

DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE AND CELTIC

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CRITICAL EDITIONS OF *AIDED AILELLA 7 CHONAILL CHERNAIG*

AND *AIDED CHEIT MAIC MÁGACH*

WITH TRANSLATIONS, TEXTUAL NOTES AND COMMENTARY

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LUCY CAVENDISH COLLEGE

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DECLARATION

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared here and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared here and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared here and specified in the text.

The dissertation does not exceed the regulation length as set by the English Degree Committee, including footnotes, references and appendices but excluding the bibliography. This dissertation is written in conformance with the ASNC style-sheet.

ABSTRACT

Critical Editions of *Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig* and *Aided Cheit maic Mágach* with Translations, Textual Notes and Commentary

Anouk Nuijten

This dissertation provides critical editions of two medieval Irish *aideda* ('death-tales'): *Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig* ('The Death-Tale of Ailill and Conall Cernach') and *Aided Cheit maic Mágach* ('The Death-Tale of Cet mac Mágach'). The editions are accompanied by translations, textual notes and linguistic analyses, followed by discussions of the textual traditions of both tales and literary commentary.

The thesis consists of two parts. Part I, entitled Texts & Traditions, introduces the manuscripts in which the tales are contained: both tales are preserved in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 72.1.40, while another copy of *Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig* is found in Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, MS 1319. Following Thomas Owen Clancy, it is argued that the former manuscript is of particular interest, since the gathering in which the two tales are found consists of a collection of seven Ulster Cycle *aideda*. These constitute an independent thematic unit that should be read as an anthology of *aideda*. An examination of the evidence for the compilation and transmission of the group is provided, tracing the existence of the collection back to the twelfth or possibly tenth century. This is followed by a thematic analysis of the *aideda* anthology, arguing that the group of *aideda* constitutes a narrative cycle based on its generic unity. Following on from this discussion of manuscript context, linguistic analyses of both tales are presented, each followed by the edited text and translation. Any textual ambiguities, problematic forms or interpretational issues are discussed in the textual notes.

The second part of the dissertation, which is entitled Context & Commentary, is split into two sections. The first section examines how the two extant *aideda* relate to references to the deaths of Ailill mac Máta, Conall Cernach and Cet mac Mágach in other sources, shedding light on the traditions that surround the deaths of these literary characters. It is demonstrated that the narrative tradition of the death of Conall is depicted relatively uniformly across all sources, and shows a particular connection to East Bréifne. References to the deaths of Cet and Bélchú reveal that the traditions of their deaths may have undergone changes, pertaining specifically to the setting of the narrative and the character of Bélchú, who may once had a different role. The second section presents an analysis of the literary themes and motifs that appear in both tales, focussing in particular on interpreting the narratives as part of the *aideda* anthology in the Edinburgh manuscript. It is

argued that the placement of *Aided Chonchobair* within the *aideda* anthology impacts upon the interpretation of the group, and that the tales should be read as anti-heroic tales. The tales depict Irish heroic society as one of dysfunction and self-destruction, caused by the tragic breakdown of the relationships upon which this society was founded. The literary commentary examines how these traditional relationships in *Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig* and *Aided Cheit maic Mágach* are subverted, leading to social chaos and disorder.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Primary Sources

<i>AACC</i>	<i>Aided Ailella 7 Chonail Chernaig</i>
<i>AC</i>	<i>Aided Chonchobair</i> (ed. and transl. Kobel)
<i>ACMM</i>	<i>Aided Cheit maic Mágach</i>
<i>AMCG</i>	<i>Aislinge Meic Conglinne</i> (ed. Jackson)
<i>CCath</i>	<i>In Cath Catharda</i> (ed. and transl. Stokes)
<i>CRR</i>	<i>Cath Ruis na Ríg</i> (ed. and transl. Hogan)
<i>FB</i>	<i>Fled Bricrend</i> (ed. Henderson)
<i>SMMD</i>	<i>Scéla Muicce Meic Dathó</i> (ed. Thurneysen)
<i>SR</i>	<i>Saltair na Rann</i> (ed. Greene)
<i>TBC-I</i>	<i>Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I</i> (ed. and transl. O’Rahilly)
<i>TBC-LL</i>	<i>Táin Bó Cúailnge from the Book of Leinster</i> (ed. and transl. O’Rahilly)
<i>TTr</i>	<i>Togail Troí</i> from H.2.17 (ed. and transl. Stokes)

Other Sources

eDIL	Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language (www.dil.ie/)
<i>EIV</i>	McCone, <i>The Early Irish Verb</i>
<i>GOI</i>	Thurneysen, <i>A Grammar of Old Irish</i>
ISOS	Irish Script on Screen (www.isos.dias.ie/)
<i>OIGR</i>	McCone, <i>A First Old Irish Grammar and Reader</i>
<i>SnG</i>	Breatnach, ‘An Mheán-Ghaeilge’, in <i>Stair na Gaeilge</i> (eds. McCone et al.)
WMG	McCone, ‘The Würzburg and Milan Glosses’, <i>Ériu</i> 36

Manuscripts

Ed.	Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 72.1.40
Eg. 1782	London, British Library, MS Egerton 1782
H.2.17	Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1319
LL	Book of Leinster: Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1339
LU	<i>Lebor na hUidre</i> : Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 E 25
YBL	Yellow Book of Lecan: Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, MS 1318

Languages

Early ModIr Early Modern Irish

MidIr Middle Irish

OIr Old Irish

Voor papa

PART I – TEXTS & TRADITIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The first part of this dissertation contains critical editions of *Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig* ('The Death-Tale of Ailill and Conall Cernach', hereafter *AACC*) and *Aided Cheit maic Mágach* ('The Death-Tale of Cet mac Mágach', hereafter *ACMM*), preceded by linguistic analyses and accompanied by translations and textual notes. The tale *AACC* is attested in two manuscripts, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 72.1.40 (Ed.), pp. 3–5, and Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1319 (H.2.17), ff. 474a–476b. It has previously been edited by Meyer in 1897, with an English translation.¹ This edition is based on Ed., with a separate transcription of H.2.17 in the bottom margins, as Meyer deemed the two versions too different to allow for the construction of a critical edition.² The tale *ACMM* is only attested in Ed., pp. 7–8. The only edition of this tale was also produced by Meyer, and published with an English translation in *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes* in 1906.³

1.1 Manuscripts

Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 72.1.40, pp. 1–12, formerly Gaelic XL (Ed.)

This manuscript contains the only surviving text of *ACMM*, and one of the two extant copies of *AACC*. Black's entry in the online *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland* provides the most recent and detailed codicological description of the manuscript and its compilation.⁴ The manuscript consists of five distinct layers or gatherings, written in different periods and with various provenances.⁵ While it used to be covered by a tattered piece of deerskin, each of these gatherings is now preserved in its own holder.⁶ The first gathering, which contains both death-tales, has been dated to the fourteenth century by Meyer on the basis of the

¹ Meyer, 'Goire Conaill Chernaig', pp. 102–11 and 503.

² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, pp. 36–41.

⁴ Black, *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts*, entry for Adv. MS 72.1.40, consulted on ISOS: https://www.isos.dias.ie/libraries/NLS/NLS_Adv_MS_72_1_40/english/catalogue.html. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, I was unable to consult this manuscript in person.

⁵ Mackinnon, *Descriptive Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts*, pp. 153–4.

⁶ Kobel, 'Aided Chonchobair', p. 15.

handwriting,⁷ while Black ascribes a fifteenth-century date to this section.⁸ The latter suggests that the first, third and fourth sections are associated with the Antrim MacDonalDs or the Clanranald or both, and that the first layer may have been brought to Scotland on the occasion of the return of Domhnall mac Iain Mhùideartaich and Iain, son of Brian MacMhuirich, from Ireland in *c.* 1650. Black counts at least nineteen hands at work in the manuscript, four of which have contributed to writing the first section. On the basis of his analysis of the marginalia, Black deduces that the largest part of the first section (i.e. pp. 1–12) was written in Ireland by a scribe named Fergal, apparently working for a certain Seaán mac Céin.⁹ Fergal seems to refer to his work in marginalia on the second page: *l(e)bar fh[...]r glaisi Berramain 7 fuil meoir Fhirgaili .i. mac rig Erenn* ‘the book of the grey man of Berraman, blood of the finger of Fergal, that is the son of the king of Ireland’.¹⁰ There are a number of places named Berraman found in Bréifne and other parts of Ireland.¹¹

The first gathering of this manuscript consists of a collection of seven *aideda* from the Ulster Cycle, all written in a single column.¹² *AACC* begins on p. 3 (or f. 2r), l. 8, with an ornate initial ‘b’, four lines tall (see image 1 below), and ends on p. 5 (f. 3r), l. 7. *ACMM* starts on p. 7 (f. 4r), l. 10, with a less ornate initial ‘c’ than the initial at the beginning of the aforementioned tale, two lines tall (see image 2 below), and ends on the penultimate line of p. 8 (f. 4v). While the handwriting is neat and legible, it is at times heavily abbreviated and the scribe incidentally omits words or phrases, inserting these interlinearly in superscript or in the margins.

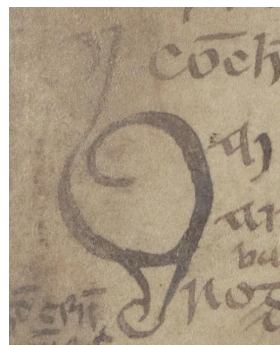


Image 2: Courtesy of Isos



Image 1: Courtesy of Isos

⁷ Meyer, ‘Edinburgh Gaelic Manuscript XL’, p. 208.

⁸ Black, *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts*.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Cf. also the marginalia on p. 11: *oraid sunn d'fir in liupairsi .i. sean mac ceinn misi pod gan seir 7 fergal atam comnaic*, ‘A prayer here for the man of this book, i.e. Sean mac Céin. I am a boot(?) without a heel and I am [called] Fergal’. Translations are mine, unless stated otherwise. See also Meyer, ‘Edinburgh Gaelic Manuscript XL’, p. 213.

¹¹ Hogan, *Onomasticon*, p. 113.

¹² This grouping of death-tales in Ed. will be discussed in section 1.2.

Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1319 (H.2.17)

This composite manuscript, which consists of two volumes, contains the only other extant copy of *AACC*. The first volume (H.2.17.1) is written on paper, and is comprised mostly of translations of Latin material. H.2.17.2, the second volume, is written on vellum and constitutes various fragments, forming sixteen separately bound subsections.¹³ *AACC* is part of subsection XIII, which is a gathering running from pp. 462a–476b, enclosed by two blank covering leaves.

While the earliest history of this gathering is unknown, it was collected by Edward Lhuyd during his tour of Ireland and Scotland in 1699–1700.¹⁴ The O’Sullivans remarked on Lhuyd’s manuscripts that he bound various manuscript fragments together with little regard for size, material or content, so that the present compilation of these manuscripts ‘is no guarantee that the manuscripts reached him from a single source’.¹⁵ However, Ní Mhaonaigh shows that in the case of H.2.17, various clues within these fragments suggest that they all come from the same general area, and would have been collected by Lhuyd when he visited the Sligo/Longford/Galway region in the summer of 1700.¹⁶

The vellum used for gathering XIII is thick, and not of good quality. The edges of pages 473–4 and 47–6 have not been trimmed. The edge of the vellum of the latter page is oval-shaped and stretched thin, which suggests this would have been the skin near the neck, tail or head of the cow. The online Trinity College Dublin catalogue notes that in subsection XIII, all the text appears to be written by one scribe down to page 471 (l. 9), while the rest is in a more or less careless hand (or hands).¹⁷ Dry point ruling has been used in this gathering, and the text is written in two columns. From personal observations, it seems that gathering XIII is made up of three single folia, followed by two bifolia, one enclosing the other. The three single folia contain the tale *Esnada Tige Buchet* (‘The Songs of the House of Buchet’) (p. 463), *Tochmarc Lúaine 7 Aided Athairne* (‘The Wooing of Lúan and The Death of Athirne’) (p. 466) and a list of battles fought in Ireland (p. 468). The two bifolia contain an account of the invasion of Britain by the Fomorians (p. 471), followed by *AACC*, starting on p. 474, l. 9. In his edition of *AACC*, Meyer wrongly claims that the copy in H.2.17 lacks the introductory part of the tale, which he designated *Goire Conaill*, and instead

¹³ *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts*, pp. 110–16.

