xv), while H is viewed as a more coherent tale (Jackson, 1990, xxxii). The notion that H would have laboured through the disorganisation of B, shortening this text by two thirds to achieve a certain logic and understanding, must surely be considered improbable.

IV.1.4. The discussion below will be based upon the view of most scholars that H, in effect, is the earlier version by virtue of being closer to X than B. Since the latter version has received most attention from the critics, it seems appropriate to focus mainly on the former here. In some instances editorial length marks and word divisions will be inserted in the quoted text for added clarity. When quoting from texts, Meyer's (1892) edition will be used for H and Jackson's (1990) edition for B. Translations have been based upon their renderings. Where their translation is merely reproduced, relevant page numbers of the translation will be given.

IV.1.5. *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* is perhaps the best known satirical narrative of early Irish literature. It is usually regarded as a send-up of the church and its doctrines by a clerical scholar who has abandoned his studies to follow poetry. It is a difficult tale to categorise as 'it betrays elements of *immram*, *echtrae*, *aisling*, heroic, hagiographic and goliardic literature' (Gwara, 1988, 53). Mercier (1962, 214) states: '*The Vision of Mac Conglinne* seems to be the oldest as well as the best major work of parody in Gaelic' and also (1962, 17) '[m]ost of the Otherworld literature, whether *echtrae*, *immram*, *fis* or *aislinge*, is summed up and annihilated in [this] single devastating work of parody'. Dillon (1948, 143) writes similarly that 'the Irish Visions are the occasion for an extraordinary outburst of fancy and malice in the 'Vision of Mac Con Glinne''. Thus *AMC* has been rated a work of parody first and foremost.

When entering into discussion of the saga, modern critics invariably refer to the B text or *Leabhar Breac* version. This is true of both Mercier and Dillon above. This phenomenon can most likely be attributed to its more detailed, if more inconsistent, rendering of the story. Even more recent articles such as Gwara (1988) and Jefferies (1997) deal largely with this text and Jackson's 1990 edition is also of this version. Fletcher (2000, 24-5) refers to the *Leabhar Breac* version in his discussion of entertainers in early Irish society and Harrison (1989, 71-2) in his concentration on the fool/trickster characteristics evident in *AMC*, bases his comments on the B text. Meyer originally got the ball rolling with his 1892 edition of B, which included the H version in the appendix for comparison purposes and added a translation of this, 'omitting only those portions which agree with *Leabhar Breac*' (1892, 148). However, this H text was not considered in his notes. Herbert (2005, 65-72) alone has written an article concentrating on the H version.

2. Textual analysis.

IV.2.1. The H text opens by introducing the figure of Cathal Mac Finguine who also appears in section 2 of B. Clearly, then, he and his demon of gluttony form a central theme of the saga. Cathal Mac Finguine was king of Munster 721-742AD with Cashel as his seat of power. From the beginning of the seventh century until the middle of the eighth century this kingship circulated 'within a compact triangle of dynastic groups dominating the geographical centre of the province: the Eóganacht Áine, the Eóganacht Chaisil and the Eóganacht Glendamnach, sited respectively in east Limerick, Cashel and north Cork' (Byrne, 2001, 204). Cathal Mac Finguine was of the Eóganacht Glandamnach. The Annals of Inisfallen for the year 721AD read:

The harrying of Brega by Cathal son of Finguine, king of Mumu, and after that he and Fergal son of Máel Dúin, king of Temuir, made peace; and Fergal submitted to Cathal. For these were the five kings of the Munstermen who ruled Ireland after the Faith, viz., Áengus son of Nad Fraích, and his son, i.e. Eochaid,

who ruled Ireland for seventeen years, and Cathal son of Finguine, and Feidlimid son of Crimthann, and Brian son of Cennétig (Mac Airt, 1951, 105).

We thus note the importance attached to Cathal in AI as a historical king of Munster, the reference to Brian son of Cennétig illustrating that the entry could not have been earlier than the eleventh century (Byrne, 2001, 208) and suggesting that after a period of at least three centuries Cathal's fame and renown still lived on. According to Byrne '[t]he men of Munster saw the king of Cashel as supreme, and took little account of a high-kingship of all Ireland until the ambitions of the Uí Néill forced the concept on their attention' (2001, 203). *Críth Gablach* mentions the king of Munster in connection with the type of law enforced by an over-king or provincial king: *rechtgae rí g amail rongab rechtgae rí Caisil la Mumain* (Binchy, 1941, §38, 20) 'the king's law as in the case of the king of Cashel of Munster'. This, then, appears to be a reference to the greatest class of king (*rí bunaid cach cinn* 'the ultimate king of every individual') as the title of 'high-king' is never used in the legal texts according to Binchy (1941, 105).

Cathal's laying waste of Brega was therefore a reaction against the growing power of the Uí Néill (Byrne, 2001, 203). Although Fergal Mac Máele Dúin is seen to have made peace with Cathal in 721AD, he followed this up with a great hosting into Leinster in 722AD which culminated in his defeat and death at the Battle of Allen (*Cath Almaine*). When Cathal marched into Brega in 721AD, he did so in alliance with the king of Leinster. Consequently the Battle of Allen, although fought in Leinster, might be seen as an act of aggression against Cathal as well. The fact that Cathal did not take part in the conflict may be explained by his formerly having made peace with Fergal (Byrne, 2001, 208). The B text of *AMC* makes reference to Fergal as *rí Oilig beós; 7 ba cosnamaid Érenn é-sside an inbaid-sin i n-agaid Cathail meic Fhinguine* (Jackson, 1990, 1, ll.23-4) 'king of Ailech yet, and he was a contender of/for Ireland at that time against Cathal Mac Finguine'. The enmity between Cathal and Fergal may thus have played a significant role as the historical background to the saga. Fergal Mac Máele Dúin was 'overlord first of Ceinél nEogain and, before he died, of the whole of Leth Cuinn' (Ó Riain, 1978, xii) and his ambition seems even to have surpassed that of Cathal. 'Both Fergal mac Maíle-

dúin and Cathal mac Finguine may be said to personify the spirit of the early eighth century in Ireland, each in his own way' (Ó Riain, 1978, xii).

Herbert (2005, 65) sees this eighth century setting as an 'articulation of present issues in the guise of accounts of the past'. She finds little evidence in the saga to demonstrate any true relation to Cathal Mac Finguine's life as a king of Munster, citing for example, the fact that 'Cathal is associated with Cork rather than with the Cashel-Emly power-base of the historical ruler' (2005, 65). As we know Cathal was of the Eóganacht Glenamnach of north Cork and the object of much of *AMC*'s satire is the clergy and particularly the monks of Cork, the chief monastery of Munster at the time according to Jackson (1990, xl). Also, Cathal is not meant to be portrayed as a normal ruler in this tale. He is a figure of derision, his demon of gluttony overriding everything else. Taking *AMC*'s date of composition on linguistic grounds to be between the mid-eleventh and mid-twelfth centuries, Herbert feels that the 'king's story-role seems to be as a surrogate for a contemporary Munster ruler...Cormac Mac Carthaig [being] the most likely latter-day representative of the historical Cathal' (2005, 65). Herbert argues further that 'we may tentatively set the composition of *AMC* close to, or within, the period of Cormac's power, roughly between the years 1124 and 1138' (2005, 66).

Although Jefferies' article is based on the B text, he also cites the period of Cormac Mac Carthaig's power in Munster as a context for the tale, reiterating Herbert's original ideas on the subject as pointed out by her (2005, 71, n.6). Jefferies (1997, 29) states that the 'evidence is tenuous, but the coincidence of the three half-years of the king of Munster's demonic appetite and the three seasons of military campaigning by Cormac Mac Carthaig in 1131-33 is suggestive'. He argues for a Connacht connection in the text owing to a description of Cathal Mac Finguine as *ard-rí mór-lethi Moga Nuadat ard-c[h]osnamaid Érenn fria clanna Cuinn Chét-Chathaig* (Jackson, 1990, 19, ll.598-9) 'high-king of the great Southern half of Ireland, chief defender of Ireland against the descendents of Conn of the Hundred Battles'. 'The epithet (*ard-rí*) had no meaning until the rise of the O'Connors of Connacht in the twelfth century threatened the independence of Munster for the first time ever. The title was singularly apt for Cormac Mac Carthaig, the king of Munster (1127-34) who answered that challenge' (Jefferies, 1997, 29). However, this description of Cathal might simply echo the motif of his being the

contender of/for Ireland (*cosnamaid Éirenn*) against Fergal as claimed by AI and stipulated at the beginning of the B text. Both Herbert and Jefferies discuss the relevant texts mainly from a historical point of view. The following discussion will seek to demonstrate that widening the net and viewing this text from additional angles provides sufficient evidence for accepting the eighth century setting as fitting and intentional.

IV.2.2.1. The hero of the tale, Aniar or Anier Mac Con Glinne is mentioned early on in both texts (line 6 in B and line 4 in H). His name is explained in B: *Is aire at-bertha Anier friss, .i. no aerad 7 no molad cách. Deithbir ón, uair ní tháinic remi 7 ní t[h]icc dia éissi bu duilge aer nó molad; conid aire at-bertha Anéra friss, iar sinni ní fétha éra fair* (Jackson, 1990, 3, ll.84-8) ‘This is the reason he used to be called Anier i.e. he used to satirise and praise all. That was fitting, for there did not come before him nor does there come after him one who is more troublesome in satire or in praise; so that he used be called Anier because there was no good refusing him’. However, ‘*Anéra* and its etymology from negative *an-* and *éra* ‘refusal, rejection’ are probably both inventions’ (Jackson, 1990, 45). Here we have a standard description of a satirist who abuses his craft by using extortion for his own gain (Kelly, 1988, 49-50).

Cridenbél, the satirist in *Cath Maige Tuired*, ‘is represented as an avaricious nuisance whom one accommodates at one’s peril and would do well to get rid of’ (McCone, 1989, 126). Although he is lodged in his host’s own house, he threatens unjust satire to secure for himself the best of his host’s food. His ultimate destruction by his own greed is seen as vindication for his improper behaviour. He is diametrically opposed to the *fili*, Cairbre, who is treated shamefully by Bres, being lodged ‘in a small, dark hovel without fire or furniture and received three small, dry loaves to eat’ (McCone, 1989, 123). He then utters a satire against Bres whose fortunes ultimately decline, and this is seen as justified. Thus we are presented with negative and positive paradigms of a poet guest’s behaviour in this tale (McCone, 1989, 126). Cridenbél acts in the manner expected of a *cáinte* and his representation is ‘fully in line with contemporary clerical disapproval’ (McCone, 1989, 128). Mac Con Glinne’s behaviour at the beginning of *AMC* is similar to that of Cridenbél, when he threatens satire for his own ends. Added to this, the meagre ration which the monks offered to him is reminiscent of Cairbre’s treatment by Bres. We have a dichotomy in *AMC* where, on the one hand, Mac Con

Glinne behaves like a *cáinte* but expects to be, and is sometimes, treated like a *fili*. On the other hand he sometimes behaves like a *fili*. Thus we have the traits of *fili* and *cáinte* encapsulated in the one person.

IV.2.2.2. There appears to have been a tradition of a character named Aindiar Mac Con Glinne who was a poet, as a verse in the Middle Irish notes to *Féilire Óengusso* for September 14th (Stokes, 1905, 208) mentions him and records *mór do laídib do rinne* ‘he made many lays’:

*Cridan ainm maic Rustaing rain,
Garb Daire ainm Maic Samain,
Aindiar ar Mac Con Glinne,
Mór do laídib do rinne.*

‘Cridan was noble Mac Rustaing’s name,
Garbdaire was the name of Mac Samain,
Aindiar for Mac Con Glinne,
Many lays he made’ (Stokes, 1905, 209).

While this entry was probably written in the eleventh century (Jackson, 1990, 45), ‘composition of the *Féilire*...can be dated quite securely to c.800AD’ (McCone, 2005, 7). *DIL* (140) translates *aindiaraid* as ‘wrathful, angry, fierce’. Whether this has any bearing on *Aniér* is an open question. It could perhaps refer to his reaction in the context if and when refused. In any event, Mac Con Glinne is in company with eccentrics in this verse, as a second quatrain in the notes implies:

*Lighe maic Rustaing ráidhe
i Ros ech cen innáire
Mar atchí cach ben báighid,
Braighid ocus bangháiridh* (Stokes, 1905, 208).

‘Mac Rustaing’s grave thou sayest

In Ross Ech without great shame
If she sees it, every woman talks,
Breaks wind and laughs like a woman' (Stokes, 1905, 209).

Mac Rustaing is thus a figure of fun and Garb Daire, also known as Mac Samain, was called the 'Rough One of the (Oak) Wood, i.e. the Wild Man of the Woods...strongly reminiscent of the Wild Man Suibne Geilt' (Jackson, 1990, 48). This may also suggest that Mac Con Glinne was a poet of low grade.

Robinson's (1912=1998, 141-4) discussion of satirical verse cites interesting pieces which are contained in *Sanas Cormaic* (Meyer, 1913) including the following quoted under *rer* 'blackbird':

Uindsí chucat in gillgugán
Mac reragáin (.i. mac Lonáin);
Bidh cach maith agad ar a chinnchugán,
A c[h]endgucáin (.i. a C[h]ind-gegáin) (Meyer, 1913, 98)

'Here comes to thee the little stripling,
Son of the little blackbird,
Have thou every good thing ready before him,
O little head (that is, O head of a little goose)' (Robinson, 1998, 142)

According to Robinson (1912=1998, 142) the 'son of the little blackbird is doubtless the poet Flann MacLonain...and the person addressed is Finngúine, King of Cashel, known as Cenn-gegáin, 'head of a little goose''. Now Flann Mac Lonáin was 'the great poet of Aidne, a descendant... of Guaire, the famous king of that territory, and he counts in the tradition as one of the three chief poets of Connacht' (Flower, 1947, 68). He was a historical figure who died in 920 AD. His reputation was not an unblemished one, however, as he used his art for the purpose of extortion and was 'a kind of foil to his ancestor Guaire, the accepted pattern of liberality' (Flower, 1947, 70). We thus perceive his likeness in character to Senchán in the tale *Tromdám Gúaire*, and this is further

illustrated in the description: ‘Flann mac Lonáin, devil’s son was he, he was so satirical and burdensome, for he never left a house without some idle satire’ (Flower, 1947, 69). Therefore it appears that Cathal is being warned in the verse above to be prepared to be generous in expectation of Mac Lonáin’s visit. Cathal, however, is also made a figure of fun as the lines ‘contain little more than word-play on the diminutive formations in the names’ (Robinson, 1912=1998, 142). Although ‘the circumstances referred to are unknown’ (Robinson, 1912=1998, 142) this entry in *Sanas Cormaic* suggests Cathal’s association with satire, even if the light cast is tantalisingly faint. Moreover, regarding *AMC*, we have now observed instances where both Mac Con Glinne and Cathal mac Finguine have satirical connections.

IV.2.2.3. In both texts Mac Conglinne is referred to as a *scolaige*, which Jackson (1990, 193) translates as ‘scholar, student, pupil’. Within the two texts, however, he is also referred to as a *scolóc*, which Jackson (1990, 193) translates as ‘monastic servant, lay-brother’. He is referred to as a *mac cléirech* on one occasion in H, when Mainchín orders ‘*na mac cléirich immach!*’ (Meyer, 1892, 115), after their satire. Because of the texts’ ridiculing of the clergy and the fact that B states *táinic móit mór for menmain don scolaige*, .i. *dol ra filidecht ⁊ a léigind do [fh]ácbaíl, as ba doinmech dó a betha for scáth a fhoghluma* (Jackson, 1990, 3-4, ll.89-91) ‘a great longing came into the mind of the scholar i.e. to follow poetry and to leave his learning, for wretched to him was his life in the shadow of his studies’, a tradition developed that ‘he began as a clerical student....but abandoned the Church for the profession of poet’ (Jackson, 1990, xl).

Jackson (1990, xl) says that in B ‘Cathal constantly addresses Mac Conglinne as *mac cléirech*’. However, this is not the case, since *mac léigind* is how he addresses him in B at l. 597, 638, 651, 680, 721, 725, 769 and 772. Nowhere in B is Mac Con Glinne referred to as *mac cléirech*. Nevertheless, *DIL* (447) translates *mac léiginn* as ‘a (clerical) student’ and there is a digression (*etaraissnéis*) in B which suggests that *mac léigind* and *mac cléirech* may be basically the same. It tells of a *mac léigind* in Imbliuch n-Ibair (Emly) who complains to Cathal that he has been pressed into a hosting and dreads the meagre fare that he will receive as a result. Cathal replies to him: ‘*Dar Barre, céin bam beó-sa nícon regu clérech i slógad lem-sa ó s[h]und amach* (Jackson, 1990, 21, ll.652-60) ‘By St. Barre, as long as I live a cleric will not go in a hosting with me from here on

out'. This is by way of explanation, according to Jackson, of 'how the clergy became exempt from military service, something which did apparently happen in the lifetime of Cathal' (1990, 60). It may also serve to create irony in the tale by juxtaposing the meagre rations of the cleric with Cathal's gluttonous indulgence. It may be emphasised that Mac Con Glinne is addressed as *mac léigind* in B alone. Mainchín addresses him as *fer dána* in H when issuing the sentence of death. Cathal refers to him as *fer dána* and *bard* in H, both instances occurring during the apple episode when Mac Con Glinne outwits Cathal and forces him to share his apple feast with him. In B he is referred to as *file*, *fer dána* and *ecnaid* (sage) and these examples also occur predominantly in the apple scene. Indeed, in H on one occasion he is also 'preposterously' called an *ollam* (Jackson, 1990, xl). This is the title given to Mac Con Glinne by his fellow student Mac na Cairre when he threatens to satirise the church: *Atá ollam maith and, ocus ní a f[h]rithalom occaib-si* (Meyer, 1892, 115) 'There is a good *ollam* here and he is not served by you'. Taking the above into account, it seems that both texts present Mac Con Glinne as a clerical student but H is more consistent than B in presenting Mac Con Glinne as some type of poet.

IV.2.3.1. In H Mac Con Glinne sets out from Fahan, a monastic foundation in County Donegal. He is said to be *do lucht Athana moiré Muru* (Meyer, 1892, 114) 'of the people of great Fahan of Mura'. Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 36) list this site as having been founded by St. Columcille with his disciple, St. Mura, as first abbot: 'Muru was of the O'Neill family, and wrote a book on the acts of St. Columcille which was kept with other relics at Fahan...There were *erenaghs* till the early seventeenth century'. Thus we perceive that Mac Con Glinne hails from Uí Néill territory which may suggest an association with Fergal Mac Máele Dúin and his period, and the possibility that Cathal may be viewed from an Ulster perspective. Jefferies (1997, 19) suggests that the author of H 'may have been from the ancient kingdom of Ailech. The itinerary from Fahan to Cork outlined in *Aislinge* certainly reflected a good knowledge of the long route. The prominence given to the Columban churches of Kells and Durrow, and particularly the aside on Durrow 'of Colmcille in Tír Néill' (Meyer, 1892, 114) is suggestive of Columban loyalties....Colmcille was, of course, the most renowned of the saints of Ailech. Mac Conglinne's affiliation with Fahan and the visitation of St. Mura of Fahan

make it possible that the author was himself from the small monastic community at Fahan in Ailech’.

H continues: *scolaige án, dochúaidh a hAthain Muru for cóairt Érend* (Meyer, 1892, 114) ‘a brilliant student, he went from Fahan-Mura upon a circuit of Ireland’. This *scolaige án* takes as companion Mac na Cairrea, ‘the Scabbed Youth’. We are thus given to understand that Mac Con Glinne is embarking on a *cúairt fhilidechta* ‘a poetic visitation’ which was identified as a ‘professional visitation by a high-class qualified poet to a succession of noble patrons’ (Jackson, 1990, 49).

IV.2.3.2. *Uraicecht na Ríar* (Breatnach, 1987, 102-15) enumerates the different grades of poet in descending order with *macfhuirmid* and *fochloc* as the lowest grades: *Macfhuirmid, cethir séoit a díre. Triar a lín for túatha, dias oc acru, a óenur dó for coí la rí...Cethorcha drécht lais* ‘A *macfhuirmid*, his honour-price is four *sét*’s. Three is his company on official business, two when pursuing a claim; he is alone on a circuit with a king. He has forty compositions’. *Fochloc, sét 7 lethshét a díre. Oínfher lais for túatha 7 a óenur oc acru 7 for coí la rí...Trícha drécht lais* ‘A *fochloc*, his honour price is one and a half *sét*’s. He has one man with him on official business, and he is alone when pursuing a claim, and on a circuit with a king...He has thirty compositions’ (Breatnach, 1987, 110-11). Mac Conglinne has been described as a *scolaige án* and it is interesting to compare the lowest with the highest grade of poet in *UR* i.e. the *ollam*: *Cethrar ar fhichit do ollamain for túathaib, dá fher deac oc acru, dechenbor dó for féile fledaib, ochtar for coí la rí* ‘Twenty four people for an *ollam* when engaged on public business, twelve when pursuing a claim, ten at feasts of hospitality, eight on a circuit with a king’ (Breatnach, 1987, 104). We thus observe that the *ollam* had many people in his retinue. The text has introduced us to a splendid scholar who is referred to on several occasions throughout the text as a poet of high grade. However, as the tale unfolds his credentials become suspect by the standard of Irish law and it is obvious that Mac Con Glinne is masquerading as a high class poet, the size of his retinue being one indication that he is a poet of low grade. The *macfhuirmid* and the *fochloc* were ‘in theory metrical specialists, even if they shared some of the satirist’s broader characteristics...we find the satirical roles of the *fochloc* and *macfhuirmid* subsumed in the word most commonly used to

signify a satirist of any kind, the *cáinte*’ (Fletcher, 2000, 25). The detail of Mac Con Glinne’s companion is not included in B, where Mac Conglinne travels alone.

IV.2.3.3. B, however, does include a performance by Mac Con Glinne, not in H, which is associated with a *drúth* or *crován* (Fletcher, 2000, 25). ‘*Drúth* is the most common word to denote the fool in Early Irish and seems often to be interchangeable with other words that came to be used, namely, *amadán*, *óinmhid*, *mear* and *crován*. As an adjective *drúth* means wanton, lewd and unchaste and as a noun has the sense of *harlot* as well as that of *fool*, *buffoon*’ (Harrison, 1989, 26). The episode describes how *gabaid gerr-chochall 7 gerr-étach imme, girru cach n-uachtarach lais 7 libru cach n-íchtarach. Fo-rórbairt fuirseóracht fon samail-sin don ts[h]lóg do lár in ríghige, .i. ní nárba comadais dia p[h]ersaind- cáintecht 7 bragitóracht 7 duana la filidecht do gabáil, co ro h-asbrad hé ná tánic riam nó iarum bid errdarcu i cerdu cáintehta* (Jackson, 1990, 18, ll.545-50) ‘he puts a short cloak and short clothing round him, each upper garment being shorter and each lower one being longer. In that manner he set about clowning for the host from the floor of the royal house i.e. a thing not fitting for a person such as he - satirising and farting and singing poems so that it has been said that there did not come before nor since one who is more famous in the art of satire’.

‘The *drúth*’s entitlement to receive a *díre* was extrinsic and solely dependent upon the status of the person by whom he was retained’ (Fletcher, 2000, 18). In other words he was seen as a person of no independent status. *Uraicecht Bec* (Binchy, 1978, V, 1617) stipulates this and in the following extract we observe that the farter is also included in this category: *bruigedoire .i. doniad in bruigedoracht asa tonaib 7 fodana olceana .i. drochdana uili cena is a hincaib oga mbiad .i. is a caich aga mbi hincaib an siat ata eneclann doib is as direnaiter .i. is as sin erniter eneclann doib nis ta saire cena fo leith* ‘farters, that is, they perform the farting from their rears, and [the practitioners of] minor crafts besides, that is, all evil crafts besides, it is on the basis of the honour of those with whom they are, that is, it is according to the honour of whomever they are with that they have an honour-price, that penalties are paid to them, that is, it is on that basis that honour-price is paid to them in compensation. Otherwise they have no franchise apart’ (trans. Fletcher, 2000, 19).

Cath Almaine (Radner, 1978, 60) contains a description of a rowdy group of entertainers such as above: *Rá frithaighid iad iar ttain, 7 ...salach ra bhás san taigh sin. Rá bhattur fuirseoiri 7 cainteada 7 eachlacha 7 oblóiri 7 bachlaigh ag beccadhoig 7 acc buireadhaigh ann. Dream ag ól 7 dream na ccodladh 7 dream og sgeathraigh, dream occ cusleannaigh, dream oc featchuisigh* ‘Then they were entertained and...it was very foul indeed inside that house. There were clowns and satirists and whores and jugglers and oafs, roaring and bellowing there. Some were drinking and some were sleeping and some vomiting, some piping, some whistling’ (trans. Fletcher, 2000, 13).

The *cáinte*’s lowly status, in the eyes of the clerical lawyers at least, is made clear in *Bretha Crólige* §51 (Binchy, 1934, 40): *Ata .iii. [ar] hi tuaith folongaiter folug mboairec. Ni tormaig ni for a notrus a mmiad nach a nemthes nach a ndliged nach a cendgelt: drui dibergad cainte. Ar is techtta la dia a ndinsed oldas a cumdac* ‘There are three persons in the túath who are maintained at the maintenance of a *bóaire*- neither their dignity nor their *nemed*-status nor their rights nor their tonsure increases their sick-maintenance: druid, *fian*-brigand and satirist. For it is more fitting in God’s sight to spurn than to support them’ (trans. McCone, 1989, 128).

‘Unfortunately, no accounts survive of the sort of performance that a *cáinte* in full flow was capable of, although perhaps there is a glimpse of it in Mac Con Glinne’s sport’ (Fletcher, 2000, 25). The scene in B has therefore been regarded as an indication of what might be ‘an entertainer’s sundry turns’ in early Irish society (Fletcher, 2000, 24), and suggests satire’s ‘heavy investment in scurrility...but also that its delivery might often have been something of a performance, a more highly wrought and energetic affair than mere recitation’ (Fletcher, 2000, 25). Mac Con Glinne is seen as the ‘classic example of the fool/trickster in Irish’ (Harrison, 1989, 72) and inclusion of this element serves to lower the tone of the text in comparison with H. Mac Con Glinne does nevertheless stoop to deviousness in both texts in order to prolong his life as is manifested in B’s lengthier version of the following incident: *ro-s léic faen for a lummain, atn-aig a mér tria drol a delci, 7 tummais rind in delgai dar a ais isin tiprait. In céin no bíd banna oc snige a cind in delca síis, no bíd in delc uas a anáil. Ro-s torsig in lucht coiméta 7 cuimrig* (Jackson, 1990, 9-10, ll.283-7) ‘he let himself down prostrate upon his cloak, put his finger through the loop of his brooch and dipped the point of the pin over his back in the well. While a

drop was dripping down from the end of the brooch, the brooch was [held] over his breath. The warders and jailers grew tired'. However, quite apart from his performance as a jester, his language in B manifests itself as that of a scurrilous individual. He repeatedly addresses the monks of Cork *a matadu 7 a latrannu 7 a c[h]onu cacca* (Jackson, 1990, ll.269, 288, 328) 'you curs and robbers and dung hounds'. Thus, while there is no doubt that Mac Conglinne is a scholar and a satirist of low order in H, his character undergoes degeneration in B, while at the same time he is repeatedly addressed as *mac légind*.

IV.2.3.4. Although H does not have any overt instances of Mac Con Glinne as a jester, it does contain a hint or two which could be responsible for B's adaption and employment of this motif. The first example involves Mac Con Glinne dressing up as he prepares to cook for Cathal: *fúaslaicter di Mac Conglinne for errudus Picháin, ocus nosfothraic ocus gabus fuathróic occus léinid n-gil imbiu...* 'Cie etir é-seom?' *ol Cathal. 'Duine is eólach di lesugud bíd' ar Pichán.* (Meyer, 1892, 117) 'Mac Conglinne is loosened upon the guarantee of Pichán, and he washed himself and seized an apron and white shirt around him... 'Who is this at all?' said Cathal. 'A person who is knowledgeable in the preparation of food' said Pichán '. In addition, the text closes on a jocular note with a *drúth* and his family composing an extempore verse on the outcome of the proceedings: *Díe n-epairt in drút[h] occus a mac ocus a ingen:*

*Dolluid Manc[h]ín –monor glé-
D'acra for Mac Con Glinne:
Is é Manc[h]ín tarras dé
'man cochall roboí imme.* (Meyer, 1892, 128).

Then the jester and his son and his daughter said:

'Manchín went - a clear work -
For prosecuting Mac Conglinne
It is Manchín who was defrauded
Of the little cowl that was around him'.

IV.2.4. Recension B ‘is riddled with contradictions as the author struggled to impose a new persona on the central character’ (Jefferies, 1997, 10). These contradictions Jefferies perceives as positive and negative characteristics (1997, 10, n.18). Since some of his examples occur in close proximity to one another in the tale, this sequence may be discussed as a whole. Mac Con Glinne has just narrated his vision to Mainchín, who then realises that this is the solution to Cathal’s demon of gluttony i.e. Mac Conglinne must now go and tell Cathal his vision and he will be cured. This, of course, also means that Mac Con Glinne may not now be crucified. Mac Con Glinne asks for a reward. Mainchín replies: *nach mór in lóg...do chorp 7 t’anim do lécu duit* ‘is not allowing you your body and soul a great reward?’ To this Mac Con Glinne retorts: *Cumma lem in ní-sin cia do-gnether. Senistre nime at urslacthi frim, 7 in uile f[h]íreón ató Ádam 7 Ábél a mac 7 cosin fírián frecnairc do-lluid doc[h]umm richid isin p[h]unc amsire hi tám, atát uli oc clas-c[h]étul for cind m’anma co tías i nnem* (Jackson, 1990, 17, ll.508-12) ‘I do not care about that, although it is done. The windows of heaven are open to me, and all the righteous from Adam and Abel, his son, and up to the latest righteous one who has gone to heaven in the present time in which I am, they are all chanting awaiting my soul so that I may go into heaven’. This excerpt Jefferies sees as a positive characteristic. We already know that Mac Con Glinne resorted to drastic measures in order to delay his execution (see IV.2.3.3.). That being so, it is absurd for him to say here that he does not care whether his life is saved or not, and it is suggested that the remainder of his speech may be taken in the same light. This is not so much a true reflection of Mac Con Glinne but an excuse of the author’s for satirising the church and its teachings. It is a farce which is part and parcel of *AMC*.

Following on this heavenly vision, Mac Con Glinne says: *is cumma leam cia dig Cathal mac Finguine 7 fir Muman co Leth Mog[a] Nuadat 7 muintir C[h]orccaige, 7 Manchín ria cách 7 iar cách, i nd-éc 7 i nd-iffern a n-aen oidche* (Jackson, 1990, 17, ll.513-5) ‘I do not care if Cathal and the men of Munster with Moga’s Half and the people of Cork and Mainchín before or after all, go to death and to hell in the one night’, hardly a comment worthy of one who seems to merit easy access to heaven. To crown it all, Mac Con Glinne concludes: *uair bet fessin i n-aentaid in Athar 7 in Meic 7 in Spiruta*

Naib (Jackson, 1990, 17, ll.516-7) ‘because I myself shall be in unity with the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost’. This last sentence Jefferies lists as another example of a positive characteristic. Again, this suggests a ribbing of the church and its doctrine rather than Mac Con Glinne’s just reward. If anything, this hyperbole could be seen to add negativity to Mac Con Glinne’s character. What is surprising is that Jefferies also lists this excerpt among his negative characteristics (1997, 10, n.18), which causes some confusion. Referring to the above as a demonstration of Mac Con Glinne’s positive characteristics is like taking the term *fer dána* or *ollam* seriously. While Jefferies’ discussion of *AMC* concentrates to a large degree on reconstructing the original *Aislinge*, he nevertheless fails to acknowledge a comic element to the saga. B does impose a new persona on Mac Con Glinne but not quite as Jefferies suggests. It is manifested rather in a deterioration of the character as portrayed in H.

IV.2.5. Mac Con Glinne and Mac na Cairrea stop off in Kells on their way to Cork (not in B). Here hospitality is wanting: *bátar oidchi cen biad isin daimliac* (Meyer, 1892, 114) ‘they spent a night without food in the stone church’. It is their experience here which provides motivation for their behaviour in Cork, and thus it can be seen as a literary device to introduce a central theme. In reaction to their lack of hospitality, they decide to humiliate the community into providing them with refectation by composing a satirical verse:

*A scolóc,
 cid ná dénom dá camrand?
 Déna-sa rann ar arán,
 Digén-sa rand ar andland* (Meyer, 1892, 114).

‘Scholar,
 Why don’t we make two quatrains?
 You make a quatrain on the bread
 I will make one on the relish’.

Doriecht dóethain fichet di lind occus di biud dóib ríe n-oidchi (Meyer, 1892, 114) ‘before night there came for them enough for twenty of food and drink’. The satire thus

produced the desired effect. We have already seen that Jefferies (1997, 9) holds that H is an abridgement of X, but in this particular instance he acknowledges H's faithful rendering of its original: 'In H this quatrain is set logically and effectively in the context of Mac Conglinne and his attendant engaging in a poetical duel in order to obtain food in the Columban church at Kells, while *en route* to Cork. In B, however, the quatrain is incongruously inserted into the middle of a concocted poem comprised of four unrelated verses, each of which has a different metre. Since the quatrain is found in both recensions it clearly belonged to Version X, almost certainly in the context of Mac Conglinne's journey from Fahan to Cork. In Version X, as in H, Mac Conglinne's neglect at Kells would have been significant as a precursor of his more drastic experiences at Cork' (1997, 11). This Kells episode, in effect, indicates no effort at abridgement by H.

When Mac Con Glinne and Mac na Cairrea are nearing Cork they notice multitudes of people heading in the same direction *ar féil Bairre agus Nessáin .i. troscud* (Meyer, 1892, 114) 'for the feast of St. Barre and St. Nessan i.e. to fast'. It therefore appears that Mac Con Glinne has not chosen a very opportune time to visit Cork. Mac na Cairrea subsequently devises a plan, agreed to by Mac Con Glinne, whereby they may both receive food: *abram is fer dána thu-sa agus ní lémtor ar m-bet[h] cen bíed* (Meyer, 1892, 114-5) 'let us say that you are a poet and our living will not be allowed without food'. Their initial welcome bodes ill since Mac na Cairrea is attacked by a dog as they enter the guesthouse of Cork and he ends up in the *tonnaig* 'swamp' (*DIL*, 600). If we consult *Sanas Cormaic* (Meyer, 1913, §222, 20) regarding the etymology of the word *cáinte*, we find an interesting explanation: *Cáinte a caine .i. cainis .i. cú, ar is cend con forsín cáinti, ar is inann dán frisgníat* 'Cáinte, from *canis*, i.e. *canis* a dog, i.e. for it is a dog's head that is on the satirist, and the profession they follow is the same' and one might suggest that this is no random attack on Mac na Cairrea but a physical manifestation of a literary association whereby the dog's aggression may be compared to the biting impact of satire. When Mac na Cairrea makes his request, he not only falsely promotes Mac Con Glinne by giving him the title *ollam*, but speaks in threatening terms to Mainchín's cleric: *atá ollam maith and, agus ní maith a f[h]rithalom occaib-si. Écnaigfid ind eglais, ar is cén ó cenél aindiú* (Meyer, 1892, 115) 'there is a good *ollam* here, and his serving is not good by you. He will slander the church for he is far from his

kin today'. Thus while Cork is responsible for ill-treating its guests, these guests themselves are not altogether honourable.

IV.2.6. When Mainchín's *mac cléirech* fulfils his instructions - *atáither tene do glaschráibech dóib ier tain, occus beror cúachán corcu dóib* (Meyer, 1892, 115) 'let a fire of green brushwood be kindled for them later and a bowl of oats be brought to them' - the meagre offering is refused. Mac Con Glinne then utters the satire around which much of the tale revolves and which can be seen to be a play on three words in lines 3 and 4 below:

*Co bráth nochá n-ísaind-si,
acht maine bein[n] ri gortae,
cúachán corca Corcaigi,
cúachán Corcaigi corcae* (Meyer, 1892, 115 and 149).

'Till Doom I would not eat,
Unless I were famished,
The oaten ration of Cork,
Cork's oaten ration'.

The identical beginnings of 'corca' and 'Corcaigi' create verbal assonance suggesting Cork is comparable to a paltry portion of oats. Mac Con Glinne and Mac na Cairrea have succeeded in carrying out their threat and this satire infuriates Mainchín to such an extent that he issues the order *cúimrighter in fer dánai corro:crochtar imbárach i cinaidh áire na hegailsi* (Meyer, 1892, 115) 'let the *fer dána* be bound so that he may be hanged tomorrow for the crime of satirising the church'. This sentence of death sets the tone of the saga, in which fantasy and exaggeration abound. Does the above verse constitute a legal satire? This question is not resolved until the closing lines of the tale. However, throughout B Mac Con Glinne calls the monks of Cork 'you curs, robbers and dung hounds' and this curse would probably qualify more fittingly as a satire since Ó Cathasaigh (1986, 10) states, 'Old Irish *maldacht* 'curse' is a loan from Latin, and can broadly be taken as the ecclesiastical equivalent of native *áer* 'satire''. Amazingly, in B Mac Con Glinne also refers to the monks' treatment of him in the same terms: *tochar do-*

rala dam arair fri munntir Corccaige, co tardsat a mallacht uli dam (Jackson, 1990, 22, ll.674-6) ‘I had a quarrel with the community of Cork last night so that they all inflicted their curse on me’. It thus hardly matters which is a satire and which not in B: the grounds are farcical on both sides. In both texts Mac Con Glinne’s proposed punishment is so severe that our sympathies are presumably intended to lie with him.

IV.2.7.1. ‘Most of the passages of any length in B which are not in H - and they are numerous - are examples of what the composer of the B version was doing, i.e. making fun of the Establishment’ (Jackson, 1990, xxxii). However, Jackson does allow that ‘[t]here is a certain element of [satire/mockery] in H already.... [and this] probably gave B the idea of using AMC as a vehicle for his mockery, which...he expanded vastly by comparison with H’ (Jackson, 1990, xxxii). The examples that Jackson gives, such as the passage about Mac Con Glinne’s demand for apples (Meyer, 1892, 116-7) are incidental. While B elaborates on many of H’s elements, it is suggested here that H also satirises the establishment and its mockery is not confined to detail. Legal issues frame the tale which begins with the issue of satire and has a final resolution hingeing on a legal judgement in accordance with Irish law. In the closing lines Cathal is so grateful that Mac Con Glinne has cured him of his demon of gluttony that he makes him a promise of the following: *greim rogabais dam-sa .i. tinme mo chotae, rotbía digrés, occus rotbía m’errad ocus fail mo lama occus étgud mo t[h]aoibh ocus fiach cét di chrud* (Meyer, 1892, 128) ‘the service you undertook for me i.e. carving of my portions, you will have it forever, and you will have my fitting out and the ring of my hand and clothing of my side and the legal due of a hundred chattels’.