¹⁴ Lhuyd’s tour is described in Campbell, ‘Tour of Edward Lhuyd’, pp. 218–28.

¹⁵ O’Sullivan and O’Sullivan, ‘Edward Lhuyd’s Collection’, p. 61.

¹⁶ Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘Bréifne Bias’, p. 142.

¹⁷ Trinity College Library Dublin, M&ARL online catalogue. This catalogue is based on Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts*, p. 115.

begins with p. 475b, l. 6.¹⁸ However, Gwynn and Abbott note that the story is in fact complete, starting on p. 474a, l. 9.¹⁹

The tale begins with a large and ornate initial ‘b’, which is now partially faded but may have had a zoomorphic shape (see image 3). In person, I was able to discern traces of red ink in the top-left of the ascender, and possibly a dot of gold-leaf in the middle of the initial. While the first six lines are readable, the two lines that follow are badly faded. A few of the words have been retraced (possibly later). There is a stain running from the top to the bottom of the columns, down the centre of the pages, which may have been caused by water damage.



Image 3: Personal image, taken with permission from TCD Library

1.2 Death-Tale Anthology

The manuscript that contains both *AACC* and *ACMM*, namely *Ed.*, deserves further consideration, as the gathering in which these tales are found consists of a group of seven Ulster Cycle *aideda*.²⁰ The tales appear in the following order:

First gathering (pp. 1–12)	
<i>Aided Chonchobair</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Conchobar’
<i>Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Ailill and Conall Cernach’
<i>Aided Fergusa maic Róich</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Fergus mac Róich’
<i>Aided Meidbe</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Medb’
<i>Aided Cheit maic Mágach</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Cet mac Mágach’
<i>Aided Lógairi Búadaig</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Lógairi Búadach’
<i>Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Celtchar mac Uthechair’

Figure 1: Death-tale anthology in *Ed.*

¹⁸ Meyer, ‘*Goire Conaill Chernaig*’, p. 102.

¹⁹ Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts*, p. 115.

²⁰ While the term ‘Ulster Cycle’ is not a medieval classification, the Ulster Cycle tales arguably comprise a body of interrelated narratives that share a *locus*, *tempus* and *dramatis personae*. Hillers suggests that the imaginary world of the Ulster Cycle was the product of a collaborative effort, ‘involving a large number of narrators, redactors, and copyists’ (Hillers, ‘Heroes of the Ulster Cycle’, p. 99). I follow Hillers and Poppe in the idea that the connections between these tales are virtual: they are part of a narrative universe that resides in the minds of the writers, redactors and the audience, and can be invoked by introducing any number of characters from the Ulster Cycle (Poppe, *Of Cycles*, p. 11).

Clancy has pointed out that this collection is unique in that it contains tales of only one specific ‘genre’ or tale type: the *aideda*.²¹ He argues that the construction of this group appears to be deliberate and that the tales have to be read as an anthology of *aideda*.²² The tales form a self-contained unit or layer within the manuscript that may have once travelled separately from the other gatherings. This is supported by codicological evidence such as the staining and fading of the first and last leaves of the layer.²³ Kobel argues that the unit may be referred to as a ‘booklet’, and cites Hanna’s definition of a booklet as ‘a group of leaves forming at least one quire [...] presenting a self-contained group of texts’.²⁴ Based on their shared theme, the seven tales can be called a ‘thematic cluster’ and I agree that the narratives should therefore not be read in isolation but in conjunction with each other.²⁵

Clancy argues that the origins of this collection may be traced back to the twelfth or perhaps even the tenth century, based on an examination of two main sources: tale-list A in LL, and the tenth-century poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain* (‘Heroes Who Were in Emain’), also found in LL.²⁶ This contention is of considerable consequence to the interpretation of the *aideda* in Ed., and warrants a detailed investigation of these sources.

There are two extant tale-lists, conventionally known as A and B. Tale-list A is found in two manuscripts: the twelfth-century LL and the fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century section of Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1336 or H 3.17.²⁷ Whereas tale-list A exists independently, tale-list B is incorporated into the tale *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coisse* (‘The Stratagem of Urard mac Coisse’). This tale, including list B, is found in three manuscripts: Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 N 10; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. B512 and London, British Library, MS Harley 5280.²⁸ Tale-list A contains a section listing various *aideda*, while tale-list B lacks this category. Clancy points out that in tale-list A, the titles of the death-tales corresponding to the *aideda* in Ed. appear together in a cluster.²⁹ This cluster has been marked in bold in the following reproduction of the *aideda* in tale-list A (in this case referred to by the later orthographic variant *oitte*):

²¹ Clancy, ‘Die Like a Man?’, p. 74.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 74 and 77.

²³ Kobel, ‘*Aided Chonchobair*’, p. 126.

²⁴ Hanna, ‘Booklets’, pp. 100–1.

²⁵ Poppe, *Of Cycles*, pp. 15 and 23.

²⁶ Clancy, ‘Die Like a Man?’, pp. 75–6.

²⁷ Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, p. 33.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Clancy, ‘Die Like a Man?’, p. 76.

Oitte dano in so .i. Aided Con Ruí

Aided Con Culaind

Aided Fir Dead

Aided Conaill

Aided Celtchair

Aided Bláí Briugad

Aided Loegaire

Aided Fhergusa

Aided Chonchobuir

Aided Fiamain

Aided Mael Fhathartaig maic Ronain

Aided Taidc meic Cein

*Aided meic Samain*³⁰

Indeed, the grouping of the titles shows a striking similarity to the collection of death-tales in Ed. As Clancy notes, *ACMM* and *Aided Meidbe* are missing, and it is interesting that these tales are concerned with the only two characters of Connacht origin.³¹

Based on this, Clancy suggests that the anthology may have been in existence in the twelfth century, when LL was compiled.³² However, the main problem when using the tale-lists for dating purposes is that the attestation of a title does not necessarily prove that a tale by that name actually existed. Before the lists can be used, the extent to which these titles represent historically attested tales has to be established. As can be seen in the table below (Figure 2), out of the thirteen *aideda* found in tale-list A, ten of the titles can be linked to extant tales. Since the majority of the titles have extant tales connected to them, this indicates these tales were likely to have been in existence in some form around the twelfth century. Moreover, Toner has shown that many of the titles in tale-list A go back to an original list O, based on the use of a specific form of alliteration.³³ The titles belonging to the category of *aideda* would have also formed part of list O, which Toner tentatively dates to the tenth century.³⁴ While this dating will be explored in more detail in the

³⁰ Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, p. 44.

³¹ Clancy, 'Die Like a Man?', p. 75.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³³ Toner, 'Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists', pp. 101–4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

sections on the textual traditions pertaining to *AACC* and *ACMM*, it deserves mention here as it lends further support to Clancy’s suggestion that the *aideda* anthology may have been in existence in the tenth century.

Tale-list A <i>aideda</i> titles	Title of extant narrative ³⁵
<i>Aided Con Roí</i>	<i>Aided Chon Roí</i>
<i>Aided Con Chulaind</i>	<i>Aided Con Culainn (Brislech Mór Maige Muirthemne)</i>
<i>Aided Fer Diad</i>	<i>Táin Bó Cuailnge</i> (episode called <i>Comrac Fir Diad 7 Con Culaind</i>)
<i>Aided Conaill</i>	<i>Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig</i>
<i>Aided Cheltchair</i>	<i>Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair</i>
<i>Aided Blai Briugad</i>	<i>Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair</i>
<i>Aided Loegaire</i>	<i>Aided Lógairi Búadaig</i>
<i>Aided Fergusa</i>	<i>Aided Fergusa meic Róich</i>
<i>Aided Chonchobair</i>	<i>Aided Chonchobair</i>
<i>Aided Fiamain</i>	-
<i>Aided Mael Fothartaig maic Rónáin</i>	<i>Aided Maelfothartaig meic Rónáin/Fingal Rónáin</i>
<i>Aided Taidc maic Cein</i>	-
<i>Aided maic Samain</i>	-

Figure 2: Attestation of *aideda* in tale-list A

The source Clancy draws upon to corroborate the existence of the *aideda* anthology in the tenth century is the aforementioned poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain* (‘Heroes Who Were in Emain’), written by the poet Cináed ua hArtacáin (d. 975).³⁶ This poem lists the places where the heroes of Ireland died and contains the names of many medieval Irish literary characters. Clancy remarks that in the poem, the deaths of the Ulster Cycle heroes cluster together, noting that ‘the content and the connections within the tales themselves are providing some part of the ordering principles’.³⁷ The order of these deaths in the poem is as follows, with the two specific strings of Ulster Cycle heroes highlighted in bold by Clancy:

³⁵ As titles for these tales are often lacking in the manuscripts, the titles of the extant narratives here refer to the titles generally assigned to these tales in Medieval Irish scholarship.

³⁶ Stokes, ‘On the Deaths of Some Irish Heroes’, pp. 303–48 and 438. For the dating of this poem, see Murphy, ‘On the Dates’, pp. 151–6.

³⁷ Clancy, ‘Die Like a Man?’, p. 76.

Lógaire Búadach; Celtchar; Bláí Briugu; Cúscraid Mend Macha; Mac Cécht; the sons of Uisliu; Fiacha; Gergend mac Illadon; Cet mac Mágach; Bélchú Bréifne; Conall Cernach; Ailill; Fergus.

Clancy is certainly right in pointing to an intriguing correspondance between the clustering of the death-tales in the poem, the tale-list and Ed. His tentative suggestion that the *aideda* anthology could perhaps be dated to the tenth century based on this poem is also supported by Toner's analysis of the tale-lists.³⁸ I would add that the poem provides a clue to the contents of the narratives in the tenth century. During transmission, tales often undergo changes, as the scribe may go beyond modernising the text and rework it more extensively to fit his purpose. While the tale-lists give no information about the contents of the tales, *Fianna bátar i nEmain* provides details about the narratives: each stanza of the poem contains the plot and characters that are also central to the death-tales, and reflect the core events as they are portrayed in the extant death-tales from the Ed. compilation. This suggests that the skeletal structure of these tales has remained relatively consistent during transmission from the tenth down to the fifteenth century, although details may have been altered, added or removed, and lends additional support to the notion that the Ed. anthology of Ulster Cycle *aideda* were associated in the tenth century.

To determine the early existence of the anthology of death-tales, Clancy calls for the study of the transmission of the individual stories.³⁹ Kobel recently examined references in other sources to throw light on the transmission of *Aided Chonchobair* (henceforth *AC*), and argues that the tale was known by the ninth century, while additional references to the story are found in sources from the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁴⁰ Although this provides evidence for one tale, the full study of the transmission of the six other tales is still lacking.⁴¹ The discussions of references from other sources to the deaths of Cet, Ailill and Conall in Part II, sections 1.1 and 1.2 of this thesis demonstrate that *AACC* and *ACMM* may also have been known as early as the tenth century. While questions are raised in the case of *ACMM* about the possible changes that this tale may have undergone during its transmission, the evidence from these references also supports the idea that the death-tale anthology as preserved in Ed. may go back to the tenth century.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Kobel, 'Aided Chonchobair', pp. 73–4.

⁴¹ It should also be noted that *Aided Chonchobair* is the most complex of these death-tales owing to the number of different extant versions and that determining its transmission is perhaps less helpful than that of the other tales in the anthology (See also Imhoff, 'Different Versions', p. 54).

One final consideration is that of the date of the language of the *aideda* in Ed. Clancy mentions that the tales have been ‘linguistically modernised’, and suggests that the anthology may represent ‘the mild, largely linguistic modernisation of a much older collection’.⁴² While this might be the case, no linguistic analysis of the tales is supplied to corroborate this statement. The language of some of the seven tales in the anthology has been examined and dated: Hull edited and translated *Aided Meidbe* (‘The Death-Tale of Medb’) in 1938.⁴³ According to him, ‘*Aided Meidbe* in its present state of transmission can hardly have been compiled before the middle of the twelfth century’.⁴⁴ While this analysis does not seem to support a tenth-century date for the tale, Hull notes that he was unable to provide a date of composition for *Aided Meidbe* because of the inability to establish the relationship between the two manuscripts in which the tale is found, and so does not exclude the possibility of an earlier date of composition.⁴⁵

Kobel has analysed the language of *AC* in all its manuscript versions, and concludes that a (late) tenth-century date may be assigned to the version in Ed.⁴⁶ The linguistic analyses of both *ACMM* and *AACC* provided in this dissertation seem to exclude a tenth-century date, as these tales contain linguistic features characteristic of a late Middle Irish date of composition. However, a few older linguistic forms have been retained, which suggests that the narratives may have indeed undergone some form of linguistic modernisation.⁴⁷ Thus, the examinations of the language in the four tales that have been analysed so far allow for a twelfth-century date. Moreover, the linguistic evidence from *AC*, *AACC* and *ACMM* supports the idea that the tales may have undergone linguistic modernisation, while that from *Aided Meidbe* may remain open.