This elicits the following question from Mainchín: *Maith, a Chathail, in amlaidh sin bere úaim-si in fer ro-áir ind eglais?* (Meyer, 1892, 128) ‘Well, Cathal, is that how you take from me the man who has satirised the church?’. Mac Con Glinne then turns to the law for judgement: *dobertor na breth[em]ain síis ocus tabair-si gell cét il-láimh Cathail, occus dobér-sa cét aile, occus abrait na brethemain cíá húain dligius a enecland* (Meyer, 1892, 128) ‘let the judges be brought here and you give a pledge of a hundred in the hands of Cathal and I will put another hundred and the judges will say which of us deserves his honour price’. The issue is treated as one of major importance

with all the representatives of Irish society taking part, namely, the king, the clergy and the judges.

These reflect the same social elements as those which convened for the drawing up of the important Irish law text *Senchas Már* as stated in its pseudo-historical prologue: ‘Nine men, then, were selected...namely the three bishops Patrick and Benén and Cairnech, the three kings Lóegaire, Corc and Daire, Ros mac Tricim the expert in legal language and Dubthach and Fergus the poet. Legal knowledge is the name of the book that they drew up’ (*CIH* 341.39-342.20, trans. McCone, 1990, 97). If this association with the *Senchas Már* was intended by the author of H, it would invest the proceedings in *AMC* with even greater significance. However, absurdity is manifested in Mac Con Glinne’s honour price of one hundred chattels, which puts him on a par with a king or a *bríugu* or an *ollam* (see Kelly, 1988, 37).

The judges rule that Mac Con Glinne is innocent of the crime: *ní derna áiracht a rád ní ísadh corcu Corcaige* ‘he did not make a satire but only said that he would not eat the oats of Cork’ (Meyer, 1892, 128). This means that Mac Con Glinne may now take his place beside Cathal and the saga ends by underpinning this motif: *Sic tra rohicad Cathal mac Finngúine din ginaig occus rohordned Mac Conglinne* (Meyer, 1892, 115) ‘thus was Cathal Mac Findguine cured of the craving and Mac Conglinne was honoured’. Mac Con Glinne, through the agency of Cathal, has been elevated to a position that one would have considered impossible in early Irish society. *Tech Midchúarda* (Book of Leinster, 1, 116) stipulates the seating arrangements for the banqueting hall of Tara, where ‘the different orders of society are allocated set positions in the hall’ (Fletcher, 2000, 12). The entertainers are perhaps included amongst the social orders because they are ‘most likely to create a festive context’, with the ‘*cuslennaig* (‘players on the *cuisle*’; that is, a form of pipe)... near the top of the near-left rank, between the *rannairi* (‘dispensers’, ‘carvers’) and the *scolaige* (‘scholars’)’ (Fletcher, 2000, 12). Thus, whether Mac Conglinne presented himself as a *rannaire* or a *scolaige*, it seems he could have merited a seat near the top. H has it appear that it is adhering to the procedure of the law; the fundamental reason behind the case in question, however, is farcical and herein lies the rub. The law itself is held up to ridicule. This episode can be viewed as a ‘gentle burlesque’ (Jackson, 1990, xxxv) of the legal system.

IV.2.7.2. Perhaps to emphasise the ridiculous nature of the case, the author has Mac Con Glinne refuse the honour price which is deemed his just reward and has him request Mainchín's cloak instead: *ní chuingim-si mo dire nó m'enecland...acht in cochall fil isin cill* (Meyer, 1892, 128) 'I do not ask my compensation nor my honour price but the cowl which is in the church'. Mainchín offers no objection: *rotfia com' bendachtain* 'you shall have it with my blessing' (Meyer, 1892, 128). Recension B does not contain any lawsuit but in this text Mac Con Glinne demands the cloak as his reward in advance of his curing Cathal. The legal element here lies in the fact that it is left in the hands of the bishop of Cork, who acts as guarantor until Mac Con Glinne completes his pledge. B makes more of Mainchín's reaction with his declaration: *do-biur-sa bréthir i fiadnaise Dé 7 Barri, dámad lemm-sa a fil eter Corccaig 7 a termund, robad usa a sechna uli oltás in cochall a aenar* (Jackson, 1990, 17, ll.522-5) 'in the presence of God and of St. Barre I give my word that if I had that which is between Cork and its boundary, it would be easier doing without it all than the cloak alone'. However, he reluctantly agrees to leave it with the bishop and we hear no more of the affair until the very end of the tale.

IV.2.7.3. Unlike H, where the lawsuit is knitted into the structure of the tale and forms a crucial part of its climax, B reads rather like a tying up of loose ends and the resolution consists of one sentence as Cathal states: *Bó cach liss hi Mumain-tír dó, 7 uinge cach comathig, brat hó cach cill 7 caera cach thige ó Charn cu Corccaig fri a thaeb-sin. Do-bérthar trá in sét is f[h]err oltás sin uile .i. cocholl Manchíne* (Jackson, 1990, 42, ll.1302-6) 'A cow of every *lios* in the land of Munster for him, and an ounce of silver from every tenant, a cloak from every church and a sheep of every house from Carn to Cork on top of that. Also, he will be given the treasure that is better than all of this, i.e. Mainchín's cloak'. Even Jefferies (1997, 16) has to admit '[i]t would seem most probable that Recension H faithfully preserved the outline of the episode derived from the original narrative in which brehons arbitrated in Mac Conglinne's favour and he... accepted Manchín's cloak in place of a very substantial legal reward', not that either text 'gives the slightest indication of why this cowl was regarded as such a valuable object' (Jackson, 1990, xxxv). Perhaps it is not so much what it is but what it symbolises that is at stake here. Referring to it as a 'valuable object' may just reflect the general tone of the tale, where exaggeration abounds. Mac Con Glinne has been passing himself off as something

he is not throughout the tale. We have already seen him dressing as a cook (*gabús fuathróic ocus léinid n-gil imbiu* ‘he seized an apron and a white shirt around him’) and Manchín’s cloak is described in similar terms at the end of the tale: *cochall roboí imme* (Meyer, 1892, 128) ‘there was a cloak around him’. As the church has come in for his greatest criticism, it may be that this mere outward manifestation of clerical status is sufficient triumph for such as him in line with the text’s satirical intent.

IV.2.7.4. On the issue of Mac Con Glinne’s guilt or innocence, we see H taking a much more detailed and structured approach than B. The lawsuit proceedings give it a veneer of authenticity. By way of background it may be noted that the law tract *Bretha Nemed* is of Munster provenance and is much concerned with the rights and responsibilities of poets (Byrne, 2001, 174). The *Cáin Fuithirbe* is said to be the earliest dateable law text and ‘to have been composed in the time of Cathal’s father Finguine (678-695)’ (Byrne, 2001, 176). This information is given in a Middle Irish introduction to an extract of the said law tract (Breatnach, 2005, 216). A description of *Cáin Fhuithirbe* in *Cambrensis Eversus* states: ‘*Cathaldo Finghini filio Momoniae regnum obtinente conscripti*...It was written during the reign of Cathal, son of Finghin, king of Munster’ (Breatnach, 2005, 216). *Cóic Conara Fugill* ‘deals with the procedure to be followed in lawsuits’ (Byrne, 2001, 174) and also has an introduction which claims that ‘this tract was written in the reign of Cathal Mac Finguine, the king of Munster who died in 742’ (Byrne, 2001, 176). It thus looks as if Cathal, and probably also his father, commissioned legal texts during their periods of rule and it could be argued that the strong legal element in *AMC*, particularly as represented by H, reflects this background, thereby poking fun at what would have been a serious and important facet of Cathal’s career.

IV.2.8.1. As regards an established institution, it is noteworthy that *AMC*’s satire of the church ‘makes sport of the most sacred things, not sparing even the Sacraments and Christ’s crucifixion’ (Flower, 1947, 76). Its mockery of church doctrine verges on the blasphemous. The first and most obvious example is Mac Con Glinne’s identification with Christ. It is the church itself that decides on Mac Con Glinne’s sentence and crucifixion, creating the tale’s mock hero. Thus what traditionally is seen as a barbarous punishment by the Romans, is initiated here by the Christians themselves. Cathal is even likened to Pontius Pilate in H, as it states: *isbert Cathal ná crochfaide bard laiss, acht*

dognetis féin na clérich, dáig is íet rofítir a égóir (Meyer, 1892, 116) ‘Cathal said that he would not crucify a bard but the clerics might do it themselves, for it is they who knew his wrong’. Mac Con Glinne asks for a drink of water, as Christ also did, but for Mac Con Glinne this serves as a delaying tactic to postpone crucifixion: *ascaid dam-sa...mo sháith de usci occus mé féin da dáil form* (Meyer, 1892, 116) ‘a boon for me...my sufficiency of water and myself to dispense it’.

B is more explicit still in its allusions to the Passion: *Ro benad ulidetaid a étaig de 7 ro gabad slipre 7 echlasca dó* (Jackson, 1990, 7, ll.212-13) ‘All his clothes were taken off him and rods and horsewhips were taken to him : *bentair de a bec n-étaig ocus rocenglad téta ocus refeda taris don chorthu* (Jackson, 1990, 11, ll.340-1) ‘his scant clothing was removed from him and ropes and cords were tied around him to the pillar stone’: *benais féin a chésad-c[h]rand 7 no-s imarchair fri [a] ais co faithc[h]i Chorccaige* (Jackson, 1990, 11, ll.321-3) ‘he himself cut his passion-tree and bore it on his back to the green of Cork’. B also contains the following comment from Mac Con Glinne: *cid ed bess de, regmait fri h-umalóit feib ro-chóid ar magister Íhsu Críst fri a c[h]ésad* (Jackson, 1990, 10, ll.308-9) ‘whatever may come of it, we will go in humility as our master Jesus Christ went to his Passion’.

It may be surmised from the above that B greatly elaborates on the Passion theme. Jefferies (1997, 22) suggests it is possible that H was written in the monastery of Cork and bases his speculation on the following observations: ‘the author of H systematically suppressed all but two elements of the ‘Messiah motif’ which was in his exemplar; that of crucifixion and the ‘Pontius Pilate’ scene. Furthermore, his recension was pointedly silent about the failings of the monks of Cork. The effect of these changes to the narrative was to make Mac Conglinne, the cleric from Fahan, seem less ‘saintly’, and the monks of Cork less culpable in their actions towards him’. In this regard, Jefferies cites the fact that in H the guesthouse in Cork and its oaten ration are referred to without comment whereas in B ‘it is conceded that Cork’s guest-house was in a poor state: B: 118-27, that the meal offered to Mac Con Glinne was paltry: B: 223-5, and that the reception given to the scholar was inadequate: B: 128-9, 136’ (1997, 22, n.100). Firstly, the fact that H is less scathing in its criticism of the monks of Cork in this instance does not necessarily imply that the author is on their side. Surely there is a clear

enough implication of inhospitality in the line directed at Mainchín's cleric; *ní maith a f[h]rithalom occaib-si* (Meyer, 1892, 115) 'his [Mac Con Glinne's] serving is not good by you', and also in the meagre offering of *tene do glaschráibech...ocus cúachán corcu* (Meyer, 1892, 115) 'a fire of green branch wood and a bowl of oats'. Jackson (1990, xxxiii) also refers to this episode: 'The monks are attacked for their meanness to guests and the filth of their guest-house [in B]; there is a small germ of this in H, and it was no doubt in X as it is essential to the story, but the mocking expansion of it in B is typical of him'. Moreover, Mac Con Glinne's experiences in the Cork guesthouse can be compared to Cairbre's treatment at the hands of Bres in *Cath Maige Tuired* and it is suggested that B's elaboration is derived from this tale (Jackson, 1990, 50).

IV.2.8.2. The scene where Mac Con Glinne joins Cathal in an apple eating competition is common to both B and H and presents another example of *AMC*'s satire of church doctrine. In H this occurs before Mac Con Glinne recounts his vision to Cathal and acts as an illustration of Cathal's voracious appetite. Cathal, as king, has been given his honorific portion of apples on his visit to Pichán Mac Maoilfinn, king of the Uí Echach (Muman), and is joined there by Mac Con Glinne. As Cathal is about to devour the apples *atnaig Mac Conglinne ag fáscocnom agaid ind-aghaid fri Cathal* (Meyer, 1892, 116) 'Mac Conglinne proceeds at empty chewing face to face with Cathal'. Rather than have the king feast alone, Mac Con Glinne wishes to accompany him and so, as Cathal eats an apple, Mac Con Glinne demands one as well. The text then proceeds to make a comparison between the number of apples they both eat and the teachings and sacred literature of the church. For example, to gain a third apple Mac Con Glinne says: *airim na Trí nóti* 'the number of the Trinity', to gain a fourth *cethor lebair int s[h]oiscéla* 'the four books of the Gospels', to gain a fifth *cúic lebair Maoisi* 'the five books of Moses', to gain a sixth *sé haosai int shaogail* 'the six ages of life', to gain a seventh *secht n-dánu in Spírta Naoib*, 'the seven powers of the Holy Spirit', to gain an eighth *ocht m-biete int shoiscéla* 'the eight beatitudes of the Gospels', to gain a ninth *naoi n-gráda na hegalsa nemdai*, 'the nine grades of the heavenly church', to gain a tenth *in dechmad grád na hegailsi talmandai*, 'the tenth grade is the order of the earthly church', to gain an eleventh *airem na n-apsdal ier n-imorbus* 'the number of the apostles after transgression', to gain a twelfth *dá apstal deg in Coimded* 'the twelve apostles of the Lord', and to gain a

thirteenth *Crist cend na n-apstal* ‘Christ the head of the apostles’ (Meyer, 1892, 116-7). Jackson (1990, xxxiii) sees here ‘a send-up of medieval Irish erudition, including the symbolical lore of numbers dear to the early Irish clerical mind, but incongruously applied to a trivial object’. Church doctrine is being tossed around here with the same irreverence as one tosses an apple.

Outside of the Passion motif and apple scene the other religious references in B are ‘chiefly a matter of parodies of situations or motifs’ (Jackson, 1990, xxxiii), such as when Mac Con Glinne sings psalms which can be heard a mile from the monastery (§16). This is most likely a take-off of St. Columcille, when he could miraculously be heard singing his psalms at a great distance (Jackson, 1990, xxxiii). Therefore we may agree with Jefferies regarding the fact that H only includes two references on the ‘Messiah motif’ but that this indicates suppression by H is questionable. These kernel elements of the crucifixion and the apple scene generate ridicule equal to that found in B and denigrate the same basic truths of the Christian religion.

IV.2.8.3. Not even prayer is sacred and it provides the author with another object of ridicule. It is pertinent at this point to note Meyer’s translation of *fáthlieig* as ‘Wizard Doctor’. Here it will be translated as ‘Prophet Doctor’ in accordance with the normal meaning of *fáith* (see *DIL*, 293). As a form of greeting to him Mac Con Glinne says ‘*Aróit lem, a cléirich!*’ (Meyer, 1892, 125) ‘Pray for me, o cleric’. The answer, in the form of a blessing, substitutes food for holiness: ‘*for foesam n-degbíd duit...for enech n-deglomae, for snádad sensaille*’ (Meyer, 1892, 125) ‘(may you be) under the safety of good food... may you be under the honour of good drink, may you be under the protection of old bacon’. Similarly, when Mac Con Glinne is taking his leave, the cleric gives him a gospel as an amulet or relic to ward off harm. This gospel consists of the following: *soscéla do gúalloind aisle shenshaille cen reing, cen toinn imbe, cona cristall do dondmaróicc bruithi foa, cona aird blonce fair* (Meyer, 1892, 126-7) ‘a gospel of shoulder part of old bacon, without a wrinkle, without skin around it, with its crystal of brown boiled sausage under it, with its top of lard on it’.

IV.2.8.4. In addition, the church is also satirised in the text’s portrayal of Cork’s abbot, Mainchín, who loses out to Mac Con Glinne and must surrender him his cloak. Apart from his derogatory name (‘little monk’), he is presented as one who, although reticent to

provide adequately for visitors, lives in comparative ease himself. After he orders the crucifixion, Mac Con Glinne begs a personal boon of him before carrying out of the sentence (not in B): *mo daothain lendu occus bíd, occus di lepaid-si cona hétach dóib etir colcaid occus brothraig* (Meyer, 1892, 115) ‘my sufficiency of drink and food, and your own bed with its bedding of mattress and quilt’. In the *Aislinge* poem itself, there is another belittling of a monastic head which is found in both H and B:

Atconnarc ní, ind aircindech
Cona brothraig bósaille
‘má mnaí miadaigh maiss (Jackson, 1990, 16, ll.485-7).

‘I saw the erenagh
 With his cloak of beefy fat
 Beside his fine, noble wife’.

In an episode of the Vision in H *in fáthlieig*, otherwise known as *in prímc léirich .i. in prímfáith* (Meyer, 1892, 123) is described thus: *ic tíechtáin...cona choraind secht mescán find fichet i cl[e]thi a chind, cona secht n-imairib dec do borraig fírlosae i mullach a coirne* (Meyer, 1892, 124) ‘coming...with his crown of twenty-seven butter-lumps on the top of his head, with seventeen ridges of bunches of genuine leek on the top of his crown’. This character is later referred to as *in dísertach* and lives in a hermitage. He is thus a person of extreme importance in Irish society: ‘The holy man who leaves his own territory and becomes a hermit elsewhere is referred to as a *deorad dé* ‘exile of God’. In the law-texts he is credited with the power to perform miracles, and is given the same honour-price as a king or bishop’ (Kelly, 1988, 224). He is addressed by Mac Con Glinne in the following manner:

Bennach dún, a cléirig, a clí cloth co comge,
Mac milbuilci mela, meic smeru, meic blonce,
Meic búadrén, meic brotc[h]áin. (Meyer, 1982, 123).

‘Bless us, o cleric, famous pillar of learning,
Son of honey-bag, son of juice, son of lard,
Son of stirabout, son of pottage’.

The same address is directed at Mainchín in B. This is part of a genealogical poem which ‘is a blatant send-up of the innumerable genealogies of kings and nobles, sometimes - as here - tracing them back to Adam’ (Jackson, 1990, xxxvi). Mercier (1962, 216) sees this as a parody of Christ’s genealogy as traced in Luke III, 23-38. In effect it can be either or both, and these examples display the author’s low regard for figures of authority within the church, suggesting by means of alluding to them in terms of food that they, too, suffered from greed. In fact, when we take Cathal into account, the author manifests a low regard for figures of authority in general, since kingship and the church were the two most powerful institutions of early Irish society. This can be contrasted with Mac Con Glinne as a figure of low status, whether as student or poet.

IV.2.9. ‘The only important element in the early Irish Establishment not guyed or burlesqued is the nobility. Cathal appears in a rather ludicrous light, of course, but that is essential to the tale; the sub-king of Iveagh, Pichán, is treated with respect’ (Jackson, 1990, xxxviii). This claim is open to question since Cathal is satirised in this text, especially with regard to his legal and historical background, but Pichán is a non-essential figure whose input into the story is slight. He is only mentioned three times in H, in a situation where he is but an intermediary between Cathal and Mac Con Glinne (Meyer, 1892, 116-7). Furthermore, he is not identifiable historically (Jackson, 1990, 57) and may thus, perhaps, be seen as an invention by the author. ‘Pichán mac Maele Finde, the king of Uí Echach in *Aislinge*, was a fictional entity, unlike both of the other kings in *Aislinge* who can be identified from eighth-century sources’ (Jefferies, 1997, 18). The second king referred to here is, of course, Fergal Mac Máele Dúin, who is only mentioned in the B version.

The one person of consequence who is not satirised is St. Mura and he only figures in H. It is he who appears to Mac Con Glinne in a vision and gets him out of his difficulties by furnishing him with the means to save Cathal: ‘*Memraigh ind aislingi si’ or sé, ‘ocus indis i fiednuise Cathail in rígh, ocus sóerfu hé don ginaig’* (Meyer, 1892,

116) ‘remember this vision’ he said ‘and tell it in the presence of king Cathal and you will cure him of the craving’. His description has angelic or divine resonances: *Lend finn imbiu, delcc oir and, léne mór síochu re gelchnes dó, putrall findlíath forchas fair* (Meyer, 1892, 115) ‘A bright mantle around him with a gold brooch in it, a large silken shirt next his white skin, a fringe of white-grey curly hair upon him’. From this we may perhaps infer that the author still retains respect for God and the saints.