This re-examination of the sources used by Clancy shows that his suggestion that the anthology may have been brought together based on the tales’ generic similarities in the twelfth century is plausible, and is further strengthened by Toner’s recent analysis of the date of the tale-lists.⁴⁸ Although further analysis of the transmission and language of the remaining three death-tales is required (and perhaps also a re-evaluation of *Aided Meidbe*) before a tenth-century date can

⁴² Clancy, ‘Die Like a Man?’ p. 78.

⁴³ Hull, ‘*Aided Meidbe*’.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 53–4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁶ Kobel, ‘*Aided Chonchobair*’, p. 86.

⁴⁷ For an analysis of the language of *AACC* and *ACMM*, see Part I, sections 2.1 and 3.1.

⁴⁸ Toner, ‘Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists’.

be assigned to the group of tales, the evidence for the existence of the *aideda* anthology as found in Ed. in the twelfth century is certainly convincing, while a tenth-century date is plausible.

1.2.1 Cyclisation

The idea of a consciously compiled anthology of *aideda* brings us to two interconnected themes common to these sources: the concepts of narrative cycles and genre. As mentioned above, the seven *aideda* can be seen to form a ‘thematic cluster’, based on Poppe’s classification of different narrative cycles.⁴⁹ Poppe discusses various ways in which texts can form clusters and how scholarship on medieval literature has sought to define these narrative clusters, and suggests a different model for referring to cyclic arrangements of medieval Irish texts.⁵⁰ While the concept of cycles is used in the field of medieval Irish literary studies to classify and categorise narratives (e.g. Ulster Cycle, Finn Cycle etc.), this is a modern scholarly invention, based on the geographical setting and core characters of the texts in question. Poppe refers to this type of cycle as an ‘immanent cycle’.⁵¹ Another way of defining a cycle of texts is based on their appearance in a sequential arrangement in a manuscript. The collocation of tales in a manuscript was an act of textual interpretation on the part of the medieval compiler and, to quote Ní Mhaonaigh, this was ‘designed to ensure that certain groups of narratives were read and assessed collectively’.⁵² For his examination of medieval Irish, Welsh and Norse narrative cycles in manuscripts, Poppe takes as his starting-point Skårup’s concept of a literary cycle, which is based on the latter’s analysis of the Old Norse *Karlamagnús saga*.⁵³ In order for a group of texts to qualify as a cycle, Skårup has established a set of five features of codicological and intertextual cohesion, based on the formal characteristics of the texts’ serial manuscript transmission:

1. Au moins deux textes.
2. Même manuscrit, dans l’ordre des événements.
3. Identité ou parenté des personnages principaux.

⁴⁹ Poppe, *Of Cycles*, p. 23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 15 and 19–23.

⁵¹ See Poppe, *Of Cycles*, pp. 1–13 for a discussion of the development of cycles as a model of generic literary classification.

⁵² Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘Literature of Medieval Ireland’, p. 35.

⁵³ Poppe, *Of Cycles*, p. 19; Skårup, ‘Un Cycle de Traductions’, pp. 74–81.

4. Signaux cycliques entre les textes.
5. Signaux cycliques dans les textes: (a) allusions, (b) adaptations.⁵⁴

Poppe calls this type of cycle a ‘cycle-by-transmission’, and proposes to apply the term ‘(thematic) cluster’ to looser narrative compilations which do not fulfill all of Skårup’s criteria.

Using Skårup’s conceptual framework, the *aideda* anthology will be analysed to reveal to what degree these tales constitute a cyclic arrangement. Evidently, the first criterion of having at least two tales in the cycle is fulfilled, as the *aideda* anthology consists of seven texts. However, this anthology lacks the second feature: chronological arrangement of events. There is no sense of chronology in the ordering of the *aideda* in Ed.: the second tale in the collection, *AACC*, notes that Conchobar, Cú Chulainn and all the other Ulster heroes apart from Conall are dead, when they are alive in the death-tales that follow. Moreover, Conall and Ailill are killed at the end of *AACC*, but Conall fights Cet in *ACMM*, and Ailill is alive to order Fergus’ killing in *Aided Fergusa maic Róich*. The central idea of Skårup’s cycle, the linear sequence of texts in transmission, is missing here.⁵⁵ The anthology does fulfill Skårup’s third criterion, requiring kinship connections of the principal protagonists. The majority of the principal characters in the death-tales share close familial kinship relations, mostly through bonds of fosterage and marriage: Medb and Ailill are married, and according to the late Middle Irish tale *Cath Boinde* (‘The Battle of The Boyne’) Medb was first married to Conchobar.⁵⁶ In *Compert Con Culainn* (‘The Birth of Cú Chulainn’) Cú Chulainn is fostered by Conchobar, Sencha mac Ailella, Bláí Briugu, and Fergus mac Róich while he grows up with Conall Cernach as his foster-brother.⁵⁷

Poppe notes that the relative independence of texts in a ‘cycle-by-transmission’ has often caused them to be edited separately, resulting in editions of individual texts that ignore their position and function in a larger cyclic compilation.⁵⁸ This is also the case for the tales belonging to the *aideda* anthology, as previous editions have concealed the collection’s unique compilatory nature. In order to qualify as cyclic, the texts should be connected by cyclic signals, but retain their

⁵⁴ Skårup, ‘Un Cycle de Traductions’, pp. 75–6. An English summary is provided by the editors: ‘there should be at least two texts involved; their inclusion in one manuscript should be determined by the order of the narrated events; throughout the cycle the principal characters should be the same or should be linked to each other by bonds of kinship; there should be ‘cyclic signals’ between the texts; and inside the texts there should be ‘cyclic signals’ in the form of allusions or adaptations’ (Besamusca, ‘Introduction’, p. 2).

⁵⁵ Skårup, ‘Un Cycle de Traductions’, p. 75.

⁵⁶ *Cath Boinde* (ed. O’Neill, pp. 176–7).

⁵⁷ *Compert Con Culainn* (ed. van Hamel, pp. 7–8).

⁵⁸ Poppe, *Of Cycles*, p. 20.

independence as discrete entities.⁵⁹ The fourth and fifth criteria concern cyclic signals or markers of cyclification, which Poppe notes ‘appear either at the beginning or end of a text within a cycle or inside it’.⁶⁰ According to Besamusca, these cyclic signals indicate that texts in the collection are sequential, but also ‘prevent the constituent elements from merging to form one undivided story’.⁶¹ Since the *aideda* anthology lacks chronological order, cyclic signals appear to be absent. However, the majority of these tales have identical introductory and concluding narrative markers, which I suggest can be interpreted as a type of cyclic marker. Five out of seven *aideda* in the anthology are introduced in the manuscript by the use of the following question-and-answer formula: *Cid diatá a[i]ded X? Ní anse* (‘Whence is the violent death of X? [It is] not difficult’).⁶² This formula functions as a narrative marker, introducing the main event of the narrative to the audience, which is the death of one or more of the main literary characters in the Ulster Cycle. This narrative opener in the form of a question and answer is common in narrative literature.⁶³ In texts such as the late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century *Acallamh na Senórach* (‘The Colloquy of The Ancients’), which contains a number of stories enclosed in the framework of a single narrative, the formula is employed to introduce individual sub-tales within the main narrative.⁶⁴ It is also found in *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (‘The Cattle-Raid of Cooley’), where it marks the beginning of the *macgnímrada* (‘Boyhood Deeds’), a section of the tale that diverges from the main story-line to tell of Cú Chulainn’s childhood exploits.⁶⁵

In the case of the *aideda* anthology, the narrative opener has a dual function: firstly, it guides the audience’s expectations of the tale. By introducing the main event of the tale before the start of the narrative, the audience is made aware of what is going to happen in the tale and forms certain expectations of how the narrative will unfold.⁶⁶ The narrative marker immediately conjures up the expectation of the character in question suffering a violent death (*aided*). Secondly, the narrative marker can be taken to function as a cyclic marker: the introductory formula separates the tales

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20; Skårup, ‘Un Cycle de Traductions’, p. 76.

⁶⁰ Poppe, *Of Cycles*, p. 21.

⁶¹ Besamusca, *Book of Lancelot*, p. 142.

⁶² Two *aideda* are not prefaced with this formula: *AC* and *AACC*. In the case of *AC*, the tale is missing its first lines in Ed. due to damage to the manuscript, and the possibility exists that the introduction has therefore been lost.

⁶³ For the development of this narrative opener, see Wright, ‘From Monks’ Jokes’, pp. 199–225; Mac Cana, ‘Narrative Openers’, pp. 104–20.

⁶⁴ Stokes, ‘*Acallamh na Senórach*’, pp. 62 and 281; Mac Cana, ‘Narrative Openers’, p. 112.

⁶⁵ O’Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cuailnge from LL*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ For the related concept ‘horizon of expectations’ in modern literary criticism, see Jauss and Benzinger, ‘Literary History’.

from each other both temporally and sequentially and treats them as individual narratives, while the mirrored use of the narrative opener across the tales signals that they belong together and should be read accordingly. This suggestion is reinforced by the use of a common concluding narrative marker in six out of the seven tales, which all finish with the formulaic sentence *conid hi aided X [connuici] sin* ('so this is the violent death of X [so far]'), *Aided Meidbe* being the sole exception. The adaptation of this formula supports the idea that the tales are individual units, compiled into an interrelated collection.

Lastly, Skårup requires the use of cyclic signals within a text for a group to constitute a cycle.⁶⁷ These can be changes made to a source text to prevent contradictions within the cycle, or allusions, cross-references, and adaptations that 'point forward to, or are reminiscent of events in other works' of the cycle.⁶⁸ Internal cyclic signals in the form of changes made to prevent contradictions within the cycle are absent in the texts from the *aideda* anthology due to their lack of chronological order. Allusions or cross-references to other tales in the cycle are only present in *AACC*: in the second paragraph, Conall is described as having killed Bélchú and his three sons: *is ē didiu ro-marb Bēlc[h]ū Brēfni 7 a trī maic* ('it is he who also killed Bélchú of Bréifne and his three sons'), which refers to *ACMM*.⁶⁹ In the following paragraph, Conchobar's death is referred to: *īar marbad a c[h]umalta .i. Conchobair 7 Con Culand* ('after his foster-brothers were killed, namely Conchobar and Cú Chulainn'), which alludes to *AC*. Lastly, *AACC* contains a particularly interesting reference to *Aided Fergusa maic Róich* in §7 and §8: as Conall is being deceived by Medb into killing Ailill, the former says '*Bāi dīgal Fergusa ann ām!*' ('Indeed, there was revenge for Fergus in this!'). After he has thrown his spear at Ailill and Medb accuses him of wounding Ailill, he repeats this sentiment: '*Mās fīr dono, ar sē, atā dīgal Fergus[a] ann.*' ('If it is true then,' he said, 'it is in revenge for Fergus.'). These are notable cross-references, but the other death-tales in the anthology lack such internal cyclic signals, meaning that the fifth criterion is not formally met.

⁶⁷ Poppe, *Of Cycles*, p. 22.

⁶⁸ Besamusca, *Book of Lancelot*, p. 145.

⁶⁹ *AACC*, §2. All quotations from *AACC* and *ACMM* are taken from my own editions below.

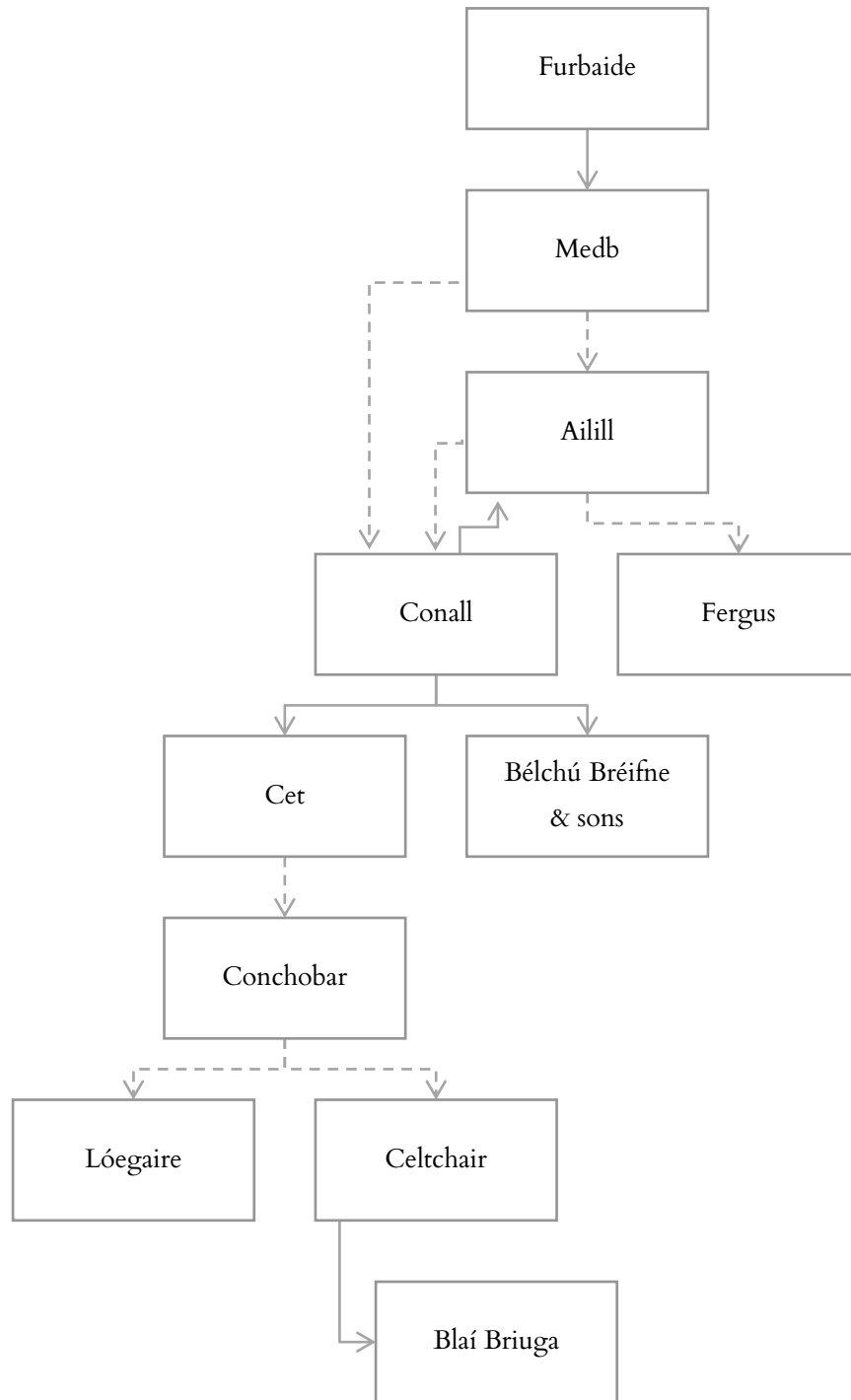


Figure 3: Interrelations of deaths in the *Ed. aieda* anthology

- > = X killed Y
- - - - -> = X indirectly caused the death of Y

Formal internal cyclic signals are, then, mostly lacking in the *aideda*. However, these tales are connected through a series of interlinked deaths that run through the anthology. Clancy contends that ‘at the basic level of character and event there are chains of cause and effect which cut across tales’, pointing out two notable chains of connected deaths: in *Aided Meilbe*, Furbaide kills Medb; Medb had caused Conall to kill Ailill in *AACC*; Ailill in turn had caused Lugaid to kill Fergus in *Aided Fhergusa*. In *ACMM*, Conall kills Cet, who in turn had effectively killed Conchobar in *AC*.⁷⁰ I would take this a step further, and argue that all the deaths in the anthology are connected, either by one character directly killing another character, or one character indirectly causing another’s death. These connections are set out in Figure 3.

The indirect deaths in the cluster Ailill–Medb–Conall all occur in *AACC*: Conall kills Ailill with a spear through Medb’s deception; Medb then accuses Conall, leading the Connachta to kill Conall after Ailill dies. As noted by Clancy, in *Aided Fergusa maic Róich*, Ailill tricks Lugaid, Fergus’ blind foster-brother, into killing Fergus; and in *AC* Cet throws a brain-ball at Conchobar, which lodges itself in the back of the Ulster king’s head and explodes after seven years, causing his death. In *Aided Lógairi Búadaig*, a poet named Aed sleeps with Conchobar’s wife Mugain, and is drowned at Conchobar’s command in the lake in front of Lógair’s house. As Lógair charges out of his house to prevent the drowning, he cracks his skull on the lintel of the door and dies shortly after. In *Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair*, Celtchar dies in a fight against one of the three pests that was harrying Ulster—a punishment demanded for his killing of Blái Briuga by Conchobar. So, while not all the main characters are directly killed by one of the other protagonists, the causes of their deaths can always be traced back to another character from within the *aideda* anthology, revealing that these deaths are all connected.

Returning to the criteria for Poppe’s ‘cycle-by-transmission’, this examination has demonstrated that the *aideda* anthology fulfills some of Skårup’s criteria: it consists of at least two texts and the main characters are connected through identity or family connections. Moreover, Skårup’s concept of cyclic markers has provided a way to interpret the introductory and concluding narrative markers in the tales and uncovered the level of interrelations between the individual narratives. While the *aideda* anthology contains many features characteristic of a ‘cycle-by-transmission’, it does not strictly qualify as one, mainly due to its lack of chronological order, and should be designated a ‘thematic cluster’ instead. However, Besamusca notes that Skårup’s criteria

⁷⁰ Clancy, ‘Die Like a Man?’, p. 79.

do not necessarily have to be exhaustive, and suggests to add thematic unity to the list—not just as a possible feature of a cycle, but as an overriding concept.⁷¹ Poppe agrees that this criterion should certainly be considered, and it seems particularly appropriate for the *aideda* anthology. While I agree with Clancy that the reason for collocating these seven *aideda* is due to their shared tale type or genre, the interconnectedness of the deaths of the characters reveals that the links between the tales go beyond that of a thematic grouping. Poppe suggests that in the application of Skårup's criteria to define cyclic arrangements of texts in different textual cultures, some leniency may be allowed.⁷² Based on the features discussed above, I contend that in the case of the death-tale anthology such leniency is certainly warranted and that this compilation should be considered cyclic in nature.⁷³ While the compilation of the *aideda* anthology is thematic rather than chronological, the narratives show a level of cyclic cohesion that transcends the definition of a 'thematic cluster'. On account of this, I propose to define the *aideda* anthology as a 'thematic cycle'.

1.2.2. Genre

Another way in which the *aideda* anthology can be conceptualised is as a generic collection, expressive of the interest of the medieval Irish *literati* in categorising texts according to tale type or genre. Defining the taxonomy of genre in medieval literature comes with its share of problems, especially when approached from the perspective of modern genre theory, which centres on the reader's expectations and reactions. Butterfield highlights the difficulty in discerning the audience response in medieval cultures, where oral performance of narratives was still dominant. She also draws attention to the complexities of medieval transmission and medium that exacerbate efforts to expose the author's intentions and audience's expectations.⁷⁴ Studies such as Duignan's analysis of *echtrae* and Dunn's monograph on cattle-raids (*tána*) and courtships (*tochmarca*) purport to present a taxonomy of specific medieval Irish literary genres.⁷⁵ While they focus on distinguishing a set of criteria shared across narratives that are grouped together in the tale-lists in an attempt to 'understand the rationale of classification',⁷⁶ they fail to consider the role of the author or audience.

⁷¹ Besamusca, *Book of Lancelot*, p. 146.

⁷² Poppe, *Of Cycles*, pp. 22–3.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Butterfield, 'Medieval Genres', p. 199.

⁷⁵ Duignan, *Echtrae as an Early Irish Literary Genre*; Dunn, *Cattle-Raids and Courtships*.

⁷⁶ Dunn, *Cattle-Raids and Courtships*, p. 25.

We know that Medieval Irish compilers were actively engaged in classifying narratives, as this interest is indicated by the extensive tale-lists. These lists categorise narratives based on their shared event-type, and can therefore be understood as generic groupings. While the tale-lists have often been taken as scholarly or theoretical exercises of the medieval Irish *literati*, Toner suggests that these lists are not only carefully planned compilations, but would have almost certainly served as catalogues of the main tales of their day.⁷⁷ An example of a similar generic collection can be found in the Yellow Book of Lecan (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1318, henceforth YBL). This manuscript includes a sequence of six *remscéla* ('foretales').⁷⁸ These immediately follow an acephalous copy of the *Táin* and the final section of the *Táin* entitled *Dinda na tána*, which enumerates the fifteen episodes that constitute the final section of the tale.⁷⁹ Burnyeat has argued that in its compilatory approach, YBL appears to be drawing on the tale-lists as a conceptual framework for categorising and analysing texts.⁸⁰ When compared to the version of tale-list B from Rawlinson B512, Burnyeat demonstrates that the texts listed under the heading *Tána* ('cattle-raids') comprise an almost identical grouping to that found in this YBL collection, as can be seen in the table she produced (Figure 4):⁸¹

YBL	Tale-list B (Rawlinson B512)
17a1 <i>Táin Bó Cúailnge</i>	<i>Mad ferr lat atfiasar duit na tana .i.</i>
41a1 <i>Dinda na tána</i>	<i>Táin Bū Cualnge. nó</i>
53a33 <i>Táin Bó Dartada</i>	<i>Táin Bó Fraich. nó</i>
54a28 <i>Táin Bó Regomon</i>	<i>Táin Bō Darti. nó</i>
55a12 <i>Táin Bó Regamna</i>	<i>Táin Bó Dartada. nó</i>
55b46 <i>Táin Bó Fráich</i>	<i>Táin Bó Regamain. nó</i>
60b42 <i>Táin Bó Aingen (= Echtra Nerai)</i>	<i>Táin Bó Regamna.</i> ⁸²

Figure 4: YBL and tale-list B (Rawlinson B512)

⁷⁷ Poppe, *Of Cycles*, p. 7; Toner, 'Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists', p. 114.

⁷⁸ For discussions of the *remscéla*, see Chadwin, '*Remscéla Tána Bó Cualngi*'; Backhaus, 'Structure of the List'; Cleary, 'Investigation of the *Remscéla*'.

⁷⁹ Gwynn and Abbott, *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts*, pp. 102–3.

⁸⁰ Burnyeat, '*Táin-Complex*', p. 296.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, p. 52.

While the grouping of the tales in YBL is almost identical to that of tale-list B, two discordances arise from this comparison: the independent entry for *Dinda na tána* in tale-list B, and the addition of *Echtra Nerai* in YBL. Burnyeat accounts for these discrepancies, arguing that while *Dinda na tána* is presented in the manuscript with a distinct heading, ‘its dependence on and engagement with the material of *TBC* suggests that we should consider it as conceptually related to the *Táin*, so the comparability between the YBL texts and the titles in the tale list category of *tána* is not impeded’.⁸³ Furthermore, she notes that in the YBL text, the tale *Echtra Nerai* is given the alternative title *Táin Bó Aingen*, which renders the tale’s inclusion among a group of *tána* ‘consistent and appropriate on its own terms’.⁸⁴ While Burnyeat’s focus is on the different types of compilatory methods, her suggestion that the compiler of YBL drew upon ‘the system of categorising and organising tales by title and type familiar from the early Irish tale lists’ supports the idea that connections existed between generic groups of titles from the tale-lists and extant narratives.

Based on the evidence from the *aideda* anthology in Ed. and the examination of its transmission, an alternative interpretation may be advanced: the titles in the tale-lists could represent records of generic collections that once existed in collocation in actual manuscripts. The clustering of the deaths in the *aideda* anthology, the tale-lists and the poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain* implies that we are dealing with a generic group of tales that was in existence before its appearance in Ed. If the tale-lists indeed represent catalogues of the main tales of their day, as Toner suggests, then it is conceivable that they may embody generic collections of tales that would have taken the form of a compilation such as the *aideda* anthology.⁸⁵

Thus, the compilation of the *aideda* anthology can be understood on different levels: as a consciously compiled collection of Ulster Cycle death-tales constituting a thematic cycle; and as an expression of the medieval interest in generic categorisation. The *aideda* anthology demonstrates an ongoing interest in and engagement with generic categorisation on the part of not one, but a series of compilers throughout its transmission from the twelfth (or possibly tenth) down to the fifteenth century. The understanding of the generic and cyclic grouping of these texts arguably defines them as an *anthology*, and is of great importance when reading and interpreting these tales moving forward.