However, from the images presented to us of Mac Con Glinne, Mainchín and Cathal, it is obvious that we are dealing with individuals who are less than perfect. Even Mac Con Glinne himself admits to greed when confronted with the Phantom (*in scál*) in the Vision: *scolaige trúag sund...occ iarraidh a iccai ar chraos, ar ithemraighe ocus ar itaid n-étúalaing* (Meyer, 1892, 119) ‘(I am) a poor scholar here...looking to be cured for greediness, voracity and unbearable thirst’. The association of gluttony with *incontinentia* and *concupiscentia*, where lack of control of the physical demands of the body leads to excessive desire (Gwara, 1988, 61) has been discussed in chapter III (2.26.1.). Gwara’s article specifically concentrates on the link between gluttony and original sin in his examination of Version B of *AMC*, because it contains a detailed explanation of how Cathal came to be possessed by a demon of gluttony. ‘Describing Cathal’s ‘first love’ (‘cétshercus écmaise’) for Lígach and the nature of the bewitched apples she is compelled to send him, the prologue of *AMC* summarily introduces the gluttony motif... In conjunction with Lígach’s conscious betrayal of her lover...the apple-gluttony motif preserves reminiscences of the story of Adam and Eve...Lígach’s role in *AMC* reflects that of Eve in Eden, as the indirect cause of Cathal’s gluttony is his ‘cétshercus écmaise’ which she arouses’ (Gwara, 1988, 55-6). While this motif does not exist in H, it does contain the apple-eating scene, and perhaps this is where B got his inspiration from.

IV.2.10.1. Gwara (1988, 64-5) explains that because ‘particular sins...were associated with parts of the body (*inter alia*, *gula* with the mouth, theft with the hands), it became commonplace to perceive sin as the demonic possession of a certain organ or member...Therefore, the ‘demon of gluttony’ in *AMC* satirises a dogma relating possession to sin, and consequently the diabolical nature of Cathal’s gluttony emphasises the role of sin in the text’. However, as all sins originated in the act of eating and as *gula* was considered ‘the mother of all vices’ by the early Patristic Fathers (Gwara, 1988, 61),

gluttony's general sinful associations may be applied to H and its protagonists. We have seen above how Mac Con Glinne admitted his failings and said he was looking for a cure. This may be interpreted as a confession of sin, as patristic literature often used the metaphor of sin as disease, and in his conversation with the Prophet Doctor 'Aniér's sinful condition (for he is a glutton) is described as a disease ('galar')(Gwara, 1988, 66).

Thus Mac Con Glinne is directed to the Prophet Doctor (*in Fáithliaig*) in order to be cured of his disease. In the Irish Penitentials 'the confessor was considered 'the physician of souls' and penance a 'spiritual medicine' (Gwara, 1988, 66). Bieler (1963, 46) also remarks on the phenomenon of the 'frequent occurrence of metaphors taken from medicine' in the Irish Penitentials. Therefore we may understand the Prophet Doctor to be Mac Con Glinne's spiritual confessor/doctor. The 'cure' for sin is, of course, penance...The most elaborate comparison of penance to a medical cure is found in the prologue to the 'B-text' of the *Penitential of Columbanus*; it was later incorporated in other penitentials, including Ps.-Cummean' (Bieler, 1963, 46). Although the Irish Penitentials were largely composed in Latin, two of the tracts were written in Old Irish, namely, the Old Irish Penitential (P), (Bieler, 1963, 258-277) and the Old Irish table of Commutations (A), (Bieler, 1963, 277-283). These vernacular texts were 'based exclusively on earlier Latin texts' and written slightly later, in the eighth century (Bieler, 1963, 47). Bieler (1963, 47) agrees with Flower's suggestion that these works 'were a product of the reform movement associated with the rise of the Céli Dé'. He further states that it is difficult to study these two texts in isolation from the rest of the reform movement literature as 'linguistically as well as psychologically they all belong together, and each of them is complementary to the others' (1963, 48).

When Mac Con Glinne finally reaches the Prophet Doctor he again confesses and seeks a remedy for his ailment: *Ticim, a degduine, a céin dom' ic ar in n-galor n-antaigtech fil im'comaitecht* (Meyer, 1892, 125) 'I come, o good man, from afar for my curing of the terrible disease which accompanies me'. When asked what his disease is, he describes greed equal to that of Cathal's: *In ginach cona fodlaibh .i. ro-íta óil, olar, inmar, caithim, rocaithim co n-géire con, co longad capaill* (Meyer, 1892, 125) 'the craving with its parts i.e. great thirst of drinking, juice and relish, feeding, great feeding, with the greed of a hound, with the appetite of a horse'. The opening line of the tale

compels us to draw this comparison, as it reads: *Cathal mac Findguine .i. rí mór Muman, co n-géire chon, col-longad chapail* (Meyer, 1892, 114) ‘Cathal Mac Finguine, i.e. the great king of Munster, with the greed of a hound, with the appetite of a horse’. We are thus presented with the same characteristics of gluttony at the beginning and end of the text, creating symmetry. It may also be pertinent to highlight the reference to a hound exemplified in the name Mac Con Glinne, ‘Son of the Hound of the Glen’, which signifies greed in the text.

Gluttony is the first of the vices mentioned in the Old Irish Penitential (P) and its remedy includes: ‘moderate fasting, remorse of heart, rare meals’ (Bieler, 1963, 259). This, however, is not the remedy advocated for Mac Con Glinne. The Prophet Doctor orders him: *Bí innocht cen bide bail i m-biae. Éirigh re muchae laithi arnamárach. Ataider tene duit do foloman crín lasamhain di chrund gescach forsa cacait serraig i mullach erslébhe* (Meyer, 1892, 125) ‘Remain tonight without food, wherever you may be. Rise early tomorrow. Let a fire be kindled for you of old, bare, withered branch wood upon which colts defecate on top of the hillside’. We observe the token reference to penance with an improbably short period of fasting and then an additional symmetry entailing contrast between the fire originally offered to Mac Con Glinne on his arrival in Cork (*tene do glaschráibech*) and that being proposed here as part of his cure/penance for sin. It is to be noted that B omits this latter subtle detail regarding the quality of the brushwood, which creates verbal symmetry in the H text.

IV.2.10.2. At the beginning of the B text, Mac Con Glinne’s miserable fire comprises *dá oibell tened i mmedón suipp síl c[h]átha corcca, ⁊ dá fhót do úr-mónaid* (Jackson, 1990, 6, ll.159-60) ‘two sparks of fire in the middle of a wisp of oaten straw and two sods of fresh turf’, which certainly gives the impression of a fire that has not much chance of staying lit. At the end of the text his instructions are: *Dia téis do [t’] tig innocht, eirg don tiprait d’innmad do lám; con-melfi dorni fri détu, ⁊ tochosaig cach finda fiar foltnide iar n-a chóir do t’fhult. Iar sin, no-t gor fri tenid trichemruaid do daroich deirg dírig, nó do ocht slisnib uindsend fhásus i fhail airshlébi dú i caccut min-gelbuind, hi tellach thirmaide irard airísel, co ra-t gori a gríss, ná ro-t losci a lassar, ná ro-t bena a dé* (Jackson, 1990, 37, ll.1151-7) ‘If you go home tonight, go to the well to wash your hands; rub your fists against your teeth, and scrape every curly, wavy strand of your hair

into shape. Then warm yourself in front of a blazing fire of straight red oak, or of eight chunks of ash which grows near a hillside, a place in which little sparrows defecate; in a dry hearth very high, very low, so that its embers may warm you, so that its flame may not burn you, so that its smoke may not blast you'. This fire blazing with good timber definitely is a contrast to the former, but B has forfeited verbal symmetry for verbosity. This example serves to further illustrate B's characteristic tendency to elaboration which often loses sight of some of the finer literary points seen in H, including the gentle jape at penitential fasting whereby Mac Con Glinne may fast overnight in anticipation of his forthcoming feast.

After being comfortably set up, Mac Con Glinne is to be served on the morrow as follows: *Tabrad ben díen détgel desgel masbruindech cóemcolpthach dít di trí nói mírend do bíud somilis soblasdu, bas méit ogh rerchirci cachmir díb. Tabrat di trí nói lomand gach óen míri* (Meyer, 1892, 125-6) 'Let a quick, white-toothed, fine-breasted, fair-thighed woman give you your three times nine morsels of sweet, tasty food, each morsel as big as the egg of a heath fowl. Let her give you your three times nine draughts with every morsel'. This constitutes a satirical swipe at the sacrament of penance 'which was normally characterised by a fast of some specific duration' (Gwara, 1988, 67). '[R]ather than instructing Mac Conglinne to fast, the *fáithliaig* ironically orders him to glut himself' (Gwara, 1988, 67). Gwara (1988, 68) also points out an interesting difference between the two versions of *AMC*: 'It is instructive to note that the Wizard Doctor in the B-text is a secular figure, and no mention is made of any spiritual responsibility. In the H-recension, however, the *fáith-liaig* is called a chief cleric ('*prímclériuch*'), and Mac Conglinne's cure is offered in a chapel...The H-recension therefore provides further evidence that the vision in *AMC* satirizes the Irish penitential tradition by mocking the confession of the sin of gluttony and the absolution of the sinner Aníer'. Thus the text has ridiculed one of the most important institutions in the early Irish church.

The church's grave attitude to penance is illustrated in §5 of the Table of Commutations: 'every penance is determined both as to its severity and the length of time one is engaged in it, by the magnitude of the sin, the length of time it is persevered in, the motive for which it is committed, and the fervour with which it is eventually abandoned'

(Binchy, 1963, 278). This tract considers certain sins not to be entitled ‘to any remission of the penance due for them, however long be the period prescribed for them’ and included in this category are ‘kin-slayings, homicides, and secret murders; also brigandage, druidism, and satirizing’ (Binchy, 1963, 278). Kin-slaying merits a penance of seven years duration according to the Old Irish Penitential (Binchy, 1963, 271) and putting satire on a par with it illustrates the seriousness in which the latter was held, at least if unjustified. Thus *AMC*’s author has struck to the heart of the church’s teaching and makes a mockery of all that it considers sacred.

IV.2.11. Up to now discussion has focussed on the texts’ satirising of the legal system and church doctrine. It is now time to focus on the Vision. Although H has been generally seen to present a more coherent rendering of the tale than B, this does not apply to the strategic kernel of the text, the Vision itself. ‘On the whole, the account of Mac Conglinne’s journey to the Wizard Doctor, of what he saw on this journey and at the Hermitage, is equally confused and full of unintelligible matter in both versions’ (Meyer, 1892, xxii). Also, as ‘the same obscure passages occur in both versions... [and] must have formed part of the versions from which B and H sprang; these we have seen reason to consider as different forms of one common original, which must thus itself have contained these obscurities’ (Meyer, 1892, xxii). Furthermore, the Vision is distinct by being largely narrated in verse and the three poems which recount visions ‘are common to H and B’ (Jefferies, 1997, 15). Thus the episode which gave *AMC* its title is similar in both versions and this indicates that little change has been made from X. Jackson (1990, xxxi) comments upon the closeness of the poems in both H and B but has a different theory. Acknowledging that apart from these poems the two texts cannot really be used for variant readings, he surmises that B ‘was not using a written text of X (or of H), but the prose parts of *AMC* were known to him as an oral tale, which...was preserved and handed on by memory but not necessarily so closely preserved that the one version must be a word for word rendering of the other...With the poems however it is different. Between X and B/H the reciters either had written texts of these, or had memorised them pretty carefully.’ Oral transmission or memorisation is neither provable nor probable and as far as the poetry is concerned ‘the great volume of verse...[and] the word for word

correspondence leaves no doubt but that they were, in fact, transcribed from written exemplars' (Jefferies, 1997, 9).

The first poem in H (Meyer, 1892, 118) occurs as Mac Con Glinne announces to Cathal his intention to relate his vision: *Cen labrai di neoch aile istoig co tair damh-sai aislingi atconnarcus arráir d'indisin duit-si* 'not a word from anyone else in here until I am finished telling you the vision which I saw last night'. The poem amounts to a description of a royal stronghold in terms of food:

*Aislingi atconnarc arráir, bá cáin gébenn,
Bá balc bríge cotarfas dam ríge n-Érenn*

*Co n-acai in les m-bilech m-barrach, bá saill sonlach
Caisel carroch do minsceillcib tanach torrach* (Meyer, 1892, 118)

'I saw a vision last night, it was a beautiful sight, it was a vigorous power so that there appeared to me, a kingship of Ireland. I saw the fort tree-topped and branched, a bacon palisade, a stone rampart of small, knobbly clumps of rock, of lumpy cheeses'. While this poem is practically identical in both versions of the text (allowing for two extra verses in B), it occurs in different places. In B it is found much later in the proceedings and, although it reads as a continuous description, it actually comprises two poems as is 'shown by the different metres' (Meyer, 1892, xxii) and also by B's intervening *ocus dixit beós*, 'and he said further' (Jackson, 1990, 26, l.814). Two additional lines from the opening of the poem help to sum up its content:

*dá cech biúd bud maith la duine,
darlium bátar uile and* (Meyer, 1892, 118)

'of every food which is pleasant to man,
I felt they were all there'

Thus is introduced the food motif which provides the subject matter for much of the rest of the text. Eatables playing such a major role, albeit in a dream, manifest the craving of either extreme hunger or gluttony. What follows this poem in both texts is a long narrative passage introduced in B by *incipit do[n] fhábull síana budesta* (Jackson, 1990, 27, l.836) ‘here below begins the fable’. This describes Mac Con Glinne’s journey as he is directed by the Phantom (*in scál*) to the hermitage of the Prophet Doctor. This part of the text is found in both versions where it has no connection with the poems, and appears as a separate story regarded by Wollner (Meyer, 1892, xxii-xxiv) as an element added secondarily to the tale. This fable switches attention from Cathal to Mac Con Glinne and introduces the motif of Mac Con Glinne himself seeking a cure for his own gluttony. There is no reference to Cathal or to his demon of gluttony in the fable. Wollner offers the following explanation: ‘We must imagine S as a shorter narrative of Cathal’s cure by a recitation of the Vision...The cure was effected by the scholar MacConglinne...The shorter narrative was then remodelled by a later hand into a longer work, X. The existing motives were utilised and given a new turn. The figure of MacConglinne stepped into the foreground and became the centre of interest, whereas in S Cathal had been the chief person. Cathal and his cure now served merely as a foil to MacConglinne’ (Meyer, 1892, xxv-xxvi).

The fable takes place *for beluch bela i crích úa Mochloingthe* (Meyer, 1892, 119) ‘on the Pass of Meat-Juice in the Land of the descendents of Early-Eating’. According to Wollner (Meyer, 1892, xxviii), ‘[i]f this country of O’Early-eating is an Irish land of Cockayne, this would be interesting’. Jackson also refers to this part of the narrative as ‘perhaps the popular motif of the Land of Cockayne’ (1990, 56).

IV.2.12. The Land of Cockayne (Cokayne) is ‘the name of an imaginary country, a medieval Utopia where life was a round of luxurious idleness. The origin of the word has been much disputed; the most usually accepted derivation is from the Latin *coquere* (‘to cook’) and the German *kuchen* (‘cake’), the literal sense thus being ‘The Land of Cakes’ (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1962, vol 5, 905). After a brief discussion, Wollner (Meyer, 1892, xxxiii) offers his own reasons for rejecting the notion that *AMC* conjures up an Irish Land of Cockayne, stating that the ‘Utopian trait is wholly wanting in the Irish ‘Fable’. True, plenty reigns in the land of the Wizard Doctor, nor is aught talked of but

eating; but this plenty is of a most primitive kind – abundance of the simplest materials. Of precious things – gold, silver, and the like – not a word; nor do the inhabitants lead a lazy life’.

‘In the thirteenth century French *Fabliau de Cocagne* the journey to Cocaigue is a pilgrimage in repentance for sins. There the poet finds, in addition to the joys of climate and food, that sexual pleasure is freely available...Of special interest in the French poem is the vocabulary of gastronomic and sartorial delight’ (Lucas, 1995, 174). We may observe how these descriptions could be applied to *AMC*, with one exception, i.e. sexual gratification. Ó Fiannachta (1974, 91) considers the similarity to the Land of Cockayne motif in his discussion of the B version of *AMC*, but rejects it on these grounds: ní thugtar ach aon bhean amháin isteach sa scéal igceart, an té a bhí le freastal ar Mhac Coinglinne agus é á leigheas. Tugtar cur síos breá uirthi...moltar a háille, ach.. níl sí in aon ghaobhar don othar- níl máchail le bheith uirthi (‘only one single woman is introduced properly into the tale, the person who was to serve Mac Con Glinne when he was being cured. She is given a fine description...her beauty is praised, but she is not intimate with the patient – there is no unseemliness to be attached to her’). Moreover, if we consider Gwara’s theory regarding the Lígach incident in the B version of *AMC* where she ‘sends Cathal the apples which cause his gluttony in a manner suggesting the temptation of Adam and the principal act of original sin’ (1988, 56), we see a forbidding light cast on the sexual connotation of the apples.

There is, moreover, no effort at the satirisation of monastic activities in the *Fabliau de Cocagne* (Lucas, 1995, 174). This is a feature of a poem entitled *The Land of Cokaygne* in the Irish manuscript Harley 913, dating from c.1330 (Lucas, 1995, 175). The poem is written in English and ‘draws on the traditions and ideas of the otherworld to suggest a land full of pleasure and satisfaction...homing in on sexual licence between men and women in religious life’ (Lucas, 1995, 174-5). *AMC* is cited in Lucas’ edition (1995, 175) as perhaps having been influential in the writing of this particular poem, as it ‘combines a picture of the other world full of indulgence and plenty with satiric treatment of monastic life...[and] satire as much as parody is significant’. Taking an excerpt referring to the riotous activities of the nuns and monks as an example:

*Whan hi (nunnes) beth fur fram the abbey,
 Hi makith ham naked forto plai,
 And lepith dune in-to the brimme
 And doth ham sleilech forto swimme.
 The yung monketh that hi seeth,
 Hi doth ham vp and forth hi fleeth
 And commith to the nunnes anon,
 And euch monke him taketh on
 And snellich berith forth har prei
 To the mochil grei abbey,
 And techith the nunnes an oreisun
 With iambleue vp and dun.*

‘When they (the nuns) are far from the abbey, they make themselves naked in order to play, and leap down into the water and devote themselves skilfully to swimming. The young monks who see them take themselves upwards and out they fly, and come to the nuns at once, and each monk takes one for himself and quickly carries forth his prey to the great grey abbey, and teaches the nuns a prayer with legs uplifted thoroughly’ (Lucas, 1995, 53-55). We observe that no such behaviour is described or intimated in *AMC*, and that any influence it may have had on the writer of this text was not in relation to descriptions of sexual activity. At any event, the fourteenth century date of composition of the *Land of Cokaygne* poem would prove rather late for *AMC*. As has already been remarked, the Vision poems containing the greatest concentration of supposed Cockayne motifs in the text sprang from *AMC*’s original. If we accept Jackson’s (1990, xxxii) estimated date of the eleventh century, or Hull’s of c. 1100 AD (1962-4, 378) as the original time of composition, we are talking about a period roughly two hundred years before the composition of the Cockayne poems. Thus, when date and sexual aspects are taken into account, it seems unlikely that the *Land of Cokaygne* poem could have been significantly influenced by the Land of Early-eating in *AMC*. ‘Some of the material in MS Harley 913 suggests a goliardic spirit’ (Lucas, 1995, 176), since the *Land of Cokaygne* is accompanied by other satirical works directed at the clergy. ‘From its

context in its manuscript then, *Cokaygne* and its companion pieces could be seen as parodies designed to shock' (Lucas, 1995, 176). This manuscript had strong Franciscan associations 'and the persons whose activities are being held up to ridicule in *Cokaygne* are monks, not friars...[therefore] one can hardly doubt that the author was a Franciscan friar' (Lucas, 1995, 176). If a reform-minded churchman could satirise the church in such an overt fashion in the fourteenth century, it is surely possible that something similar could also have been done in the twelfth or even earlier. *AMC*'s singling out of the clergy for its sharpest criticism places it in a unique position in early Irish literature, since this satire is an inside job, so to speak. Moreover, this self-criticism may be seen to have existed from its time of composition as the Vision demonstrates.