⁸³ Burnyeat, ‘*Táin-Complex*’, p. 296.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Poppe, *Of Cycles*, p. 7; Toner, ‘Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists’, p. 114.

2. AIDED AILELLA 7 CHONAILL CHERNAIG

2.1 Linguistic Analysis

Based on the textual transmission of the Ed. anthology, the evidence suggests that a version of the tale may have been existence as early as the tenth century. However, the language of the extant texts of *AACC* in both Ed. and H.2.17 is later and contains a range of MidIr forms. The following linguistic analysis will discuss these forms in more detail, as these may provide further indications as to the date of these copies of *AACC*.

The MidIr period is generally assumed to roughly encompass the centuries between 900 and 1200 AD. It is preceded by the OIr period (c. 650-900 AD) and followed by the Early ModIr period (c. 1200-1500). The boundaries between these periods are not strictly demarcated, as the language was in a continual state of flux, and linguistic developments beginning in the OIr period continued into the MidIr period. OIr will have contained dialect variations and forms from different registers, but these remain mostly hidden because of the standardisation of the written language.⁸⁶ MidIr introduced both literary innovations and forms from the spoken language. The interaction between these innovatory forms and the more formal forms from the conservative written language caused confusion, which generated attempts at correcting and revising by means of simplification and hypercorrection. These changes, as reflected in *AACC*, will be discussed here, drawing on recent studies of the MidIr language. The language of *AACC* will also be compared with MidIr forms found in other dateable MidIr texts, which have received extensive linguistic analyses. These texts include the late tenth-century *Saltair na Rann* (*SR*);⁸⁷ the late eleventh-century *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* (*AMCG*) and the first recension of *Togail Troí* (*TTr*);⁸⁸ texts from LL, such as the mid-twelfth-century *TBC-LL* and *Cath Ruis na Ríg* (*CRR*);⁸⁹ and the late twelfth-century *In Cath Catharda* (*CCath*).⁹⁰

⁸⁶ See Murray, 'Dialect in Medieval Irish?'; McCone, 'Würzburg and Milan glosses', pp. 96-7 and 102; McCone, 'Zur Frage der Register'.

⁸⁷ Strachan, 'Verbal System of *Saltair na Rann*'.

⁸⁸ Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, pp. 77-140; Mac Eoin, 'Das Verbalsystem'. The first recension of *TTr* is represented by H.2.17 and a number of fragments from Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1339 (H.2.18). Of note is that *AACC* is also attested in H.2.17, which makes this version of *TTr* particularly valuable.

⁸⁹ O'Daly, 'Verbal System'; Mac Gearailt, 'Some Late Middle Irish Texts'.

⁹⁰ Sommerfelt, 'Le Système Verbal'.

Each section of the analysis includes a discussion of the linguistic forms found in Ed. and the corresponding forms from H.2.17, examining and comparing these forms. The relevant words are referenced by paragraph number, and particularly noteworthy or problematic forms are also discussed in the textual notes below. The variant readings from H.2.17 are provided below the edited text from Ed., or can be referred to in the transcription in the appendices. References to more extensive discussions of specific linguistic developments are provided in the footnotes.

1. Orthography⁹¹

Vowels and Diphthongs

1.1 Orthography in poetry

In the MidIr period, orthography in poetry is often designed to give visual rhyme, and the spelling of a final vowel can be dictated by the vowel with which it rhymes.⁹² This practice is well-attested in *SR*, which contains multiple examples of this type of rhyme with the dat. sg. form *glē*: *Ro raid trían int sluaig co glé / eter angle is archangle*.⁹³ One example is found in H.2.17, where we have visual rhyme between *Martaine* and *glē* (§9) (see textual note on §9. 7 *rl-*).

1.2 Reduction of proclitics

Disyllabic proclitics were often reduced to monosyllables by the loss of a final or initial short vowel.⁹⁴ Although this already occurred in OIr, it became the norm in MidIr. There is one example of the preverbal particle *ro* losing the *-o*: *gur* (§6) for OIr *co-ro*.

1.3 Glide vowel *a*

A development only attested in H.2.17 is the introduction of the later glide vowel *a*, which is a feature of Early ModIr.⁹⁵ The following forms have undergone this development: *seacht* (§2) for OIr *secht*; *Ceat* (§2) for *Cet*; *ticeab* (§3) for OIr *ticub*; *ead* (§5; §8) for OIr *ed*; *leath* (§7) for OIr

⁹¹ In sections 1 and 2 of this discussion I have separated orthography and phonology. Since changes in orthography are likely to represent scribal modernisations introduced during transmission, more emphasis is placed on the phonology for the purposes of dating the text.

⁹² *SnG*, §2.11.

⁹³ *SR* (ed. Green, l. 1838).

⁹⁴ *OIGR*, p. 177.

⁹⁵ *SnG IV*, §2.2.

leth; *nod-muirfead* vs. *not-muirbfet* (§8); fem. *ā*-stem noun *dreach* (§9) for OIr *drech*; neut./masc. *o*-stem noun *ceann* (§9; §10) for OIr *cenn*.

Consonants

1.4 Spelling of the stops *b*, *d* and *g*

In OIr, the stops /b/, /d/, /g/ were written in intervocalic and final position as *-p*, *-t*, *-c*. In MidIr and Early ModIr, they can also be written as *-b*, *-d*, *-g*:⁹⁶ *ēigin* (§3) for OIr *éicen*; *ēd* (§6) for OIr *ét* (but note also *hét* (§6)); *neōid* (§6) for OIr *neóit*. H.2.17 shows a much stronger tendency to innovate this spelling: *ro-marbsad* (§1) for OIr *ro-marbsat*; *Māda* (§2) for OIr *Māta*; *Corb* (§2) for *Curp* (Ed.); *dia ndebrad* (§2) for OIr *-tobrad*; *ēg* (§3) for OIr *éc*; *do-berdis* (§5) for OIr *do-bertis*; *airmidiu* (§6) for OIr *airmitiu*; *rēd* (§6) for OIr *rét*; *sguma* (§7) for OIr *scama*; *no-beraid* (§7) for OIr *no-berait*; *m'ēgaib* (§8) for OIr *m'ēcaib*; *nod-muirfead* (§8) for OIr *not-muirbfet*; *carbad* (§8; §9) for OIr *carpat*; *bādur* (§9) for OIr *bātar*; *robādur* (§9) for OIr *robáatar*.

1.5 Spelling *p* for *b*

This is not a MidIr feature, but rather a peculiar spelling variation introduced by this particular scribe of Ed. The text contains the orthographical variant *p* for *b*: *lupra* (§3) for *lubra* (form of *lobrae*)⁹⁷ and *dōip* (§5; §9) for *dóib*.

2. Phonology

Vowels and Diphthongs

2.1 Unstressed vowels

By the ninth century, final short unstressed vowels began to fall together and were reduced to /ə/ in speech.⁹⁸ During this lengthy process, *-o* and *-a* were first affected and used interchangeably, followed by *-e* and *-i*.⁹⁹ Eventually, all the unstressed vowels fell together, and as a result previously distinct spellings became indistinguishable. This development particularly

⁹⁶ *SnG*, §2.2.

⁹⁷ eDIL s.v. *lobrae* or dil.ie/30400.

⁹⁸ Carney, 'Dating of Early Irish Verse', pp. 196–8; *WMG*, p. 87; *SnG*, §3.1.

⁹⁹ *OIGR*, pp. 174–5.

affected the inflectional system of some classes of nouns and adjectives, causing them to lose their distinct endings.¹⁰⁰

In unstressed final open syllables, vowels began to fall together, a development which especially affected the endings of the *io*- and *iā*-stem nouns and adjectives.¹⁰¹ We find the nom. sg. of *io*-stem *cluithi* (§6) for OIr *cluiche* and nom. sg. *cori* (§4) for OIr *coire*.¹⁰² The falling together of *-e* and *-i* is attested as early as the tenth century, and can also be observed in the nom. sg. form *trūaigi* (§3) for *trūaige*, from the OIr *iā*-stem noun *tróg(a)e*.¹⁰³ The *iā*-stem noun acc. sg. form *soc(c)haide* (§9) for OIr *sochaidi* is only attested in H.2.17.¹⁰⁴

The *io/iā*-stem adjective *uile* is found as *sin uili* (§4), which looks like the correct form (i.e. acc. pl.). However, after the falling together of unstressed final open syllables, the ending could now be written *-e/-i* after a palatal consonant.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the correct form of the adjective *aille* as acc. pl. *aili* in the noun phrase *fria mnāib aili* may be a coincidence. The ending of the *io-/iā*-stem adjective *cétnae* in the noun phrase *in combfēith cétnai* (§5) is also a consequence of this development, the expected OIr form being the nom. sg. form *cétnae*.

Other noun and adjective stems were also affected: we find the acc. pl. forms of the *r*-stem nouns *a mbrāithri* (§5) and *a n-aithri* (§5) for OIr *bráithrea/bráthra* and *aithrea/-athra*, and acc. pl. *brāit[h]ri* (§1) for OIr *bráithrea/bráthra*;¹⁰⁶ gen. sg. of *i*-stem *lānamna* (§7) for OIr *lānamnae*; acc. sg. *lānamain* (§10) for OIr *lānamnai*;¹⁰⁷ gen. sg. of *ā*-stem *f[h]i[d]chilli* (§10) for OIr *fidchille*;¹⁰⁸ and dat. pl. *m'ēcuib-so(m)* (§8) for OIr *écaib*. In addition, H.2.17 has the nom. sg. of the masc. *t*-stem noun *c[h]rōdaiti* (§1) for OIr *c[h]rōdatu* (Ed. contains the expected form). H.2.17 also has the noun *sguma* (§7), the acc. pl. form of the masc. *o*-stem *scam*—only found in the plural—as opposed to OIr *scamu*.

Other parts of speech were also affected, such as verbs and conjugated prepositions; for example, we find the conj. prep. 3 sg. masc. *a(i)ci* (§3) for OIr *occo/occa*; the perf. 3 sg. form *rabi* (§3) for OIr *-rabae* and *beror* (§4) for OIr *berair* (this latter instance also contains the development dependent verbal form for independent, for which see 10.6).

¹⁰⁰ It should be noted that the examples here are not controlled by rhyme and therefore represent the reflex of MidIr reductions that could have been introduced at any stage of transmission prior to these manuscripts.

¹⁰¹ WMG, p. 87.

¹⁰² *SnG*, §5.9.

¹⁰³ Mac Gearailt, 'Zum Irischen', p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ *SnG*, §3.1.

¹⁰⁵ *OIGR*, p. 184.

¹⁰⁶ *GOI*, §334-5; *SnG*, §5.13.

¹⁰⁷ *SnG*, §5.10.

¹⁰⁸ *SnG*, §5.6.

2.2 Hiatus

Hiatus disyllables began to be contracted to monosyllables with a long vowel as early as the OIr period:¹⁰⁹ *atā* (§8); *atā* (§10 x3).

2.3 Unstressed words

Another MidIr feature occurring in unstressed words was the dropping of *o* in *do* and *de*. When followed by a vowel, the prepositions *do* and *de* often elided the *o*.¹¹⁰ This development is only attested in H.2.17: *d'Ernaib* (§9) vs. *do Ernaib* (Ed.); *d'Ulltaib* (§10) vs. *do Ulltaib* (Ed.). H.2.17 also shows loss of the first vowel in unstressed words:¹¹¹ *ga* (§5) for OIr *oc a*; *san abainn* (§9) vs. OIr *isin abainn*.

Consonants

2.4 Assimilation of consonants

In MidIr, some consonants were assimilated: the OIr internal consonant clusters *-ln-*, *-nd-*, *-mb-* assimilated to *-ll-*, *-nn-*, *-mm-* in MidIr.¹¹² This development is attested in the following forms: *sloinned* (§2) for OIr *sloinded* and *comad* (§7) for OIr *combad*. H.2.17 contains additional instances of this development: *innisin* (§5) for OIr *indisin*; *aneas* (§7) for OIr *andess*; *grān[n]a* (§7) for OIr *gránda*; *abainn* (§9) for OIr *abaind* (§9). This could also lead to the hypercorrect spelling of *nd* etc. for historical *nn*: *Find* (§2) for OIr *Finn*; *cind* (§6) for OIr *cinn*. Additional forms in H.2.17 are *abaind* (§9) for OIr *abainn*; *dorinde* (§8) for OIr *dorinne*; *cend* (§9) for *c[h]enn* (Ed.).

2.5 Confusion between *d* and *g*

In later MidIr, lenited *d* (ð) and *g* (γ) began to fall together, leading to confusion between these consonants in spelling:¹¹³ *fuigell* (§4) for OIr *fuidell*; *[b]a[i]rdin* (§4) for OIr *baigin*; *tagall* (§6) for OIr *tadall*; *díaigh* (§9) for OIr *diaid*; *nide* (§9) for OIr *nige*; *f[h]ichilli* (§10) for OIr *fidchilli*. H.2.17 has the additional form *trūath* (§7) for OIr *trúag*, which also shows archaism of *dh* to *th*.

¹⁰⁹ *SnG*, §3.2.

¹¹⁰ *SnG*, §3.27.

¹¹¹ *SnG*, §3.26.

¹¹² *SnG*, §3.16; *WMG*, p. 86; *OIGR*, p. 177.

¹¹³ *SnG*, §3.18; *Breatnach*, 'Lebor na hUidre', pp. 74–5.

A particularly late development is the falling together of unlenited *d* and *g*, which occurs in the Early ModIr period.¹¹⁴ One example is found here: *ad* (§4) for OIr *ag*.

2.6 Prosthetic *f*

In OIr, vowel-initial forms in leniting contexts could correspond to unlenited forms with an initial vowel or *f*.¹¹⁵ This led to the spread of the inorganic or prosthetic *f* as a hiatus-filler between the preverbal particle and this vowel-initial unlenited form.¹¹⁶ Ed. contains the following cases: *co-facca* (§7); *focus* (§7); *do-fust* (§9). H.2.17 lacks corresponding forms, but has a prosthetic *f* in the case of *dos-ficfa* (§10), where Ed. has *do-icfa*.

2.7 Unstressed words

In MidIr, unstressed words underwent a number of changes, such as initial *c* being spelled as *g*.¹¹⁷ Examples from Ed. include *gon* (§1) and *gan* (§9) for OIr *cen*; *gach* (§4; §5; §6) for OIr *cach*; *gur* (§6) for OIr *co-ro*. H.2.17 shows a slightly stronger tendency to render *c* as *g*: *gusaníu* (§7) vs. *cusaniu* (Ed.); *gid* (§3) for OIr *cid*. While the OIr preposition *co* is retained nine times (§6; §7 4x, §8 x2, §9; §10), occasionally it is also affected: *gusa* (§3) for OIr *cosa*; *go* (§3) and *gu* (§4; §9).

3. Nouns

3.1 Loss of Neuter

The neuter gender fell into decline in the ninth century and was mostly gone by the eleventh century.¹¹⁸ No clear examples of the neuter can be found in this text, and it is not possible to determine the gender of the following examples of (formerly) neuter nouns: *nert* (§3); *tech* (§4); *leith* (§4); *ad* (§4); *lāi* (§5); *ordan* (§6); *acobur* (§6); *laa n-ōen* (§7); *fāstig* (§7); *t[h]uighi* (§7); *a ndorus* (§8); *tír* (§9); *teglach* (§9); *as* (§10); *dīth* (§10); *a nert cétna* (§10). While the forms *a ndorus* (§8) and *a nert cétna* (§10) appear to be preceded by a neuter article, this is actually the 3 pl. possessive pronoun. A possible neuter form might be the nom. sg. form *cumachta* (§6): this could be either the neuter *io*-stem noun *cumachtae*, or the later *iā*-stem *cumachta*.¹¹⁹ The noun *cluithi* (§6) may also

¹¹⁴ *SnG* IV, §2.10.

¹¹⁵ *EIV*, pp. 199–200.

¹¹⁶ *SnG*, §3.21.

¹¹⁷ Mac Gearailt, ‘Some Late Middle Irish Texts’, pp. 177–8; *SnG*, §3.23.

¹¹⁸ *SnG*, §5.4

¹¹⁹ eDIL s.v. *cumachtae* or dil.ie/13790.

have been taken as a neuter *io*-stem, but eDIL has put a questionmark after its gender.¹²⁰ H.2.17 contains additional historically neuter nouns. The noun *in tīr* (§2) is no longer taken as a neuter in the text. The gender of the noun *lāthar* (§3), originally a neut. *o*-stem, cannot be determined, nor that of *leath* (§7) (OIr neut. *s*-stem *leth*) and *tōlaibh* (OIr neut. *io*-stem *tóla*). Due to the early decline of the neuter, however, it is highly likely that these words are either taken as masc. or fem.

3.2 Changes to noun stems

The noun *taīb* (§7), which is a form of *taeb*, was originally an *o*-stem, but is later found declined as an *ā*-stem or masc. *u*-stem. The form here is likely the acc. sg. *ā*-stem. Similarly, eDIL notes that the noun *ráth/ráith* ‘fort’, which is found multiple times throughout the tale, can be either masc. or fem., but the consistent use of the noun with the fem. gen. sg. form of the article (i.e. *mūr na rátha* (§4)) suggests that it is taken as a fem. *ā*-stem in this text.¹²¹

H.2.17 at times contains a corresponding form to Ed. with a different stem. The noun *ūaman* (§6) is the acc. sg. of the masc. *u*-/*o*-stem noun *omun*, the latter form being attested in Ed. During the MidIr period, *omun* and *úamun* were used interchangeably, but *úamun* eventually superseded *omun*.¹²² The dat. sg. noun *madan* (§7) is a MidIr masc. *o*-stem, while Ed. has *matin*, the OIr *ā*-stem. The substantive *araile* in *co ’raili* (§7) is taken as the an acc. sg. fem. here, as opposed to the masc. *co arail* in Ed.¹²³

Additional forms, unique to H.2.17, also show changes in stem: the noun *cathair*, which was originally a fem. *i*-stem, is found here as a gen. sg. *k*-stem: *cat[h]rac[h]* (§4), which was already the case in OIr.¹²⁴ The fem. noun *caill* later takes on the dental inflexion, but is still found here as the gen. sg. form *caille* (§7), as opposed to later *cailled*.¹²⁵

3.3 Forms spreading to other cases

In MidIr, *u*-colouring was often lost in the dat. sg. of the *o*-stems, although this development is attested as early as the OIr glosses.¹²⁶ Loss of *u*-colouring in the noun *cenn* was

¹²⁰ eDIL s.v. *cluiche* or dil.ie/9644.

¹²¹ eDIL s.v. 2 *ráth*, *ráith* or dil.ie/34837.

¹²² eDIL s.v. *omun*, *ómun* or dil.ie/33853.

¹²³ eDIL s.v. 1 *aile* or dil.ie/978.

¹²⁴ *GOI*, §318; Kelly, ‘*Tiughraind Bhécáin*’, pp. 95–6.

¹²⁵ eDIL s.v. 1 *caill* or dil.ie/7742.

¹²⁶ WMG, p. 86.

already common in the late OIr/early MidIr period, as in the form *dia cind* (§6).¹²⁷ In H.2.17, the form *inad* (§1), the dat. sg. of masc. *o*-stem noun *inud*, has lost its *u*-colouring because of the falling together of unstressed vowels in final closed syllables.

In OIr, a number of masculine stems (*o*-stems, *i*-stems, *u*-stems) had identical nom. and acc. pl. forms, which caused them to be used interchangeably in MidIr.¹²⁸ We find the nom. pl. forms *trī maic* (§2) and *a maic* (§5) used as acc. pl. instead of the OIr acc. pl. form *maccu*. The old acc. pl. ending in *-u* is retained in *secht maccu Mághach* (§2). In H.2.17, the nom. pl. form *trī maic* (§2) is used once for OIr acc. pl. *maccu*, but the correct acc. pl. form is attested more often: *trī maccu* (§2); *secht maccu* (§2); *seacht mac[c]u* (§2); *a maccu* (§5).

In the consonantal stems, it is common for the oblique case with the consonant to replace the nom. sg. form in MidIr. One example from this text is the *n*-stem noun *airmitiu*, which is found in the acc. sg. form *armitin* (§6) where a nom. is expected.¹²⁹ H.2.17 retains the expected nom. sg. form *airmidiu*.

The dat. pl. ending *-(a)ib* spread to nouns governed by any preposition, effectively becoming a prepositional ending in the plural in late MidIr.¹³⁰ The prep. *fri*, which is followed by the acc. case in OIr, is followed by this prepositional ending in Ed.: *fria mnāib* (§6). H.2.17 retains the acc. pl. form *fria mnāi*.

3.4 MidIr forms

Some nouns are found in MidIr spelling: OIr *tróg(e)* is found in the later spelling *trūaigi* (§3), but also as *trōige* (§3), which retains the OIr stem (*ó*), but has a later palatal *g*. H.2.17 has the form *trōighi* (§3 2x). The *iā*-stem noun *n-oidc[h]i* (§4), which is the dat./acc. sg. form of *adaig* ‘night’, is found here with the later spelling of the stem with *oi-* for OIr *ai-*. H.2.17 retains the OIr spelling in *aidchi*.

¹²⁷ *GOI*, §174.

¹²⁸ *SnG*, §5.5; *OIGR*, p. 180.

¹²⁹ A similar development can be found in the *t*-stem noun *mil* ‘soldier’, which adopts the acc. sg. *milid* during the MidIr period (eDIL s.v. 2 *mil* or dil.ie/32222).

¹³⁰ *WMG*, p. 89; Mac Gearailt, ‘Zum Irischen’, p. 36.

3.5 Loss of independent dative

The independent dative was used in OIr mostly in poetic and legal language or for stylistic purposes, while its use was more restricted in prose.¹³¹ During the MidIr period, the independent dative was lost. It survived in fossilised phrases such as *a aenor* (§4).¹³² In appositional use, the nominative is used where in OIr the dative would have been used: *blíadan lān* (§5). The temporal dative *indíu* ‘today’ is found as *aniū* (§7) and in the compound *cusaniu* (§7) ‘until today’, which consists of the conjunction *co*, followed by the MidIr spelling of *indiu* as *aniu*.¹³³ The first element (*in*) is analysed as the definite article, followed by the dat. sg. of *día* ‘day’.

H.2.17 preserves one example of the independent dative: *tōlaibh* (§2). This form survives in a verse absent from Ed. The use of the independent dative in this verse suggests that it was copied into the tale from another, older source. As mentioned in the textual note on this verse, it shows textual parallels with the ninth-century Leinster poem *A Chóicid Choín Chairpri Crúaid*.¹³⁴

3.6 Personal names

The personal name *Bélchú* is found undeclined in Ed. as *Bēlc[h]ū* (§2), where H.2.17 preserves the declined form *Bélcoin* (§2). The reverse happens in the case of the name *Cú Chulainn*, which is declined to *Con Culand* (§3) in Ed, but is found undeclined as *Cū Culand* in H.2.17.

4. Adjective

Only a few adjectives are found in this text, of which most are predicate adjective nom. sg. forms of *mór*. One predicative adjective is found in MidIr spelling: *trūag* (§7) for OIr *tróg* (H.2.17 has *truath*). The superlative is attested once: *is dech* (§1). This is the OIr form, as during the MidIr period the superlative suffix was replaced by the comparative, e.g. *is/as ferr*.¹³⁵ However, as this form is found in a formulaic opening sentence, it cannot be accorded much significance, as it would have remained in use beyond the OIr period.

The form *gach*, which is a MidIr spelling variant of OIr *cach*, is found once nasalising the following noun: *gac[h] n-oidc[h]i* (§4). Already in OIr nasalisation following *cach* spread from the

¹³¹ *GOI*, §251.3.

¹³² *SnG*, §5.4.

¹³³ *GOI*, §251.3.

¹³⁴ See Part II, section 2.2.2.b for more on these parallels.