IV.2.13.1. It appears that the author of the Harley 913 poem *Land of Cokaygne* could have been influenced by 'Irish voyage literature where a journey leads to an intriguing discovery of an 'other' world' (Lucas, 1995, 175). This can likewise be applied to *AMC*, especially in the next Vision poem that we encounter in H. This poem 'contains, to a large extent, the same things as the prose in which it is inserted, and it is evident, from a comparison of the two, that the prose must be regarded as a paraphrase of the poem' (Meyer, 1892, xxiv). Mac Con Glinne is on his journey to the Prophet Doctor's hermitage and the prose begins by informing us: *lotmur dar cend Sléibi Imi conn-acamar in curchín beg be[o]chlaidhi bóshailli ind- eocharimill in lochai, cona chodail geared, cona ráma do tiug tana tuirc... Imráimit dar loch lemnachta..corragbomor port..ar beúloibh beloidhe críche úo Mochloincthi hi fíordorus díseirt ind Fáithleghae* (Meyer, 1892, 119-20) 'we went past Buttermount until we saw the little gravy-soaked coracle of corned beef on the border of the lake, with its covering of tallow, with its oars of solid, thin board-meat...We rowed beyond a lake of new milk...until we reached a harbour...at the mouth of a pass of the territory of the descendents of Early-eating in front of the entrance of the Prophet Doctor's hermitage'. Then we have the second Vision poem, which does not seem to bear any relationship to the first poem except that everything is again described in terms of food. It begins:

*Aislingi do-márfas-[s]a,
Taidbsi ingnad indisimm,*

*Hi fhiadnaisé cháich:
Curchán gered gert[h]ide
Hi purt locha lemnachta
ós lind betha bláith.*

*..cor bensumm na sesbémend
dar muncind in mur-t[h]racha
co tochrad a mur-thorad,
mur-grian amal mil.*

*Coem in dúnad ráncumar,
Co n-a ráthaib ro-brehtán,
Resin loch anall:
Ba h-imm úr a erdrochat,
A chaisel ba gel-chruithnecht,
A shondach bas all...*

*Tipra d'fhín 'n-a fhir-iarthar
Aibne beóri is brocóti,
Blasta cech lind lán.*

‘A vision appeared to me, a marvellous apparition I tell in the presence of all, a coracle of suet and lard in a port of new milk lake over the smooth pool of life. So that we struck the oar-strokes across the expanse of sea-strand, so that the sea’s plenty was thrown up, sea-sand like honey. The fort which we reached was lovely, with its ramparts all buttery, beyond the lake: its causeway was fresh butter, its stone rampart was white wheat, its palisade was bacon...A well of wine just behind it, a river of beer and bragget, flavoursome each full pool’ (as this poem is identical in both recensions, the version here is taken from Jackson, 1990, 14-5, ll.430-63). As stated, this is H’s second version of Mac Con Glinne’s vision and appears superfluous. In B this is the first vision poem. ‘It is no mere arbitrary whim of the author of B to call this poem ‘The Vision’. For once in a

way, B is right. In an earlier version this poem actually was the Vision, and, as I think, the whole of the Vision' (Meyer, 1892, xxiv). The main reason for considering this the original version of the vision is that Cathal Mac Finguine is mentioned in the last stanza, thus suggesting that 'this poem originally belonged to a tale dealing with Cathal' (Meyer, 1892, xxiv). The last verse includes the lines:

*Cathal maith mac Finguine,
Fó fer dianad oirfited
Airscéla bíd braiss* (Jackson, 1990, 16, ll.492-4)

'The good Cathal Mac Finguine, happy is the man to whom was played a famous tale of strong food'.

IV.2.13.2. In his notes relating to these verses Jackson (1990, 56) states: 'we reach at last the voyage to the Earthly Paradise'. Evidently, this can be seen as a satirical take on *echtrae* literature where the hero returns from his visit across the sea to the otherworld and tells of the wonders he encountered there. The inhabitants are described thus:

*Muinnter enig inchinni
D'ócaib dercaib tenn-s[h]ádchib
Im thenid astig;
Secht n-allsmaind, secht n-episle
Do cháisib, do choelánaib,
Fo brágait cech fhir.* (Jackson, 1990, 16, ll.479-84)

'A generous, intelligent company of red-hued, vigorous, flourishing young men around the fire inside; seven necklets, seven amulets of cheeses and chitterlings around the throat of each man'. The above may be compared with certain passages from *Serglige Con Culainn* containing descriptions of Labraid's island home:

Atá Labraid for lind glan...

*Bíatar tri cét do chach crund
Do mes ilarda imlum...*

*Dabach and do mid medrach
Oca dáil forin teglach:
Maraid béos, is búan in bés,
Conid bithlán do bithgrés...*

*Atchonnarc láechu co lí
Co n-armmaib ic imdibí (Dillon, 1953a, 15-20, ll.421-562)*

‘Labraid dwells upon a clear pool...three hundred are fed from every tree with mast plentiful and bare...a vat there of intoxicating mead being dispensed to the household, it always remains – it is a lasting custom – so that it is forever full...I saw warriors in colourful attire, hacking with weapons’. Abundant food and wine is a motif also shared with the *immram* genre: *imrit rempa iarsin [fhria re cian], co tarfas doibh inis ingnad ele,⁷ doire aluinn edrocht d’abluibh cobra innti. Sruth f(íraluinn) tre lar in doire...Rothomuilset hua Corra ni dona hublaib, ⁷ atibhset ní don tsruth fhina, cur’ sased iat fo cétair* ‘hereafter they row on for a long time, till another wonderful island was shown to them, with a beautiful bright grove of fragrant apple trees therein. A very beautiful river (flowed) through the midst of the grove...The Húi Corra ate somewhat of the apples and drank somewhat of the wine stream, so that they were straightaway satisfied’ (Stokes, 1893, 43). The motif of a land made of food may, perhaps, have sprung from the *immrama* or *echtraí* where there are detailed descriptions of food being miraculously supplied to travellers. This food was both a physical and spiritual replenishment for those in need. The author of *AMC* may have developed this particular motif to suit his own ends, since Mac Con Glinne is portrayed as one also in need of physical and spiritual sustenance. The author of *AMC* succeeds in exaggerating the motif to the point of hyperbole by presenting a land made entirely of food.

We note how in *AMC* food is inserted at every opportunity as a comic descriptive device. It may be presumed that voyagers often suffered from hunger while

on the sea and *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla* cites an instance where this proved perilous: *Dothaed clereach chucu asinn indsi, la forcongra nDé, dia forithin, ar ba gabudh doib and cen biadh; 7 dober doib iasc 7 fin 7 cruithnecht* ‘by God’s command a cleric came to them out of the island to succour them, for they were in danger there, without food; and he gives them fish and wine and wheat’ (Stokes, 1888, 21). Contrasting Mac Con Glinne’s hunger with the deprivations suffered on a true voyage produces irony that is no doubt intentional. Taking all the above elements into consideration, we recognise motifs of the *immram* genre. Moreover, when we look at the prose passage following this poem, further similarity to the *immrama* becomes evident: *Lodmor iersin i tochor táith, hi cráibech n-geiredh, hi cepaig sensaille. Ássaidh in dubcheó uscaidhe immund coná cuingenmair nem ná talmain, nó áit i tibremais ar cóir, co tarlai buille dom’ cúl frisin elaith grotha bricnói* (Meyer, 1892, 121) ‘We went then into a causeway of curds, into a wood of lard, into a field of old bacon. A dark, greasy mist rose around us, so that we did not know if it was heaven or hell, or any place it was right for us to go, until my back struck against a cairn of curds’.

IV.2.13.3. There is a mist motif at the beginning and end of *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*. Before Brendan sets out on his voyage, Barrind relates to him his own experiences of the *terra repromissionis*. He describes how ‘a fog so thick covered us that we could scarcely see the poop or the prow of the boat. But when we had spent about an hour like this a great light shone all around us, and there appeared to us a land wide, and full of grass and fruit’ (O’Meara, 1976, 4). This motif is repeated later in Brendan’s experience as he beholds the land for which they had been searching: ‘Their voyage was for forty days towards the east...When the forty days were up, as the evening drew on, a great fog enveloped them, so that one of them could hardly see another...After the space of an hour a mighty light shone all around them again and the boat rested on the shore’ (O’Meara, 1976, 67). Indeed, Brendan’s own name is said to refer to a rain mist which appeared at his birth: ‘thereafter a white rain (*broen finn*) that is, a white mist, poured there and filled all the Fenet. Thence was Broen-finn his name, *find* ‘white’ was said of him, because he was white in body and in soul’ (Stokes, 1890, 248). Thus the mist motif is also encountered in hagiographical material.

Compert Con Culainn contains a similar description prior to the birth of the hero: *Is and ba hadaig for feraib Ulad. Feraid snechtae mór foraiib dano. Asbert Conchubur fria muintir ara scortis a cairptiu 7 ara cortis cor do chuindchid tige dóib* (Van Hamel, 1933, 4) ‘It is then that it was night upon the men of Ulster. Moreover, a great snow fell upon them. Conchobar said to his people to unyoke their chariots and he sent a party for the seeking of shelter for them’. This great snow may be understood to constitute the same obscurity of visibility as a mist and the motif appears to be used here in a similar situation to that of the mist in the *immrama*. Thus we see the fog/mist/thick snow motif employed as a narrative device announcing a forthcoming epiphany. This motif is also to be found in the *echtraí*. It occurs at the beginning of *Echtra Láegairi* and forms part of the introductory description of Láegaire: *co n-accatar in fer chucu triasin ciaig. Bratt corcra cóicdiabulta imbi. Dá shleig cóicrinni i n-a láim. Sciath co mbuali óir fair. Claideb órduirn for a chriss. A mong órbuide dar a aiss* (Jackson, 1942, 380) ‘they saw a man coming towards them through the mist. A purple five-folded cloak around him. Two five-pointed javelins in his hand. A shield with a gold rim upon it. A gold-hilted sword on his belt. His golden yellow hair down his back’. This motif is absent from B.

The *terra repromissionis* is considered a heaven on earth and the trials and tribulations suffered during the voyage evoke visions of hell. Hillers (1993, 66-7) likens the *immrama* to voyages between heaven and hell, where the protagonists may ‘encounter benevolent and malevolent creatures and visit idyllic as well as perilous islands...In the fictional world of the *immram*, we must not be surprised to find terrors adjacent to delights, the life-giving apples being guarded by fiery pigs, the island of laughter adjacent to the island of wailing’.

The Fable continues as Mac Con Glinne encounters *Ugadart, gilla in Fáithlegai* catching fish in a lake of new milk: ‘*Canas tici, a trúaiig?*’ *ol in gillai. ‘A céin a focraib’ ar misi fris. ‘Cid saige?’ ol sé. ‘Saigim in dísertach,’ ol meisi fris. ‘A thrúaiig,’ ol sé, ‘is it aneólach. Ní roiche indocht in dísertach’* (Meyer, 1892, 122) ‘From whence do you come, wretched man?’ said the lad. ‘From far away, from near’ I said to him. ‘What are you seeking?’ he said, ‘I seek the Hermit,’ I said to him. ‘Wretch,’ he said ‘you do not know the way. You will not reach the Hermit tonight’. It is to be observed that

since the start of the Vision episode Mac Con Glinne has been addressed in a derogatory manner, as one held in low esteem and perhaps in need of redemption. ‘Mac Conglinne stands in marked contrast to the other persons of the fable. One and all treat him contemptuously as an inferior being’ (Meyer, 1892, xxxi). He must camp for the night *etir Sliab n-Imme ocus Loch n-Aiss, t’aiged re Sliab n-Imme ocus di chúl re Sliab Tainge fo bun Chroind Chroithe if-ferta Cruind-Mésé, im-blenai Guirt Cruithnechtai* (Meyer, 1892, 122) ‘between Butter-mountain and Milk-lake, your face towards Butter-mountain and your back towards Cheese-mountain, at the foot of the Tree of Cream, in the Trenches of the Round Dish, in the Hollow of the Field of Wheat’.

Here we have an example of what in B (ll.95, 96, 1135) is referred to as *bánbiad* (whitemeats or dairy products) and throughout both texts we are presented with ‘milk and its endless preparations – buttermilk, butter, various kinds of cheese, curds, custard; further, fat, suet, lard, tallow, bacon, flitches of boar, tripes, sausage, corned beef...bread, wheat’ (Meyer, 1892, xxxii). Moreover, when it comes to beverages, the texts place little emphasis on intoxicating drinks. ‘Mead and bragget are mentioned incidentally, but one has the impression that this is done for completeness’ sake’ (Meyer, 1892, xxxii). To aid him on his way, Mac Con Glinne states: *tégim co topur tremantae..ocus ibim mo deich ferlommandae fichet ass arná rolád in chonair form chridhe* (Meyer, 1892, 122) ‘I go to the well of whey...and I drink my thirty manly draughts out of it so that the path might not afflict my heart’. We are, however, given a graphic and amusing description of the power of milk in the following excerpt where Mac Con Glinne salutes the Tribes of Food at the end of the fable: *ass tiug, ass tana, int ass foloing a sluccad chocnomh...dogní sraindmeigil ind reithe frangcaig ic dul dar do brágait, co n-apra in bolccum toisiuch risin m-bolccum n-dédenach...Cía beó-se in[n]sin, ní bíu-su sund! (Cía thí[s]-iu anúas, regat-sa súas). Is íat sin tra tóisicch Túath m-Bid* (Meyer, 1892, 127-8) ‘thick milk, thin milk, the milk that needs its chewing and swallowing...which makes [the sound] of the gurgling bleating of a French ram going down your throat, so that the first sip says to the last sip...If you are there, I will not be here! (If you come down, I will go up). Those, then, are the chiefs of the Tribes of Food’. *Bánbiad*, therefore, appears to consist largely of dairy produce and the meats mentioned are mostly of bacon and fatty substances, according to Wollner (Meyer, 1892, xxxii). The

conclusion Wollner (Meyer, 1892, xxxiv) draws then, is that Mac Con Glinne's tastes seem to be simple and may be representative of the lower echelons of society.

The *ócaire* was 'the lowest grade of freeman of full age and status recognized as a 'person' in Irish law' (Binchy, 1941, 101) and *Críth Gablach* states that his property consists of the following: *folod sechtae lais - .vii. mbaí cona tarb, .vii. muca co muic fhorais, .vii. caírig; capal[l] iter fognum 7 imrim* 'his substance is sevenfold – seven cows with their bull, seven pigs with a brood sow, seven sheep; and a horse for work and for riding' (Binchy, 1941, §10, 4). His *bés tige* 'house custom' or 'annual food rent' (Binchy, 1941, 75) to his lord consisted of the following: *dartaid inite cona thimthuch ...tairr muicce les is tin[n]e íccas la boin, nó thin[n]e ordlaig(e) inna chumbu choir, 7 trí méich m(b)racha 7 leth méich tharai* 'a male calf of Shrovetide with its trappings; a belly of pork with it and a flitch which he pays with a cow, or a flitch of one finger's breadth, properly cut, and three sacks of malt and half a sack of wheat' (Binchy, 1941, §10, 5). His own meat consumption is outlined in *Bretha Crólige* §47: *dligid cach ócaire 7 cach bóaire saill for a mes cach domnaig .i. a ndomnac 7 a ndardain do grádaib féne ó callaind co hinit. úrcarna dóib a ndomnac 7 i ndardain co callaind 7 nis be féoil i samrad* 'every *ócaire* and every *bóaire* is entitled to salt meat on his dish every Sunday i.e. on Sunday and Thursday for the freemen grades from New Year's Day to Shrovetide; fresh meat for them on Sunday and Thursday [from Hallowe'en?] to New Year's Day, and they get no meat in summer' (Binchy, 1934, 36-7). According to Kelly (1997, 336) 'in our sources, meat features much more prominently in the diet of lords than in that of commoners. Salted meat (*sall* or *sailite*) is given special prominence, and is generally from the pig'. Lower down the social scale we have the *fer midboth* who, because of his low-ranking 'is not entitled to butter when visiting, but only to milk and cheese (*grus*) or cereals' (Kelly, 1997, 326). Perhaps the author of *AMC* has the *fer midboth* in his sights when indulging in his descriptions of dairy produce. As Kelly (1997, 324) himself says of *AMC*: 'This text is an important repository of information on early Irish dairying, as it contains descriptions of many different types of milk-produce, particularly cheeses'.

IV.2.14. Mac Con Glinne is cautioned by Ugadart regarding the next leg of his journey: *Faidhithir techtae óait co toisechu Túath m-Bíd, cor'gabat di comairci ar tromtonnaibh beladaigh nárotbáidet. Tecat dit' frithailem in drochtoisc dóib, ocus tú cétnúisid*

atacommaic isind alien sa i tánac (Meyer, 1892, 122) ‘Let messengers be sent from you to the chiefs of the Tribes of Food that they may protect you from the heavy waves of gravy, so that they do not drown you. Let them come to help you on the difficult journey for you are the first face to be seen in this island into which you have come’. This may be interpreted as tantamount to saying to Mac Con Glinne that he is a ‘specimen of a race different to us’ (Meyer, 1892, xxxi). While no messengers materialise in the story, the motif may perhaps refer to dangerous situations which arise in voyage literature when faced with new and unknown territories and peoples. Approaching strange islands whose inhabitants are fearsome is a common motif of the *immrama*. For instance, in *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla* the clerics *imrait co tír n-uathmuir i mbatar dáine co cendaib con, co mongaib ceatra foraib...Imrait iarsin co rancatar tír a mbatar doine co cendaib mucc forro* ‘voyage to a fearful land, where there were people with heads of hounds, with manes of cattle upon them...Then they voyage until they reached a land where there were people with heads of swine upon them’ (Stokes, 1888, 21). As Brendan and his monks approach the Island of Smiths in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* they have a feeling of foreboding. Deciding not to disembark, they are attacked by its inhabitants with lumps of burning slag as they retreat from the island, whereupon Brendan says to his followers ‘be strengthened in faith unfeigned and in spiritual weapons, for we are in the confines of hell’ (O’Meara, 1976, 54).

Mac Con Glinne, however, appears to have suffered no ill effects on his travels, and is welcomed by *Beccnat Bláith Bélaithe ingen mBétain mBrasslongt[h]aig, senmátha[i]r Thúath m-Bídh* (Meyer, 1892, 122) ‘Beccnat the Smooth and Juicy, the daughter of Bétan the Huge Eater, the grandmother of the Tribes of Food’. It is she who finally directs him to the hermitage, warning him *gan guth ard n-oebela di dénamh co fessera riagail na sruithe filet isin recles* (Meyer, 1892, 123) ‘not to speak in a loud open-mouthed voice until he find out the rule of the elders who are in the church’. This may, perhaps, be another satirical echo of an episode of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* in which the monks visit the Community of Ailbe and Brendan is met by an elder. ‘The holy father kept questioning the elder in various ways, but he could not get one answer out of him: he only indicated with his hand, with incredible meekness, that they should be silent. As soon as the holy father realised that this was a rule of the place, he spoke to his

brothers, saying: ‘Keep your mouths from speaking lest these brothers be defiled by your garrulousness’ (O’Meara, 1976, 27).