¹³⁵ *OIGR*, p. 185.

neut. and acc. sg. to other forms.¹³⁶ The noun *oidc[h]i* can be both acc. and dat. sg., but is more likely to be an acc. here, functioning as an adverb of time.¹³⁷

5. Article

5.1 *in/ind/int* vs. *an*

The form of the definite article for the nom., acc., and dat. sg. of the masc. and fem. is found written as *in* eleven times. The MidIr form *an* is found two times: *forsan rāith* (§7); *an tan* (§7).¹³⁸ The form *ind^{+L}*, found before vowels and lenited *f*, is also found as *an*: gen. sg. *an f[h]ir* (§6).¹³⁹

In H.2.17, the nom., acc., and dat. sg. form of the masc. and fem. article is found as *in* twelve times; the MidIr form *an* is found once: *an lis* (§8). The former combination is found in Ed. as *in lis*, but in all five instances where Ed. has *an*, H.2.17 writes *in*. The gen. sg. form *ind^{+L}* is written as *in* once: *in rīgh* (§2), and once as *an*: *an āir* (§9). The neut. article has disappeared with the erosion of the neuter gender: *in tīr* (§2) vs. OIr *a tīr*.

5.2 Generalisation of pl. article *na*

In the plural, the form (*in*)*na* already began replacing the OIr nom. pl. masc. *in/ind/int* during the late OIr period.¹⁴⁰ This development is attested in the only instance of a pl. article in this text: *na trī Ruadcoin* (§9). Similarly, in the gen. sg. fem. the short form of the article *na* has superseded the long form *inna*: *na rātha* (§4); *na rātha* (§4); *na lānamna* (§7).

6. Numeral

6.1 Dual

The numeral two is attested once in H.2.17: *dā comalta-som* (§3). The dual was already falling out of use during the OIr period and there was a growing tendency in MidIr to use the indeclinable num. *dá* ‘two’,¹⁴¹ which suggests that the latter form was used here.

¹³⁶ *SnG*, §10.27.

¹³⁷ eDIL s.v. 1 *adaig* or dil.ie/256.

¹³⁸ *SnG* IV, §7.3.

¹³⁹ *SnG*, §7.7.

¹⁴⁰ *SnG*, §7.6; WMG, pp. 89–90.

¹⁴¹ *OIGR*, p. 187.

6.2 Form of numerals

The numeral one (*óen*) is found both in the OIr spelling *óen* and later MidIr spelling *aen* and other variants: *a aenor* (§4); *a n-ainfecht* (§4); *aonfecht* (§6); *laa n-óen* (§7).

The numerals 2–4, which were fully inflected adjectives in OIr, lost their distinctions between masc. and fem. in favour of the masc. In the case of the numeral four (masc. sg. *cethir*), the old nom. pl. form *cethair* became confined to independent usage, while the OIr acc. pl. *ceithri* came to be used as nom. pl. too, due to confusion between nom. and acc.¹⁴² The latter form is found in this text where an acc. pl. is expected: *cet[h]ri(g)* (§10).

While in OIr numerals were followed by pl. nouns, in MidIr they began to be followed by the sg. forms. This development was based on analogy with neut. nouns, which had identical sg. and pl. forms.¹⁴³ The examples found here all take the pl.: *trī maic* (§2); *secht maccu* (§2); *trícha fer* (§6), which indicates that the OIr system was still in place.

7. Adverbs

In MidIr, adverbs are often lenited.¹⁴⁴ Ed. contains two examples: *thiār* (§2) and *chena* (§3), but unlenited forms are the norm in this text, occurring seven times. In H.2.17, the MidIr lenited form *esta* (§7) is found for OIr *fasta*, but the remaining six adverbs are unlenited.

MidIr forms of adverbs are also attested: *immorro* (§3; §6) for OIr *immurgu*; (assertive particle) *ām* (§4; §7); *ōm* (§8) for OIr *ém*,¹⁴⁵ versus one instance of *ēm* (§8); the forms *dorīs* (§10) and *arīs* (§10) for OIr *doridisi*, which had already become petrified in early MidIr. H.2.17 retains the spelling *ēm* (§4; §7), but has the petrified form *aridisi* (§10).

Already in OIr the prep. *co* ‘until’ is used in combination with an adj. to form an adverb, and instances such as *co mōr* ‘greatly’ (Ed. §1; H.2.17 §9) therefore provide no indication of date.¹⁴⁶ In MidIr this becomes the standard way to form adverbs: the combination *co trēn* (§2), which is found in H.2.17, is also attested in LU.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² *OIGR*, pp. 186–7.

¹⁴³ *SnG*, §8.7.

¹⁴⁴ *SnG*, §4.7.

¹⁴⁵ Mac Gearailt, ‘Some Late Middle Irish Texts’, p. 177.

¹⁴⁶ *OIGR*, p. 185.

¹⁴⁷ LU, l. 6688.

8. Pronouns

8.1 Infixes Pronouns

Infixes pronouns are attested more often than independent pronouns in Ed. However, it is not always possible to tell whether they have been used correctly or if they happen to align by coincidence, as in MidIr distinctions between the different types of infixes pronouns began to be confused. The following three instances appear to be using the correct infixes pronouns, which are all 2 sg. forms: *rot-fia* (§4); *not-ber* (§8); *not-muirbfet* (§8). However, the 1 and 2 sg. infixes pronouns continue to be used during the MidIr period in written language, and survive into Early ModIr, especially in bardic verse.¹⁴⁸

In the case of the remaining three infixes pronouns, they have undergone MidIr developments. In MidIr, the Class A 3 sg. fem. and 3 pl infixes pronoun *-s* began to spread beyond its limits and came to be used to mark a masc. object.¹⁴⁹ This development is attested in the form *nus-certoigem* (§7) (referring to *in gaí*). The relative 3 sg. neuter pronoun *-d* of Class C also began to spread beyond its limits and came to be used to mark a masc. object irrespective of the nature of the preverb or conjunct particle, often losing its relative marking.¹⁵⁰ In the case of *not-guin* (§7) (referring to Ailill), the infixes pronoun *-t* is most likely an orthographical variant of the 3 sg. relative infixes pronoun *-d*. Although the Class A 3 sg. neut. infixes pronoun *-a* in *doróine* (§8) is correct, the infixes pronoun is not visible due to the falling together of pretonic vowels during the MidIr period, eroding the formal distinction between *da-* and *do-*.¹⁵¹

H.2.17 contains five additional infixes pronouns. The forms *rot-bí* (§2) and *ros-dígail* (§2) are found in a passage which is unique to H.2.17. In the case of *rot-bí* (§2) (referring to Conall), the infixes pronoun *-t* is most likely an orthographical variation of the 3 sg. relative infixes pronoun *-d*, which Strachan notes is well established in MidIr.¹⁵² The form *ros-dígail* (§2) contains the Class A 3 pl. infixes pronoun *-s*, which is used correctly.

The other three cases of infixes pronouns occur where Ed. has a different verbal construction. For the combination of preposition + verbal noun *gan síthlōd* (§9), H.2.17 has the verbal form *gu rod-sit[h]lōd* (§9) (referring to *āt[h]*). The infixes pronoun is the relative 3 sg. neuter

¹⁴⁸ *SnG* IV, §9.2.

¹⁴⁹ *SnG*, §10.8; *EIV*, p. 171.

¹⁵⁰ *SnG*, §10.6; Strachan, 'Infixes Pronoun', p. 162.

¹⁵¹ Strachan, 'Infixes Pronoun', p. 163.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 172; Ó hUiginn, 'Old Irish Nasalizing Relative Clause', p. 71.

-d of Class C, of which has been noted that it spread beyond its limits in MidIr.¹⁵³ H.2.17 has *ed ron-asta* (§9) (referring to Conall) for the phrase *do-fust rē cāch* (§9) in Ed. In both cases, the OIr infixed pronoun Class A 3 sg. masc. infixed pronoun *aⁿ* has been retained. While the nasalisation caused by this infixed pronoun is not found in Ed., it is present in the form *ron-asta* in H.2.17, with *o* and *a* coalescing in both pretonic vowels. Due to the falling together of unstressed vowels, *ro* and *ra* are pronounced similarly. Lastly, Ed. uses a construction with the 3 pl. form of the conjugated prep. *i* ‘in’: *do-icfa [...] intib* (§10), where H.2.17 has a verb with the Class A 3 pl. infixed pronoun -s: *dos-ficfa* (§10). The construction of the verb *do-icc* with an infixed pronoun functioning as indirect object is common in OIr, although eDIL also notes examples of continued use in MidIr texts.¹⁵⁴

8.2 Independent Pronouns

A feature of late MidIr is the use of independent pronouns instead of infixed pronouns as the object of active verbs.¹⁵⁵ Although this development is not yet attested in the late tenth-century text *SR*, independent pronouns had become more common in the twelfth-century *LL* (although infixed pronouns still outnumber independent pronouns).¹⁵⁶ The stressed independent object pronoun tends to be placed at the end of the sentence, which is also the case in the one example in Ed.: *do-berait leo anunn hē* (§7).

The use of the independent pronoun as the subject is a slightly later development which may have started with the copula. The independent subject pronoun was used in OIr in identifying sentences using the copula. It is only in this construction that the neut. pronoun *ed* survives into MidIr.¹⁵⁷ This use is attested in both Ed. and H.2.17: *Is ed no-airfitedh Connachtai* (§5); *is ed aderad Ailill* (§6); *conid ed sin do-fust* (§9).

While in OIr the subject would not be expressed separately in a copular phrase as the verb was personal (i.e. *is fer*), in MidIr the verb becomes impersonal and the subject is expressed by means of a personal pronoun (i.e. *is fer é*): *ba hí a māthair-som Māta Muresc* (§2).¹⁵⁸ The 3 sg. fem. pronoun *í* is a MidIr form (for OIr *sí*), modelled on the masc. *é* and as eDIL notes is ‘used as nom.

¹⁵³ *SnG*, §10.6; Strachan, ‘Infixed Pronoun’, pp. 171–3.

¹⁵⁴ eDIL s.v. *do-icc* or dil.ie/17788.

¹⁵⁵ Breatnach, ‘*Lebor na hUidre*’, p. 70.

¹⁵⁶ *SnG*, §10.15; Strachan, ‘Infixed Pronoun’, pp. 76–7.

¹⁵⁷ *SnG*, §10.13.

¹⁵⁸ *SnG*, §10.14.

after the copula'.¹⁵⁹ H.2.17 contains an additional independent pronoun functioning as the subject: *Conall grānna clam trūath tū bud esta* (§7). The 2 sg. independent pronoun is combined with the fut. 3 sg. form of the copula.

In *is iat-sin* (§3) and *is iat ro-ben* (§9) the 3 pl. pres. form *it* has been replaced by the pres. 3 sg. *is*, the latter having become an impersonal. The 3 pl. pronoun *iat* is a MidIr development, replacing OIr *é*.¹⁶⁰ For *is iat-sin* (§3), H.2.17 has *isī-sin* (§3), but it also uses the independent pronoun in the variant reading *is iat tall* for *is iat ro-ben* (§9), and has the MidIr 3 pl. form *iat* functioning as the subject in *Ulaid bātar iat* (§10). The 3 pl. pres. form *it* (§4) is used once in H.2.17, with a sg. subject, where the corresponding line in Ed. is too damaged to read. As the subject does not agree with the verb, I have chosen to emend the subject (see textual note on §4. *cena* [...]) *ar Conall*).

A particularly late MidIr development is the use of independent pronouns as subjects of verbs other than the copula. As the earlier synthetic verbal forms began to be opposed by the analytic forms in MidIr, independent pronouns began to be used as subjects of verbs other than the copula:¹⁶¹ *gur ro-gab sī Conall* (§6); *do-fitir sí in cētlud* (§7) (latter phrase not found in H.2.17). Breatnach notes that this use is particularly common in texts from LL.¹⁶²

8.3 Demonstrative Pronouns

The OIr form of the demonstrative *sin* is found in the later spelling *sein* once:¹⁶³ *sein* (§10), while H.2.17 contains three examples of the later spelling: *ro-marbsad-sein* (§1); *sein* (§9; §10).

8.4 Emphasising Pronouns

The spelling of the 1 sg. (*-sa*, *-se*), 2 sg. (*-so*, *-su*, *-siu*), and 3 sg. fem. (*-si*) emphasising pronouns became interchangeable, since distinctions between unstressed vowels in final position eroded in MidIr. This also included the 3 pl., which in MidIr is *-si*, *-se* (for OIr *-som*).¹⁶⁴ The 3 sg. fem. *-si* is used correctly once in *dī-si* (§6) (and in the variant reading *lē-si* from H.2.17). It is used

¹⁵⁹ eDIL s.v. 2 *í* or dil.ie/26895; *OIGR*, p. 193; *SuG*, §10.20.