IV.2.15. The hermitage is represented in H as a church *isin glind itir Slieb n-Imme ocus Loch n-Ais hi crích húa Mochlongthe* (Meyer, 1892, 122) ‘in the glen between Buttermount and Milk lake in the territory of the descendants of Early eating’. The church is *eglais cláraid .i. cláir d’aislib sentorc secht m-bliadan, bá síat cappair na heglailsi, cona sailgib sencáisi, cona slinnib gered, cona bendcopraib blonce, cona altóir íthu ina airthir* (Meyer, 1892, 123) ‘a wooden church i.e. boards of joints of seven year old boar meat, these were the rafters of the church, with beams of old cheese, with tiles of lard, with domes of fat, with an altar of lard in its west’. The hermit (called *in prímc lériuch .i. in prímfáith*) is similarly described: *Is amlaidh táinic immach in clériach for capall senshaille... cona choraind secht mescán find fichet i cl[e]thi a chind, cona secht n-imairib dec do borraig fírlósae i mullach a coirne* (Meyer, 1892, 123) ‘the way the cleric came out was upon a horse of old salted bacon... with his crown of twenty-seven butter lumps on the top of his head, with seventeen ridges of pure leeks on top of his crown’.

At the end of *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* Paul the Hermit advises Brendan and his monks how to reach The Promised Land of the Saints. The hermit here is a spiritual advisor strategically situated near journey’s end. He has spent many years alone in penance on his island and his description bears testimony to his anchoritic lifestyle: ‘For he was entirely covered by his hair from his head and beard and other hair down to his feet, and all the hair was as white as snow on account of his great age...He had no other clothing on him except the hair that grew from his body’. His saintliness is reflected in Brendan’s utterance on seeing him: ‘Here I see before me a man already in the angelic state, untouched by the vices of the body, although he is still in human flesh’ (O’Meara, 1976, 62-3). Paul the Hermit thus provides the eremetical ideal (Bray, 2000, 181) while the Prophet Doctor is a parody of this important motif of the *immrama*. As the Voyage of Mael Dúin can be seen as a secularization of the *Navigatio* (Carney, 2000, 51) so is the Hermit of Tory a secular manifestation of Paul the Hermit. We therefore appreciate the close relationship between all of the *immrama* (Carney, 2000, 46) and the fact that satirising one often amounts to satirising all.

Instead of advocating a life of self-denial as Paul the Hermit has done (O'Meara, 1976, 60-5), the Prophet Doctor appears to encourage self-indulgence by belittling Mac Con Glinne's greed when he confesses it to him: *A thrúaig...ní mó int [sh]áith sin indas int sháith domeled mac mis isind ailen so, ocus fogébad sund co m-bad crín. Is beg do toisc ré díthughad m-bíd* (Meyer, 1892, 125) 'Wretch...that full meal is not greater than the full meal that a child of one month would consume in this island, and that he would find here until he was an old man. Small is your intention to destroy food'. In the *immrama* sin is severely punished. When Brendan confronts the thieving brother, the latter is immediately filled with remorse: 'he threw the bridle out of his bosom and fell before the feet of the man of God, saying: 'I have sinned, father. Forgive me. Pray for my soul, that it may not perish' (O'Meara, 1976, 13). Although forgiven, he knows his fate is to die. 'And so when the Eucharist had been received, the soul of the brother left his body, and before the eyes of the brothers was received by the angels of light. His body, however, was buried on the spot by the holy father' (O'Meara, 1976, 14). *Immram Ua Corra* is 'the most clearly purgatorial of any of the *immrama*...Most of the sights seen are essentially the sights of punished sinners played out on the waves...There is an emphasis, too, on sabbatarianism: awful punishments for such trifling offences as carrying firewood on Sunday' (Clancy, 2000, 211). Thus, instead of being treated seriously and issued a suitable penance, Mac Con Glinne is ridiculed for not committing a grave enough sin.

To compound the satire, Mac Con Glinne's sin of puny appetite is compared with absurdities, among which are included: *is cuad do báesach, is rún re mnái n-drúith n-étaigh, is gat im gainim, is ierraid ime il-lige con* (Meyer, 1892, 125) 'it is (like) telling a story to a fool, it is a secret to a silly jealous woman, it is a withe around sand, it is looking for butter in a dog's kennel'. The author has here taken the opportunity to parody collections of proverbs and aphorisms such as *Trecheng Breth Féni* (The Triads of Ireland) and *Tecosca Cormaic* (The Instructions of Cormac), although this list is greatly expanded upon in B (Jackson, 1990, 27, ll.854-74), in keeping with this particular text's relish for the ridiculous. Jackson (1990, xxxvii) refers to these types of descriptions as 'burlesque runs' where nouns and adjectives, frequently alliterating, are strung together to form 'decorative rhetorical passages'.

IV.2.16.1. After the Prophet Doctor has suggested a cure for Mac Con Glinne, which, as has already been seen, amounts to a resumption of his indulgence to an even greater extent, we have the third and final poem of the Vision episode in H. This is put into the mouth of the Prophet Doctor, in answer to Mac Con Glinne's question *Cia do comainm-si?* (Meyer, 1892, 126) 'What is your name?' This poem 'is quite out of place, as MacConglinne has just addressed to the Cleric the same elaborate pedigree which in B he addresses to Manchín before relating the Vision to him' (Meyer, 1892, xxiii-xxiv). In B it occurs far earlier in the proceedings and is addressed to the Phantom. 'B makes use of the poem 'Wheatlet' as an answer to MacConglinne's question respecting the name of the Phantom. But here, again, it is out of place, as the Phantom has just given his name' (Meyer, 1892, xxiv). Therefore this poem, although presumably retained from X in the two texts, is equally incongruous in both. It consists of the Prophet Doctor introducing his family and describing them in terms of food:

Cruithnechtán mac Lemnachtán
Meic Saille súgmaire
m'ainm-si féin...
Blonag mo ben...
Millsén m'ingen
Imthét inber...
Bóshall mo mac (Jackson, 1990, 30, ll.919-934)

'Wheatlet, son of Milklet, son of Juicy Bacon is my own name...Lard my wife...Cheese Curds my daughter, she goes around the spit...Corned Beef, my son'. We thus observe a strange development whereby the Prophet Doctor now becomes Wheatlet. Wollner (Meyer, 1892, xxvi) explains this phenomenon as perhaps the author's way of prolonging the Vision episode. This poem 'can best be explained by the author's wish to establish the identity of the Wizard Doctor and Wheatlet. The simplest means to effect this was to make the Wizard Doctor himself say he is Wheatlet. This is no doubt a clumsy proceeding' (Meyer, 1892, xxvii). As may be deduced from the excerpt above, this poem merely continues the food motif without contributing much of substance to the storyline

and ‘its curious position in H may be set down to the helplessness of the author, who could find no better place for it’ (Meyer, 1892, xxx).

Wollner (Meyer, 1892, xxxvii) sees a connection between Ugadarc, Wheatlet’s *gilla* in the poem *Ug-adarc mo gilla gloma[i]r* (Jackson, 1990, 1963, 30) ‘Ugadarc, my bridle boy’, and Ugadart, the servant of the Prophet Doctor who was catching fish in New Milk Lake. Jackson, however, believes ‘the two are not the same person’ (1990, 64), without giving any reason for this statement beyond pointing to the trivial difference in spelling. The similarity of t/c in the script as it may have appeared in the manuscript may be noted and suggested as a possible cause for the confusion. Be that as it may, Wollner suggests this figure may originally have come from European folklore (Meyer, 1892, xxxv). He considers that because Mac Con Glinne is treated derogatively in the fable, he is a ‘puny imp’ living in a land of giants (Meyer, 1892, xxxiv-xxxvi), and Ugadart/c may represent a cowherd who figured in this European tradition. Wollner’s endeavours to connect *AMC* with European tradition are tenuous and outside the scope of this thesis. His reason for thinking Mac Con Glinne lives in a land of giants may be reconsidered, however, if we look at his treatment from a penitential point of view. Mac Con Glinne is a supplicant, a sinner in need of redemption and on a journey in search of forgiveness. He manifests the humility of the penitent. The Vision episode and the Fable resonate with *immram* motifs and the author, in bringing this genre to mind, succeeds in turning what should be a deep religious experience into a farce which parodies the whole concept of a penitential journey.

IV.2.16.2. A pilgrimage was a spiritual journey. ‘Renunciation of the world was the central aim of any ascetic *peregrinatio*’ and it was taken up with enthusiasm in early Christian Ireland (Charles-Edwards, 2000, 94). There were, however, two different grades of *peregrinatio*; one known as the *potior peregrinatio* that presumably gave rise to the *immram* genre and involved travelling overseas, and the lesser *peregrinatio*, where one went into self-exile outside of one’s territory but did not travel overseas (Charles-Edwards, 2000, 94). The eighth century Cambrai Homily contains the following list of the three main types of martyrdom: *Fil-us tre chenélæe martre...baanmartre ocus glasmartre ocus dercmartre...Is sí ind glasmartre dó, in tain scaras fria thola lee céssas saithor i ppennit ocus aithrigi* (McCone, 2005, 100) ‘There are three kinds of

martyrdom...white martyrdom and green martyrdom and red martyrdom...It is green martyrdom when it is that one separates from his desires and suffers tribulation in penance and repentance'. This green martyrdom involved separation from one's kindred and was known as 'self-exile'. According to Clancy (2000, 199) 'this displacement from the kin-group into the unknown was openly courted, indeed seen as a type of martyrdom, by early Irish monastics...and the sixth and seventh centuries are full of accounts of Irish monks setting off for deserts in the ocean, setting up shop in foreign lands, in Scotland, England, and on the Continent, as well as in different territories within Ireland'. Connlai can be seen to choose self-exile when he follows the woman in *Echtrae Chonnlai*. Here we have the theme of 'sovereignty goddess' subsumed under a Christian interpretation where the woman 'proves to be the exact opposite of [this stereotype] in that she finally persuades Connlai to give up his regal future among mortals for eternal life in a distant sinless paradise' (McCone, 2000, 55).

In the *immrama* 'a character or characters travels at God's will on the sea, sees many beautiful and fear-inspiring marvels, meets ascetic hermits on islands, and returns, often changed' (Clancy, 2000, 195). Taking into account the satiric nature of our text, it may be observed that this generally describes Mac Con Glinne's adventures except that he remained in the land of Ireland, his voyaging being in a dream. *AMC*, therefore, may appear to bear the outward shell of an *immram* with Mac Con Glinne manifesting an outward show of piety. In H, Mac Con Glinne threatens to satirise the church *ar is cén ó a cenél andiú* (Meyer, 1892, 115) 'for he is far from his kindred today'. It may be suggested here that he has left his monastery in Fahan to embark on a *peregrinatio* which takes him well beyond his own people into the territory of south Munster. His mind is concentrated on food as his pilgrimage is supposed to entail suffering, and this may be indicated in the Prophet Doctor's remark: *Ro ied gortu di choelána* (Meyer, 1892, 119) 'Hunger has closed up your entrails'. He repeatedly confesses his sins and admits his need of a cure. His own curing of Cathal could be understood metaphorically as a conversion, because 'missionary work was an inherited element in the Irish tradition of *peregrinatio*' (Clancy, 2000, 106). But instead of self-denial we have self-indulgence, and it is indulgence that B gives as a reason for the scholar's journey to Cork: *at-chuala in scolaige immad 7 oirer cacha bánbíd do fhagbáil*

dó, uair ba sanntach so-accobrach mbánbíd in scolaige (Jackson, 1990, 4, ll.94-6) ‘the scholar heard that there was abundance and satisfaction of all whitemeats to be got for himself, for the scholar was greedy and desirous of whitemeats’. There may also be significance in the choice of white food, which evokes the notion of whiteness or purity and adds to the sense of irony. While H does not stipulate a motive for the journey, the end result is the same in both texts with Mac Con Glinne occupying an enviable position alongside Cathal.

According to Jefferies (1997, 20) the Messiah motif which pervades the tale was a central theme of the original Aislinge, and seems to suggest that the author was himself a cleric and may have come from the small monastic community at Fahan. He then states that the author might have ‘yielded to that peregrinatory passion to which so many early Irish clerical scholars were addicted’. As Jefferies does not elaborate further on this issue, presumably it is to be taken as background information. While the Messiah motif does create a certain sympathy for the hero and a *peregrinatio* was religiously motivated, the presentation of these issues in the text verges on the blasphemous and is hardly to be taken seriously. Therefore, if ‘peregrinatory passion’ motivated the protagonist of the tale, it did so in a negative way. While it may have suggested a structure for his tale, his sympathies appear to lie elsewhere. Thus *AMC* is the antithesis of a properly motivated *peregrinatio* and seems to turn the tables on the whole idea of *immram*.

IV.2.17. Having established that the H version of *AMC* satirises kingship, the legal system, the church and its doctrines, and clerical pilgrimages and their literature, let us now briefly look at its parody of literature generally. As we have seen, the Vision episode comprises much that is recognisable in an *immram*. However, it also bears a relation to vision literature. According to Clancy (2000, 201) the vision genre fed into the development of the *immram*, telling the ‘story of a man or woman who experiences a vision, often in a dream, of the afterlife, of heaven and hell. The dream often takes the form of a journey, and the dreamer is conducted, sometimes by an angel, through this Christian and moral other world’. One version of *Immram Snédgusa ocus Mac Riagla* actually includes the text of *Fís Adamnáin* as part of the tale (Clancy, 2000, 217). The obvious link between *AMC* (H) and vision literature is in the person of St. Mura who

appears to Mac Con Glinne in a dream and it is his power that saves the day. ‘In B the angel says no word of the salutary power of his story’ (Meyer, 1892, xviii). While H does not satirise the saintly figure, what it has to say has little relation to an *Aislinge*. Another interesting connection, moreover, is that the text of *Fís Adamnáin* is preserved complete in *Leabhar Breac* (Dillon, 1948, 133). This comprises what Gwara (1988, 54) suggests to be thematically unified but anomalous texts sitting side by side in the same manuscript.

Mac Con Glinne set out on his journey before he had his vision and the same sequence of events can be identified in the seventh-century *Vita Fursei* (Heist, 1965). Fursa was primarily a *peregrinus* of the lesser grade, being described as *patriam parentesque relinquens* (Heist, 1965, 38). Having become a *deórad Dé*, he experiences visions and subsequently his life changes direction. He then travels to East Anglia where he is received hospitably by its king ‘and the first activity which the biographer mentions is that of a missionary’ (Charles-Edwards, 2000, 107-8). We may thus suggest certain thematic similarities between the two texts.

In addition, Meyer (1892, li) draws our attention to the notes on *Féilire Óengusso* for January 16th, the feast of Fursa. This is a curious mixture of the sacred and profane: *Eccmaing Fursa fecht n-óen co Maighnend Chille Maighnend 7 gníet a n-oentaig 7 claechlait a treblaiti ar comartha a n-aentad .i. gail-cind nó daegalar ro bóí i Fursu do beith for Maignend 7 peist ro boí Maignend do dul a Fursa, co mba hé gnathugud Fursu cach maitne tri bithu tri mírenna sáille do ithe co ro thérnad gail na piasra. Ecmaing didu Fursa tar muir co rocht araile cathraig. Gníid didu a bés gnathach into, 7 berar hé co hescob na cathrach dia notad. ‘Ni cráibech caithe do bethaid’ ar in t-escob. ‘Is cet duit si’ ar Fursa ‘a chleirig, in ní dobeir formsa sin a [fh]romad duit si’. Lingid iarum in peist fochétóir a mbraigit in espuic. Ó rofhitir cach sin gairmid Fursu in peist chuici doridisi 7 morthar ainm Dé 7 Fursa triasin firt sin 7 erptar in cathair uile cona ferand fognuma do Dia 7 do Fursu ‘Fursa once happened to visit Maignenn of Kilmainham and they make their union and exchange their troubles in token of their union, that is, the headache or piles from which Fursa suffered to be upon Maignenn and the serpent that was in Maignenn to enter Fursa, so that it became Fursa’s a practice every morning always to eat three pieces of bacon that he might abate the serpent’s violence. Then Fursa crossed the sea and came to a city. Therein he practices*

his usual custom and is brought before the bishop of that city to be censured. ‘Your life is not spent devoutly’ said the bishop. ‘You have permission, O cleric’ said Fursa ‘to test that which inflicts this on me’. Immediately then the serpent leaps into the bishop’s throat. When everyone knew that, Fursa calls the serpent back to him; and God’s name and Fursa’s are magnified by that miracle and the whole city with its service-land is conveyed to God and to Fursa’ (Stokes, 1905, 45, trans. 47). We have already noted that Mac Con Glinne is himself mentioned in the notes to the *Félire* for September 14th (IV.2.2.2.). If this is where the author got the inspiration for his literary character there is a good chance Fursa’s feast day also furnished him with material, its bizarre content no doubt appealing to his sense of humour, thus adding to his eclectic range of influences.

IV.2.18.1. We are given to understand the author’s explicit intention to satirise saga literature when he describes the *prímclériuch* thus: *cona triubhus do bíud scabail fo cossaibh, cona assaibh ierslesai hi raibe Táin Bó Cúailnge ocus Bruiden Dá Derg isin asa robói fo cois deis, Tochmarc Etaine ocus Tochmarc Emere isin asa robói fo a cois clí* (Meyer, 1892, 124-5) ‘with his trousers of pot-meat on his legs, with his shoes of flank in which *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Bruiden Dá Derg* were in the shoe which was on the right foot, and *Tochmarc Etaine* and *Tochmarc Emere* in the shoe which was on the left foot’. An episode from *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* has already been considered from the point of view of borrowing and elaboration (IV.1.3.) and so it will suffice here to limit our discussion to the question of how this motif is presented in the text. Firstly, the description of Étain’s beauty opens *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, thus setting the scene for the events that follow. Her beauty is said to mirror her nobility: *Tochim ríghnaidi lé. Ba sí trá as caemeam ⁊ as áildeam ⁊ as córam ad-connarca dar súili doíne de mnáib domain* (Knott, 1936, §2, 2) ‘She had the gait of a queen about her. She was then the fairest, the most beautiful and the most perfect of the women of the world that men’s eyes had seen’. On seeing her, the king, Eochaid Feidlech, fell in love with her: *gabais saint in rí n-impe fo cétoir* ‘immediately, desire seized the king regarding her’ (Knott, 1936, §3, 2). In *AMC* the same description is employed for a serving woman (Meyer, 1892, 125-6). It is part of the Prophet Doctor’s advice to Mac Con Glinne that he find a woman of this description to serve him his ‘cure’ for gluttony. Repeatedly throughout the tale we are reminded of

Mac Con Glinne's low status, so that being provided with a woman of this calibre for this purpose is both improbable and highly denigrating.

Another example of parody of early Irish saga is Mac Con Glinne's reception by the monastery of Cork, which contains motifs derived from *Cath Maige Tuired* as pointed out by Jackson (1990, 50). This satire has been discussed (I.1.9.) and relates how Cairbre is badly treated by Bres, who is renowned for his meanness. Cairbre's retaliation is a satire of Bres which is understood to be deserved. This is proved justified when Bres immediately goes into decline and must eventually relinquish the kingship. There is, however, one important difference between the two texts: whereas Cairbre's satire manifests the power of the satirist by its devastating effect on Bres, Mac Con Glinne's satire results in his being detained for execution because of its slanderous intimations. In one way, therefore, this satire could be judged unjustified. Mac Con Glinne's verse, while finally proven to be merely a statement of fact, was uttered with the intention of slander: *éчнаigfid ind eglais* (Meyer, 1892, 115) 'he will slander the church'. The satirist and his companion thought up the idea by imagining it would guarantee them a decent repast in Cork, this scheme having previously worked in Kells. Mac Con Glinne's satire lacked power and it was only the intervention by St. Mura that turned things in Mac Con Glinne's favour. Thus he may be viewed as poet of a lower order than Cairbre. Mac Con Glinne's misuse of his imagined powers for extortion puts him in the same category as Cridenbél, who is referred to as *cáinte*.

In the light of *Cath Maige Tuired*'s exemplification of standard behaviour of the *fili* and *cáinte* (I.1.9.), *AMC* may be presenting us with a *cáinte* who tries to pass himself off as a *fili*. The fact that Mac Con Glinne's treatment by the monks of Cork recalls Cairbre's treatment by Bres further suggests the former's intended likening to a *fili*. Cathal refers to him as *fer dána* (Meyer, 1892, 116), and the outcome of his trial is that he is honoured by the king, judges and clergy (Meyer, 1892, 129). Thus his behaviour is seen to be rewarded. It appears that the author of *AMC* is endeavouring to promote the *cáinte* to the position of *fili* by depicting the former's quick-wittedness, poetic skill and ability to tell a story. Thus it may be observed that the profession of *fili* is satirised, along with the other upper echelons of society. H has only a suggestion of *Cath Maige Tuired*, namely, the meagre fare offered to the visitors and its resultant satirical

verse. B, as is his wont, elaborates greatly on the motif, borrowing heavily from one or two episodes of the saga in the process.

Parody may also be suggested in the detailed description of Mac Con Glinne's journey from Fahan to Cork. While his point of departure was north-west heading south, he seems to have quickly gone in a south-easterly direction. This is somewhat explained by *dochúaidh a hAthain Muru for cóairt Érend* (Meyer, 1892, 114) 'he went from Fahan upon a circuit of Ireland'. When we look at his itinerary, however, we note that some of the territory through which he passes has strong associations with Cú Chulainn and the *Táin*: *a Tír Eoghain, i n-Airgialla, co hArdmachu, dar Slíab Fúait* (O'Rahilly, 1976, ll.413, 666, 668, 3555), *dar Magh Muirt[h]eimne* (O'Rahilly, 1976, ll.251, 1527, 1239, 1876, 3480), *hi Cremt[h]aine, hi Crích Rois* (O'Rahilly, 1976, 2519, 3293, 3301, 3319), *i m-Mullach Tailtlen* (O'Rahilly, 1976, ll.3486, 3395, 3402, 3394), (Meyer, 1892, 114) '[he went] from Tyrone into Oriel, to Armagh, over the Fewes Mountains, across Mag Muirthemne, into the territory of the Uí Crimthainn, into the land of the Men of Ross, to the Hill of Tailtlen'. This route may be designed to conjure up the *Táin* and the heroic stand made by Cú Chulainn before the Ulster army marched through these same territories to meet the Connaught onslaught. If so, Mac Con Glinne's southward march is anything but heroic, comprising as it does, a journey for self-gratification.

This brings us to Mac Con Glinne in the role of a mock-hero. This concept can be realised in the Messiah motif, but there is an excerpt which calls to mind an image from saga literature as well. Mac Con Glinne is temporarily disorientated as a mist comes down over Milk-lake: *co tarlai buille dom' cúl frisin elaith grotha bricnói. Beg nach dearna slicrig do cnámaib mo cloicne. Sinim mo lámh remom do athérgi, conamtarlai etir mescána úrime co bac m'uillea* (Meyer, 1892, 121) 'so that I struck with my back against a cairn of speckled curds. It nearly made bits of the bones of my skull. I stretched out my hand for to raise myself again, so that I fell between lumps of fresh butter to my elbows'. Prior to succumbing to his wasting sickness in *Serlige Con Culainn*, Cú Chulainn props himself against a pillar-stone: *dotháet Cú Chulaind iar sin co tard a druim frisin liic, 7 ba holc a menma leis 7 dofuit cotlud fair* (Dillon, 1953a, 3, ll.71-2) 'Cú Chulainn came then so that he brought his back against the rock and his mind was upset

and he fell asleep'. It may be suggested that Mac Con Glinne's actions are here designed to mirror those of the Ulster hero.

B supplies us with another take-off from heroic literature in the apple scene, although in this instance it is Cathal who may be compared to Cú Chulainn: *Gabaid feirg Cathal. Lingid ind ala súil dó i n-a chend co ná tibred petta cuirre ass. Gabaid in súil n-aile immach comba métithir 7 og rerchirce hí i n-a chind, 7 bertais a druimm fria sliss in ríghige co ná fárcaib cleith nó slait nó scolb nó dlaí nó uatni ná dic[h]sed as a inad* (Jackson, 1990, 21, ll.631-5) 'Anger seizes Cathal. One of his eyes leaps back into his head so that a pet crane could not pick it out. The other eye extrudes so that it was as large as a full-grown hen's egg in his head, and he put his back against the wall of the palace so that he left neither post nor lath nor wattling nor bunch of thatch nor prop that did not move out of its place'. The first image alludes to Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*, when the women of Ulster draw the hero's wrath and they witness his subsequent distortion in *Serlige Con Culainn*. Moreover, the tale informs us that this was a common occurrence: *ar bá dán dósom in tan ba n-olc a menma* (Dillon, 1953a, 2, ll.44-5) 'for it was a habit with him when his humour was bad'.

While *Serlige Con Culainn* does not specifically state that this is a *ríastrad*, further on in the tale Cú Chulainn is referred to as *in ríastartha* (Dillon, 1953a, 20, §35, l.586) in the battle scene with Labraid. Thus the association may be deduced. Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad* is also featured in the *Táin* (O'Rahilly, 1976, 68-9, ll.2245-78). The second image of Cathal sitting with his back against the palace wall 'looks like a reminiscence of the episode in the 'Feast of Bricriu' where Cú Chulainn grips the sill of the palace wall and heaves it right up so that his wife and her ladies can get in from outside' (Jackson, 1990, xxxvi-xxxvii). Both examples are humorous in *Fled Bricrenn* and *Serlige Con Culainn* and this may have induced B to use them for his own comic ends.

As the above demonstrates, *AMC* has borrowed widely from different genres in early Irish literature. While H, like B, derives many of its motifs from other narratives, it is by far the shorter text. B, in comparison, appears to contain more extensive dialogue. The whole episode of the expulsion of the demon may serve to demonstrate the differences between H and B in terms of literary methods. Both texts relate the same

storyline, but it is suggested that B's expansion lacks any additional literary merit. B's version extends from lines 1220-1279 (Jackson, 1990, 39-41), while H's consists of thirteen lines (Meyer, 1892, 128). The long speech in B (Jackson, 1990, 40-1, ll.1254-72) which the demon delivers as he is being banished, may serve to illustrate the text's overuse of dialogue.

IV.2.18.2. This amounts to a eulogy to Mac Con Glinne, the monks of Cork and Cathal, and can be seen as an act of obeisance by the demon when on the point of departure, 'though as this is put into the mouth of the demon it is perhaps meant to be ironical' (Jackson, 1990, xxxii). For instance, Mac Con Glinne is described thus: *uair at fer co rath Dé, co n-imma[d] ecnai, co cgéiri inntlechte, co lléri umalóti, co mian cach maithiusa, co rath in Spiruta sechtaig* (Jackson, 1990, 40, ll.1256-8) 'for you are a man with the grace of God, with abundance of wisdom, with sharpness of intellect, with unwearied humility, with the desire for every goodness, with the grace of the seven-fold Spirit'. This may be seen as an example of B's inclination to vacillate with resultant incoherence within the text. We have become accustomed to certain failings on the part of these figures and B succeeds in unnecessarily complicating matters when he eulogises them thus, demonstrating some of the 'contradictions and confusion' for which this text is renowned (Jefferies, 1997, 26). However ironical this eulogy may be, it appears needlessly verbose in comparison with the succinct brevity of H: *ocus roléicc in deman teora grécha ass* (Meyer, 1892, 128) 'and the demon let out three shrieks from him'. In interspersing such dialogue between strategic developments in the episode, the drama of this penultimate scene is diluted in B.

H provides no such diversion, limiting itself to a straightforward narration of events: *Conid annsin rochromasdair a láimh cosna dá bir bídh, ocus dosbered co bél ind rígh, ocus dúthraicedh a slucud etir chrand occus biad. Corruc fot a láma úad, corroling an lon craois assa brágait corrabá for in m-bir m-biudh, ocus corroling don bir, corrogaib imm-brágait gilla int s[h]acairt Corcaige robói 'con coire for lár in taiga, ocus roling a brágait in gilla for in m-bior cétnae. Láid Mac Conglinne inn m-bior issin gríssaigh, ocus láid core ind rígt[h]aige corrabá for in m-bir m-biud. Rucad ind rígh i n-airecal codultae, ocus rofolmaiged in tech mór, ocus roloiscead íarna folmugud* (Meyer, 1892, 128) 'His hand then hung with the two spits of food and he put them to the mouth

of the king, who desired their swallowing, wood, food and all. So he took them an arm's length from him, and the demon of gluttony jumped from his throat till he was on the spit, and jumped from the spit till he seized the throat of the priest of Cork's *gilla*, who was at the cauldron in the middle of the house, and jumped from the *gilla*'s throat upon the spit again. Mac Con Glinne put the spit into the hot ashes and upset the cauldron of the palace over the spit of food. The king was taken to the sleeping quarters, and the big house was emptied and then burnt after its emptying'. Thus H's brevity helps us focus keenly on the action and we are not waylaid by superfluous dialogue. In attending to superficialities, B has, in some instances, missed out certain details relevant to a coherent understanding of the text. These details include, among others, the initial visit to the monastery of Kells (IV.2.5.), the following through of the law-suit (IV.2.7.1-4.), and the verbal symmetry illustrated in the fire motif at the beginning and end of the text (IV.2.10.2.).

IV.2.19.1. It now remains for us to look more closely at the figure of Mac Con Glinne. According to Meyer (1892, xliii) he 'is one of those vagrant clerics called...*goliardi*'. The origin of the word 'goliard' is uncertain and a matter of dispute, but could derive from Latin *gula*, meaning 'throat, gluttony' (Kernan, 1959, 165). 'There were...a number of satiric poems, written in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by anonymous poets, which were purportedly the work of one Bishop Golias, a sprightly, irreverent, devil-may-care figure who divided his time between laughing at the clergy and praising the pleasures of the flesh' (Kernan, 1959, 165). This, however, was a mythical figure and the 'purely poetic creation of those poets called the goliards' (Kernan, 1959, 165). An example of one of their poems is *Credo au Ribaut*. A goliard is dying and the priest lets him recite his *Credo*:

To drink and wench and play at dice
Seem to me no such mighty sins...
Never man I know descendit
Ad infernum for a game...
Ad caelos will no man go
Because he aped a holy show.

But he who sedit by a lass
And hath his three dice in his hand
Is in the tavern better set
Than ad dexteram Dei patris (Waddell, 1934, 212)

The goliards were clerical students who abandoned the business of edifying the church for the business of amusing and the church viewed them as reprobates who lived by their vices (Waddell, 1934, 198). The word ‘goliard’ outlived the turbulent poets ‘which had given it birth and passed over into French and English literature of the 14th century in the general meaning of jongleur or minstrel’ (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1962, vol 10, 506-7). It seems to be more in this sense that Wollner bases his characterisation of Mac Con Glinne: ‘our tale represents him as a jongleur or minstrel...The costume which MacConglinne assumes as he approaches Pichan’s house is none other than the professional garb of the minstrel or jester’ (Meyer, 1892, xli-xlii). While there is an understood ribbing of the clergy in both texts, B presents a more overtly vicious attack and Mac Con Glinne’s performance as a jester only exists in B. Wollner states that ‘in B the quarrel with the monks is protracted for the sole purpose that the author may have an opportunity for invectives against the monks’ (Meyer, 1892, xliv). Therefore when identifying Mac Con Glinne as a goliard/jongleur, Wollner takes his examples from B rather than H and observes that they ‘did not exist in the versions on which B and H are based’ (Meyer, 1892, xliii).

In his final evaluation of *AMC*’s date of composition, Hull (1962-4, 378) states that the ‘comparative analysis of the respective verbal systems of LB [Leabhar Breac], H, and L [LL *Táin*]...leads to the conclusion that *AMC* was committed to writing about A.D.1100’. Even if we are to treat this date a little loosely, it seems too early for the goliards to have influenced the work. The issues which would have suggested a connection are not to be found in H, which also suggests that they were not present in the original. It is possible that they could have had some influence on B. In his discussion of ‘The Development of the Trickster Motif’ Harrison (1989, 72) says it is very hard to either prove or refute the influence of the goliardic tradition in B: ‘The Goliardic tradition in literature was caused by tension within the learned classes and...there was occasion for

such tension in twelfth-century Ireland which could have produced such an anticlerical literary work independently or which could have attracted elements of this kind of composition from abroad...and a comparison with continental and British analogues is necessary before the whole question of Goliardic influence can be treated with any authority’.

It may be that clergy who did not take their vocation seriously were a feature of the early Irish church, as on the continent. Waddell (1934, 191) makes the point that ‘given clerical privilege, the abuse of it existed at least from the fourth century’. Included in her examination of the *Ordo Vagorum* is a reference to seventh century canons from Ireland which reflects the church’s disciplinary attitude to wayward clerics:

Clericus verbis turpibus iocularis degradetur.

Clericus inter epulas cantans, fidem non aedificans, sed auribus...pruriens, excommunicus sit. Mansi, XII, 121. (Waddell, 1934, 270).

‘Let the cleric jesting with foul words be degraded. Let the cleric singing amidst feasts, not edifying the faith but gratifying the ears... be excommunicated’. Perhaps *AMC* is, as Harrison suggests, essentially *sui generis* as an anticlerical composition.

IV.2.19.2. ‘Because of its blithe ridicule of the clergy and its irreverent parodies of sacred literature, the *Vision* might seem to be of lay authorship, but nobody could parody devotional writings so effectively without some clerical training’ (Mercier, 1960, 120). Flower (1947, 76-7) sees the tale as reflecting the rivalry which existed between the clergy and the poets: ‘It is little wonder that the monks were at odds with such poets as this. The point of the whole composition is the contempt of the monk for the poet and the way in which the poet turns the tables on him’, although he pertinently states that ‘the arrow is winged with a feather of the bird it strikes’ (1947, 75). There is no doubt but that this text is the product of a monastic setting, occurring as it does along with other clerical material (IV.1.1.). The surprising thing is that it has survived, given its highly critical slant. Both Gwara (1988, 71) and Flower (1947, 75) mention *Tromdám Gúaire* in relation to *AMC*, suggesting they may have been created by the same intellectual forces. As the former sets about upending the satirists by having the church triumph over them, so *AMC*

upends the church by making the satirists triumphant. It appears in both cases that the motive for satire was the perceived power of the offending institution. They also have in common the fact that they reflect an earlier time than the one in which they were composed (Flower, 1947, 75-7).

IV.2.20.1. *Cath Almaine* (Ó Riain, 1978) is set in the same period as *AMC*. There are two recensions: ‘B, [a Brussels MS of the seventeenth century, the tale forming part of the first of the ‘Three Fragments of Irish Annals]’ which was composed in the tenth century in an annalistic milieu...and YDF [Yellow Book of Lecan, R.I.A. D iv 2 87 R a 1-V a 44 and The Book of Fermoy], a modified version of B, redacted in the early twelfth century’ (Ó Riain, 1978, xxxvi). There is a marked difference between the recensions: ‘The YDF recension begins and ends with an account of the relationship between Fergal mac Maíle-dúin and Cathal mac Finguine. In B there is no mention whatever of Cathal and only one doubtful reference to Munster’ (Ó Riain, 1978, xxii). Thus Cathal’s introduction to the tale is seen as a later modification (Ó Riain, 1978, xxiii). As was stated previously (IV.2.1.), AI’s entry for 721AD gives an account of the peace made between Fergal and Cathal and how Fergal submitted to Cathal. Although Fergal followed this up by his march into Leinster in 722AD, culminating in his death at the Battle of Allen, Cathal ‘had neither hand nor part in the battle, a fact hardly disguised in YDF’ (Ó Riain, 1978, xxiii).

‘The introduction of Cathal mac Finguine to the tale, as well as the inflated importance attached to his role, suggests that the intention of the author was to make propaganda for the southern province, and more particularly for the Eoganachta to whom Cathal belonged’ (Ó Riain, 1978, xxiv). This is exemplified in the following statement after the battle: *Luid iar sin Cathal co ngléri tinóil fer Muman les d’idnocol chind Fergail como-tarad fén d’Uib Néill 7 co tarad rígi Úa Néill do Flaithbertach mac Áeda, 7 fácbais Cathal amhlaid-sin iad 7 tánic co Gleandamain na rígi i cind cháectigis ar mís* (Ó Riain, 1978, 30, ll.187-91) ‘Then Cathal went with a gathered group of Munstermen to convey Fergal’s head so that he brought it himself to the Uí Néill and he gave the kingship of the Uí Néill to Flaithbertach mac Glendamain after six weeks’. However, ‘there is no evidence to support the assertion in the YDF recension ...that Cathal was in some way connected with the aftermath of the battle’ (Ó Riain, 1978, xiv). Furthermore, Cathal’s conferring of the kingship is ‘a curious statement...Least of all should we expect the king

of Cashel to appoint the High King' (Dillon, 1946, 102). Tying in with this propaganda theory is the further suggestion that because of similar statements in YDF and AI, the author of YDF may have drawn on AI as his source (Ó Riain, 1978, xxiii). We may thus summarise that YDF was redacted in the early twelfth century with a strong bias in favour of Cathal and the Eoganachta, as evidenced by its relationship to AI.

The B version of *AMC* alludes to the on-going contention between Cathal and Fergal for the high-kingship, while the YDF recension of *Cath Almaine* begins: *Baí cocad mór iter Chathal mac Findguine 7 Fergal mac Maíli-dúin fri ré fota* (Ó Riain, 1978, 17, 1.2-3) 'There had been a great war between Cathal and Fergal for a long time'. We therefore understand this contention as background to both tales, even if it is not precisely stated in H. The fact that Cathal was ravaging his own province by his greed suggests criticism on the part of the author. Moreover, although Mac Con Glinne's adventures bring him to Munster, his point of departure was Uí Néill territory. It is suggested here that *AMC* is casting a satirical eye on Cathal, viewing him from a northern perspective, and may have been influenced by the tale *Cath Almaine*, which was set in the same period.

IV.2.20.2. While the title *Cath Almaine* suggests a tale describing an important historic battle, it is nevertheless characterised by 'an unusual lack of concern with the action of the battle itself as against its preliminaries and aftermath' (Ó Riain, 1978, xi). '[O]ne cannot help feeling that to the storyteller the history and politics were of minor importance compared with other facets of the story he wished to emphasise' (Harrison, 1989, 27). Part of the preliminaries outlined on the eve of battle was Fergal's wish to have Donn Bó entertain them with storytelling. He excuses himself, however, and nominates Úa Maigleine in his stead. He is described as *ríg-drúth*, which Harrison (1989, 27) interprets as 'chief or master of jesters', and 'he tells them stories of other encounters between the warriors of the north and the Leinstermen'. After Fergal has been killed in battle the jester is captured 'and his death alongside the king has a ritual flavour about it. The story shows us the jester functioning as an entertainer telling stories and as a ritual scapegoat dying in the company of the king' (Harrison, 1989, 27-8). We thus observe the fortunes of the jester tied in with those of the king.

According to Harrison (1989, 30-1) there is a connection in early Irish literature between the jester and the poet. Using Mac Dá Chérda in *Líadain 7 Curithir* as an example, he recognises in this character ‘a literary realisation of the...close connection between the profession of folly, the role of the poet and the powers of prophecy and divination’ (Harrison, 1989, 30-1). Citing yet another example he states: ‘In the *Annals of Tigearnach*...we read of one Murchad Ua Carrthaig ...who is described as chief jester and chief professor of poetry (*primdrúth agus primollam*)’ (Harrison, 1989, 31). Turning our attention to *AMC* we may see in Mac Con Glinne a similar character. While his role as jester is present only in B, he is primarily represented as a poet in both versions. His role as *cáinte* associates him with that of jester, for these lesser classes of poet ‘are often coupled with the fools in ways which make it clear that their activities very often overlapped’ (Harrison, 1989, 32).

We therefore recognise a similarity between Úa Maigleine and Mac Con Glinne. Both play the role of storyteller and reflect the fortunes of their king. Although Mac Con Glinne is a disruptive presence initially, he restores ‘stability and prosperity to the province by using creatively those very qualities that make him a disruptive force’ (Harrison, 1989, 25). Thus the precocious Ulster poet, by his intervention, has saved Munster from the exactions of a rapacious king and Cathal’s gratitude is manifested in his promotion. Úa Maigleine, on the other hand, was expendable and thus could fill in for Donn Bó. His intervention, however, could demonstrate an awareness of the tragedy which was to occur and his death is a sacrifice entwined in the fortunes of his kingdom (Harrison, 1989, 29).

AMC and *Cath Almáine* represent two very different types of saga, the former a satire that is difficult to categorise and the latter part of the Kings’ Cycle. They both, however, are set in the same historical period, one reflecting a tragedy and the other creating a satire around the perceived victor in that tragic battle. While *Cath Almáine* is the stuff of heroes, *AMC* turns the tables on heroic endeavour with Mac Con Glinne the epitome of a mock hero. Although the connections are tenuous, there is perhaps, sufficient to link the two tales in terms of background influence. In a way, one tale may be seen as a reaction to the other, where the great Munster king’s power and victory are

seen in terms of a voracious appetite which needs controlling, but not before he is suitably humiliated.

Herbert (2005, 71) concludes that ‘*AMC* animates a fantastic universe, but never loses sight of its targets in the real universe of church and state in twelfth-century Cork’. Herbert’s arguments for a twelfth century setting for H concentrate mainly on a narrow time frame 1124-38AD covering the height of Cormac Mac Carthaig’s power (2005, 66). However, there seems to be sufficient grounds for viewing the eighth century as the intended period for H’s setting in view of the historical background of Cathal Mac Finguine’s victory, the introduction of a legal suit which reflects on his own legal activities, the fact that H is found in the same manuscript with other legal material, the mention of a lesser class of poet named Mac Con Glinne in *Féilire Óengusa*, the fact that the Vision largely takes the form of a *peregrinatio*, the major role penance plays in *AMC*, the fact that the Old Irish Penitentials were written in the eighth century (Bieler, 1963, 47), and that *Cath Almáine* may be seen as a contrasting text. Thus Herbert’s statement that ‘there is little to suggest that the author of *AMC* [H] is seeking to be true to an eighth-century reality of the king’s [Cathal’s] life’ may be questioned. While Herbert’s arguments in favour of a twelfth century focus appear legitimate, it nevertheless seems necessary to also view H in terms of the period in which it is set.

Although Wollner’s introduction to Meyer’s edition was written over a hundred years ago, many of his comments are still valid today and his discussion of *AMC*’s textual tradition remains indispensable to a study of the tale.

3. Conclusion.

IV.3.1. The foregoing detailed textual analysis of H supports Wollner’s statement ‘if we want to know how the original version [of *AMC*] would have run, we must turn to H’ (Meyer, 1892, xv) as well as Jackson’s comment (1990, xxxii) that H is a more coherent version of the tale. This text presents a satirisation of the higher echelons of early Irish society, namely, king, judge, poet, and clergy. Kingship, in the person of Cathal Mac Finguine, is portrayed as undignified and gluttonous due to a voracious appetite causing the hospitality due to him to press the province’s resources to the limit. This alarming

phenomenon is hinted at when Mac Con Glinne follows Cathal to Pichán's house and suggests to him *dá léged dó airichthi Cathail di lesugud, robad feirde do feraib Muman* (Meyer, 1892, 117) 'if he were allowed the preparing of Cathal's maintenance it would be better for the men of Munster'. It may be deduced from this that Cathal's principal role as king, which was to govern, would suffer neglect. The historical king Cathal Mac Finguine, however, was an energetic king who gained mention, along with Brian son of Cennétig, in the Annals of Inisfallen as one of the kings of Munster who attained submission of the king of Tara (Mac Airt, 1951, 105).

The judges make an appearance towards the close of the saga when Mac Con Glinne asks them to adjudicate the lawsuit. This is given a veneer of authenticity by its terms and procedure but lacks substance because of its triviality. According to *Críth Gablach* the judge is in constant attendance on the king, forming part of his retinue even during the sowing season: *acht nammá atáa mí ná n-imthet rí acht cethrur. Cía cethrar? Rí 7 brithem 7 dias i manchuini. Cía mí i(n) n-imthet in tucht sin? Mí silta(i)* (Binchy, 1941, 21, §40, ll.535-8) 'there is but one month in which there is no one travelling with the king except for four. Who are the four? The king, the judge and a couple in attendance. What is the month in which the travelling is thus? The month of sowing'. At feasts the seating arrangements also favour the *brithem*, who sits beside the king if the queen is absent: *a ben nó a brithem fri suidi[u] aníar* (Binchy, 1941, 23, §46, ll.595-6) 'his wife or his judge behind himself'. This stresses the close link that existed between the king and the *brithem*, who was there to advise the king on all legal decisions he had to make (Kelly, 1988, 52). Thus another great pillar of early Irish society is belittled.

The poets are implicitly ridiculed on account of Mac Con Glinne's fraudulent behaviour when demanding to be treated as an *ollam* but acting more like a *cáinte*. By engineering the equation of his honour-price with that of an *ollam* and also by achieving the respect due to a poet of this high grade, the author is suggesting that a lowly satirist is as good as an *ollam*. 'The highest grade of *fili* is the *ollam*, who has the same honour-price as the king of a *túath*' (Kelly, 1988, 46).

The author's greatest criticism, however, is reserved for the clergy. The church is satirised on three levels: figures of authority, teachings and practices, and the cultivation of vernacular literature. We see the church's authority undermined in the

person of Mainchín, the monastic abbot. He is portrayed as mean, arrogant and self-indulgent in his dealings with Mac Con Glinne. ‘In the law-texts on status high-ranking clergy are treated as equal or superior to kings’ and the importance of an abbot is indicated by the fact that an honour-price of fourteen *cumals* is assigned ‘to the abbot of a great monastery such as Cork or Emly’ (Kelly, 1988, 41). The traditionally respected figure of the ascetic hermit is derided in the author’s presentation of *in prímc léiriuch* in terms of food. In reality the *deorad Dé* was so revered that his evidence could not be overturned, even by a king (Kelly, 1988, 41). Fundamental beliefs such as the Passion and death of Christ and the Trinity, the concepts of sin and penance, pilgrimage, prayer and the gospels also come in for mockery. At the same time, saga literature in many of its different genres is treated as an object of derision by the author.

IV.3.2. Turning to the author’s particular use of satire in the tale, burlesque may be seen in his depiction of dignified figures such as the king and the hermit. By presenting them in such a ridiculous light the author deprives them of any dignity and degrades the offices which they represent. Due to the unimportant nature of Mac Con Glinne’s lawsuit, the trial procedure is mocked and the judges made to look foolish for treating the case seriously. Mac Con Glinne’s depiction as a Christ-like mock-hero facing crucifixion for uttering a supposed satire against the church, is farcical and verges on blasphemy. Mac Con Glinne becoming the saviour of Munster by curing Cathal means that society has been turned upside down when a poet such as a *cáinte* can be honoured in such a manner.

The tale’s structure is based on Mac Con Glinne’s trip from Fahan to Cork and his curing of Cathal there. The overall scheme may be interpreted as a peregrination which is motivated by greed instead of religious fervour. The frame within a frame consists of the vision in which Mac Con Glinne is furnished with the wherewithal to cure Cathal of his demon of gluttony. This parodies the idea of a vision, which was intended rather as a spur for the religious life. The tale’s expansion is due mainly to its parody of the church and its vernacular literature. In utilising motifs from well-known sagas and inserting them incongruously within the text, the author creates a comprehensive send-up of the church. In the course of the tale the author succeeds in parodying *immrama*, *echtraí*, hagiography, vision and heroic literature. While on pilgrimage Mac Con Glinne is seen to mock sin and penance by substituting increased sinful indulgence for penance.

When he greets *in prímc léiriuch* he dishonours him by addressing him in terms of food. It is observed that the author, in employing the motif of the land of O'Early-eating provided himself with a wealth of descriptive possibilities that he fully utilised. The author's source for this motif is uncertain. The idea may have grown from the motif of the otherworld as a land of plenty and further elaboration may have been the author's own. His satirical take on early Irish society conflicts with standard expectations and this anomaly results in a derisive but humorous tale. He creates an interesting play on satire itself when a satirical verse sets the drama in motion, and the tale as a whole represents a sophisticated satirical composition.

IV.3.3. 'The whole structure of the Church in Ireland was altered by a series of reforming councils in the twelfth century' (Gwynn, 1968, 1). The 'Twelfth Century Reform' has generally 'been seen to have been inaugurated by the synod of Cashel in 1101', while the eleventh century is recognised as background (Candon, 1991, 2-3). The letters of Lanfranc and Anselm, successive archbishops of Canterbury, were written in 1074 and 1093 respectively and highlighted anomalies they perceived in the Irish church (Gwynn, 1968, 1-9). These centred upon what they regarded as the unduly secular nature of the Irish church in comparison with its English and Continental counterpart. In Europe the 'growing number of ordained priests in each monastery was in marked contrast with the increasing secularisation of Irish monasteries' (Fleming, 2001, 28). The 'increasing level of contact with England and the continent is seen as providing a heightened awareness of the different character of the Irish church...Unlike the rest of Europe, the church in Ireland appears... to have been organised.. on a framework of 'monastic' confederations governed by abbots few of whom were in major orders if they were in orders at all' (Candon, 1991, 3). The synod of Rathbreasail was convened in 1111 by 'Cellach, archbishop of Armagh and O Dunain, bishop of Meath who was then officiating in Munster' (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970, 147). Turlough O'Brien (1064-86) had 'involved himself closely in the appointment of bishops to Dublin and Waterford, and had corresponded with Pope Gregory VII and with Lanfranc' (Ó Cróinín, 1995, 281). His son Muirchertach (1086-1116) continued in his father's footsteps regarding reform by presiding over the synod of Rathbreasail. Thus the issue of reform seems already to have been in the air in the later eleventh century with Munster appearing to figure prominently.

‘The monastery of Cork was founded by St. Finbar (Bairre) in the sixth century. Abbots of Cork (*comarbai Bairre*) are recorded from the late seventh century to the twelfth century’ (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970, 66). This suggests an end of domination by lay families around this time. We may perhaps infer from this that Cork accepted reform in the early period of transition. Further evidence of its attitude to reform may be seen in ‘the unusually large territory given to the bishop of Cork at the synod of Rathbreasail’ (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970, 66). The separation of the clerical and the secular led to the decline or even closure of many older Irish monasteries. New orders of monks like the Augustinians arrived from the continent and took over many of the sites of the Irish monasteries (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970, 27). St. Malachy is credited with introducing the Augustinian order into Ireland ‘as the best means of instilling new life into Irish monasticism which was then at its lowest ebb and showing no signs of recovery’ (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970, 147). Malachy came to Munster in 1127 and while there he may ‘have prepared the way for the reform of certain old monasteries...and for a new abbey at Cork’ (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970, 148). According to Gwynn (1970, 146), an establishment was founded in Cork for Augustinian canons between 1134 and 1137. ‘St. Malachy visited Cork as papal legate (before 1148), and appointed a western bishop, Gilla Aodha O Muigin, who attended the synod of Kells and died in 1172. Cormac Mac Carthaig and his son Diarmaid both made grants in favour of the religious of Gill Abbey, Cork...A bishop of Cork did fealty to Henry II in 1172’ (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970, 66).

While H has an eighth century setting, the text has been dated to the late eleventh or early twelfth century. The twelfth century reforms would therefore have formed a contemporary background to this tale. For an Irish monk of the period this must have been a time of upheaval. The early Irish church is particularly represented in the following excerpt, which states that the head of a monastery was married. The quote is taken from B as the same verse occurs in both texts:

Atconnarc ní, ind aircindech

Cona brothraig bósaille

‘má mnaí miadaigh maiss (Jackson, 1990, 16, ll.485-7).

‘I saw the erenagh
With his cloak of beefy fat
Beside his fine, noble wife’

IV.3.4. The tale’s reference to a hermit and his hermitage and to Mac Con Glinne’s journey, which is similar to a peregrination, are further echoes of the early church. This suggests the author’s satirisation is of the unreformed church and may reflect certain attitudes of the time, especially in places like Cork. However, satire directed at the old church is not accompanied by an obvious bias in favour of the new one. In effect, this tale exalts the *fili* of doubtful status at the church’s expense. It appears to revel in pitting the poet against the churchman, to the detriment of the latter. As Flower (1947, 75) states ‘the point of the whole composition is the contempt of the monk for the poet and the way the poet turns the tables on him’.

‘The twelfth and thirteenth centuries are generally recognised as a watershed in which the success of newly established continental monastic orders forced the vernacular learning of the older monasteries into an increasingly secular milieu, and it looks as if the earlier rigid distinctions between the monastically oriented *fili* and the humbler secular *bard* gradually disappeared’ (McCone, 1990, 27). The *bard* was beneath the lowest grade of *fili* and did not progress from grade to grade as did the *fili* (McCone, 1990, 224-5). ‘Only one thing then, natural ability, is required of a *bard*...To qualify for the status of *fili*...normally both ability and study are essential, the ideal consisting of having the proper family background in addition to these two qualifications...The essential distinction between *filid* and *baird* in UR and other texts was that the *filid* were scholars whereas the *baird* were not’ (Breatnach, 1987, 98-9). As the *cáinte* is mentioned in the category of *fili* (McCone, 1990, 225), perhaps the author of H reflects the new scheme of things whereby the *bard* may now be referred to as *fili*. In fact, ‘these later poets...occasionally call themselves *bard* and generally prefer the more prestigious title of *file*, but the name used in the annals of the period is...almost invariably *fer dána*’ (McCone, 1990, 27). We have seen Mac Con Glinne referred to in H as *bard*, *fer dána* and *ollam*. I suggest that this author may be viewing the unreformed church from the

twelfth century angle of a former lower class poet whose profession had been accorded little respect by the church for centuries but who now senses the latter's demise and seizes an opportunity for one-upmanship.

V. General Conclusion.

V.1. The foregoing chapters have attempted to demonstrate that satirical narrative or satire in the modern sense has existed in early Irish literature from at least the tenth century. *Echtrae Chonnlai* and *Immram Brain* are among the earliest surviving narratives in Irish and although they are not satires in themselves, they nevertheless contain certain elements akin to conventional satire. One such example is the subversion of the sovereignty goddess motif in *Echtrae Chonnlai*. Here the monastic author ‘took the inherited mythological figure of the sovereignty goddess and gave her a new function in line with an allegorical and typological commonplace whereby various women in the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, were taken to represent the Church. In so doing, he carefully established resonances with and inversions of conventional sovereignty motifs’ (McCone, 2000, 115). Its sister text *Immram Brain* has recently been interpreted as a ‘cautionary tale’ (McCone, 2000, 118), conveying a similar basic message in negative terms that are at least reminiscent of satire: ‘*Echtrae Chonnlai* displays an essentially positive and *Immram Brain* an essentially negative paradigm of the quest for eternal life as linked to anchoritic or monastic ideals’ (McCone, 2000, 114). *Immram Brain*’s obvious echoes of *Echtrae Chonnlai* thus ‘bear witness to the profoundly literate nature of both works’ (McCone, 2000, 118) and intertextuality emerges as a literary device used from the seventh or eighth centuries onwards.

Intertextual borrowing may serve the purpose of satire. What may be a straightforward motif in one text can become an occasion for ridicule in another. Certain borrowings may be transmitted with relatively little surface alteration as in the motif of the disfigurements of the women presumably taken from *Talland Étair* into *Serglige Con Culainn* (see III.2.4.). The motif is perceived to be satirical only when viewed in the context of Cú Chulainn’s previous behaviour in *SCC* and in the subtle but crucial alteration of detail making the women’s disfigurement permanent. Thus a borrowing may retain the same basic structure as the original. However, strategic alterations may have a subversive effect as in *Aided Con na Cerda* and the Fer Loga episode (see II.2.19.2). Inversion is another technique that may be applied to a borrowing for satirical purposes. It has been suggested earlier that this is manifested by *Serglige Con Culainn* in relation to

Echtrae Láegairi (see III.2.21.1.). The author of *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* demonstrated his ability to afflict certain well-known heroic characters with physical disabilities not normally associated with them in other texts (e.g. Éogan's Mac Durthacht's one-eyedness, see II.2.10.) in order to help further his satirical aims. Moreover, the authors of *SMMDT* and *SCC* went about their respective satires from different angles; in *SMMDT* Cú Chulainn is physically absent but present by implication, while in *SCC* the hero takes centre stage and undergoes a direct hit. In *SCC* Cú Chulainn conforms to Kernan's delineation of a character in the satirical plot (I.3.4.) because he undergoes no fundamental change by the end of the tale in spite of the commendable behaviour of Lóeg, Labraid, Emer and Fand in comparison with him. All the above instances of borrowing may be described as parodistic, but they are parodies tinged with a moral purpose. Thus both *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* and *Serglige Con Culainn* appear to be moral satires. *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* is one long parody of the church and its literature but does not seem to have a fundamental moral message. This text appears to have much in common with European works of satire like *Cena Cypriani* (see I.2.4.). However, if *AMC*'s ultimate purpose is to exalt types of poets who had previously been accorded little respect by the unreformed church then it contains serious satirical intent. At any rate, certain authors have employed a variety of devices in order to produce works of sophisticated satire from at least as early as the tenth century.

V.2. In Hull's (1930, 65) discussion of 'Cairpre mac Edaine's satire upon Bres mac Eladain' he concludes that by the ninth century 'satire had already received a definite literary form' (see I.1.9). Hull is obviously referring here to *áer*. This form of satire has received a fair amount of scholarly attention but the foregoing discussion should have indicated that satire in the modern sense did not lag too far behind *áer* as a literary genre in early medieval Ireland. This more developed type of satire may also be found in episodes within tales, as argued with regard to *Mellgleó n-Iliach* from *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (see I.1.13.1.-I.1.13.2.). Thurneysen (1921, 197-8) felt that this section in Recension I belonged to source A rather than source B and at any rate, it almost certainly predates the compilation of the first recension (see I.1.13.1). This may suggest that satire in the conventional modern sense was already present in certain narrative episodes as early as the ninth century. What helps to underpin our perception of intended satire in this excerpt

is the realisation of Recension II's efforts to dilute the negative portrayal of Iliach in Recension I. The Middle Irish text *Tromdámh Gúaire* presents a sophisticated work that accommodates both types of satire by turning the tables on the old with the help of the new (see I.1.11.). Elliot considered that *Tromdámh Gúaire* and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* were examples of Ireland's early satire breaking out of the magical mould (see I.1.12.), intimating that there were no earlier satirical works. His views now appear questionable, to say the least, and acknowledgment of the occurrence of satire in the conventional sense in a number of early Irish narratives raises the interesting possibility that it may prove to be still more widespread as a constituent of pre-Norman Irish saga literature. It is to be hoped that the present study will be followed by further research in this area.

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