¹⁶⁰ *GOI*, §408; *OIGR*, p. 192–3.

¹⁶¹ *SuG*, §10.19.

¹⁶² Breatnach, ‘*Lebor na hUidre*’, p. 72.

¹⁶³ Mac Gearailt, ‘Some Late Middle Irish Texts’, p. 179; *SuG*, §10.24.

¹⁶⁴ *SuG*, §10.2.

for the masc. 3 sg. *-som/-sem/-sium* in *t'ainm-si* (§7) (referring to Conall). H.2.17 has 1 sg. *-si* for *-sa/-se* in *m'inchuib-si* (§8) and *m'ēgaib-si* (§8).

A particular feature of Ed. is the use of the 3 sg. masc./neut. or 3 pl. emphasising pronoun *-som/-sium* where the 1 or 2 sg. form is expected. These forms are only found in §8: *marb-so(m)*, *m'hēcuib-so(m)* and *marb-so(m)*. While the corresponding forms from H.2.17 all end on a vowel, the OIr 1 sg. form *-sa* is used for both 1 and 2 sg. forms, as the unstressed vowels have merged.

Under the influence of the demonstrative pronoun, the 3 sg. masc. and 3 pl. emphasising pronouns (*-som*, *-sem*, *-sium*) can also be found spelled with a final *-n*.¹⁶⁵ Both Ed. and H.2.17 retain the spelling of the 3 sg. masc. with final *-m*, using *-som* (13x Ed.; 10x H.2.17), *-sium* (5x Ed.; 3x H.2.17), and *-sim* (3x Ed.; 1x H.2.17), but *is īat-sin* (§3) in Ed. and the corresponding *isī-sin* (§3) in H.2.17 show this development occurring in the 3 pl.

9. Prepositions

9.1 Case following prepositions

Since the nom., acc. and dat. sg. forms were being confused during the MidIr period, this caused the erosion of the distinctions between the acc. and dat. case following a preposition.¹⁶⁶ In the case of prepositions which take the acc. in OIr (*a*, *co*, *fri*, *imm*, *tre*), these continue to do so in AACC, although the case cannot be determined in a few instances. In *fri tāob* (§7) it is not possible to tell the case, although the appearance of this noun in the same paragraph as *a taib* (§7) indicates that it is being used as a fem. *ā*-stem and therefore should be taken as an acc. sg. form. Both the sg. form *fri mnāi* (§7) and the pl. form *fria mnāib* (§6) of the noun *ben* could be either acc. or dat., since by the late MidIr period the dat. pl. ending *-(a)ib* had become a prepositional ending, appearing after all prepositions.¹⁶⁷ Prepositions which historically take the dat. in OIr (*do*, *iar*, *re*) also continue to do so here, although again the case cannot always be determined.

Prepositions that take either the dat. or the acc. in OIr, depending on whether they are describing stasis or motion, do not show any major changes. They are mostly followed by the expected case, or the case cannot be determined. The preposition *for* 'on' takes the dat. when used to describe stasis, but both *for mūr* (§4) and *forsan rāith* (§7) can be either case. The preposition *i* 'in' in *a fāstig* (§7) is a dat. sg., correctly describing being in a location. In *ina c[h]arpat* (§9), the

¹⁶⁵ *SnG*, §10.2.

¹⁶⁶ *SnG*, §5.1 and §5.5.

¹⁶⁷ *WMG*, p. 89; Mac Gearailt, 'Zum Irischen', p. 36.

preposition *i* is followed by the acc. case, used correctly to indicate movement. In the case of *a cētemain* (§7), the dat. would be expected, as it refers to a set point in time, but the case cannot be determined.

9.2 Base forms of prepositions

The falling together of unstressed vowels caused spelling variation of certain prepositions; examples from this text include MidIr *ac* (§5 2x; §6; §7; §9 x2; §10) < OIr *oc*;¹⁶⁸ MidIr *gon* (§1), *cin* (§6), *gan* (§9) < OIr *cen*;¹⁶⁹ MidIr *le* (§10) < OIr *la*. The form *ac* for *oc* is also attested in the conjugated preposition: MidIr *a(i)ci* (§3) < OIr *occo/occa*.¹⁷⁰ Two additional spellings for OIr *oc* are attested in H.2.17: *ag* (§5) and *ic* (§7; §9).

The OIr preposition *i* ‘in’ is mostly spelled as *a* in this text:¹⁷¹ *a n-Ērinn* (§1); *a tīr* (§2); *a n-ainfecht* (§4); *a cētemain* (§7); *a taīb* (§7); *a n-Oilill* (§7); *a fāstig* (§7); *a ndorus* (§8); *a n-āth* (§9); *a ndīgail* (§10); *a cosair* (§10); *a tarngire* (§10), but note *i teglach* (§9). It is found spelled with an *i* when followed by the article: *isin rāith* (§4); *isin abaind* (§9); *isin iarmōracht* (§9) or possessive pronoun: *ina lāim* (§1); *ina tegais* (§6), *ina c[h]arpat* (§9), but note *am c[h]arpat* (§8). H.2.17 has the following examples: *ana c[h]osaibh* (§3); *a teglach* (§9) vs. *i teglach* (Ed.); *a scēi* (§7); *a leath* (§7) but *i ceitemain* (§7) vs. *a cētemain* (Ed.); *i taīb* (§7) vs. *a taīb* (Ed.) and *i cēdhluadh* (§7).

In unstressed monosyllabic words, the initial vowel was often dropped.¹⁷² This affected forms of the prep *i* ‘in’ + article or suffixed possessive adjectives, as seen in the form *'na c[h]osaibh* (§3). H.2.17 also tends to drop the initial vowel in the combination of *i* + article: *san abainn* and *san abaind* (§9) (vs. *isin abaind* in Ed.).¹⁷³ However, opposed to Ed., H.2.17 retains the the first vowel when it is followed by the possessive adj., as in *ana c[h]osaibh* (§3) and *ina lamaibh* (§3) (no corresponding forms in Ed.).

Some prepositions developed new forms during the MidIr period. The preposition *iar* ‘after’ is found in OIr spelling in *īar marbad* (§3), *īar m'hēcuib-so(m)* (§8) and *īarsin* (§9 x2), but is

¹⁶⁸ *SnG*, §13.21.

¹⁶⁹ *SnG*, §13.5

¹⁷⁰ *SnG*, §13.21.

¹⁷¹ *SnG*, §3.1; WMG, p. 87.

¹⁷² *SnG*, §3.26.

¹⁷³ *SnG*, §7.8.

also found once in MidIr spelling in *ar cur* (§9).¹⁷⁴ The prep. *a* ‘out of’ is found in later language as *as*, which is attested once here in *as as* (§10).¹⁷⁵

Forms of prepositions followed by the article or possessive adjective also underwent changes. In the MidIr period, the prep. *tre* ‘through’ inserts an *-n-* when it has a suffixed 3 sg. possessive pronoun: *triana t[h]uighi* (§7), as opposed to OIr *tria*.¹⁷⁶

Confusion between the prepositions *di* and *do* regularly occurs, mostly when used to denote descent or belonging to a certain group: *do Chonmachaib* (§2); *do Laignib* (§2); *do m’inchaib* (§8); *do Feraib Muigi* (§9); *do Ernaib* (§9). Since eDIL notes that this development dates back to the Cambrey Homily and Würzburg glosses, this evidence does not provide any indication of a MidIr date.¹⁷⁷

H.2.17 shows a slightly stronger tendency to innovate base forms of prepositions. During the MidIr period, base forms of prepositions with an initial *f* tended to lose this consonant under the influence of corresponding conjugated forms with a lenited initial, which is why we find *ar* for *for* in *ar sibal* (§3) (no corresponding form in Ed.) and *ria* (§6) for *fria*; see also the quasi-adjectival combination *ar leith* (§4) for OIr *for leith*.¹⁷⁸ The falling together of proclitic vowels led to spellings such as *fa* (§3) for *fo* (Ed.) and *ac* for *oc*, as in the 3 pl. form *acu* (§9) (Ed. has *leo*).¹⁷⁹

9.3 Forms of conjugated prepositions

The conjugated 3 pl. dat. form *intib* (§10) is found for OIr *indib* (from the prep. *i* ‘in’). McCone notes that this is because the stem of the prep. was reanalysed *ind-* > *imm-*, but it is more likely that this is hypercorrect *mm* for *nd*.¹⁸⁰ H.2.17 has the MidIr form of the 1 pl. conjugated form of the prep. *do* with a slender *-n-*: *dūin* (§3) (Ed. has 1 sg. *dam*).¹⁸¹ The OIr dat. 3 pl. ending *-aib* becomes interchangeable with the acc. pl. ending, resulting in the conj. 3 pl. form *oc(c)u/o/a* for OIr *occaib*, as in *acu* (§9) (not in Ed.).¹⁸²

¹⁷⁴ *SnG*, §13.16.

¹⁷⁵ *SnG*, §13.2; eDIL s.v. 7 *a* or [dil.ie/8](#).

¹⁷⁶ *SnG*, §13.26.

¹⁷⁷ eDIL s.v. 1 *de*, *di* or [dil.ie/14787](#).

¹⁷⁸ *OIGR*, p. 190.

¹⁷⁹ *SnG*, §13.21; *OIGR*, p. 189.

¹⁸⁰ *OIGR*, pp. 190–1.

¹⁸¹ *SnG*, §13.8.

¹⁸² *OIGR*, pp. 188–9.

10. Verbs

10.1 Simplification of compound verbs

As a consequence of the complexities of the alternation between deuterotonic and prototonic forms, many compound verbs are reanalysed as simple verbs during the MidIr period.¹⁸³ These new simple verbs were mainly modelled on the prototonic stem or the verbal noun of the compound verb. The following MidIr simple verbs are found in Ed.: perf. 3 sg. *ro-imrāidh-sim* (§3) from OIr *imm-rádi*; impf. 3 sg. *no-airfitedh* (§5) from OIr *ar-peiti*; past subj. 3 sg. *ro-ēirged* (§5) from OIr *at-reig*; perf. 3 sg. *do-fust* (§9) from OIr *ad-suidi*; perf. 3 pl. *ro-dibracsit* (§9) from OIr *do-bidci*; past subj. 3 sg. *toilled* (§10) from OIr *do-alla*.

H.2.17 retains a few older compound verbal forms where Ed. has innovatory simple verbs. For the form *ro-ēirged* (§5), H.2.17 preserves the older form *at-reised*, of the compound verb *at-reig*, as well as the older *s*-subjunctive. For *do-fust* (§9), H.2.17 has the earlier *ron-asta*, a form based on the compound verb *ad-suidi*, and has also preserved the infixed pronoun where Ed. has lost it.

10.2 Developments in verbal stems

Verbs such as *téit* and *beirid* use suppletive verbs for certain tenses. The perfective forms of *beirid* are supplied by the stem *ro-ucc-*, which survives into ModIr. The perf. 3 pl. form *rucsat* (§9; §10 x2) is found three times in absolute position. This suppletive form spread at the expense of *t*-pret. form *bert* during the MidIr period. The instances of *rucsat* in this text are independent, meaning that they are formed with the later stem *ruc-*, which replaces the preterite forms as past tense.¹⁸⁴

Deuterotonic forms of the verb *do-gní*, which are spelled with medial *-gn-* in OIr, are found in MidIr without the *-g-*.¹⁸⁵ The forms of *do-gní* found in the text all show this development: pres. 3 sg. *do-ní* (§4) for OIr *do-gní*; impf. 3 sg. *do-nīd-sium* (§4) for OIr *do-gníth*; pass. sg. *do-nīther* (§4) for OIr *do-gníther*, as well as the perf. 3 sg. form *dorōine* (§8) for OIr *dorigne*. This innovation is also found in H.2.17, in the spelling of the perf. 3 sg. *dorinde* (§8) for OIr *dorigne* (found as *dorōine* in Ed.). The consonant cluster *-gn-* was first reduced to *-n-*, after which *-nn-* has undergone hypercorrection to *-nd-*.

¹⁸³ *SnG*, §§11.16–9; *EIV*, pp. 191–4; *WMG*, p. 99.

¹⁸⁴ eDIL s.v. *beirid* or dil.ie/5583.

¹⁸⁵ *SnG*, §12.197.

10.3 Preverbal particles

In MidIr, unstressed proclitic vowels merge and are all pronounced as /ə/, resulting in spelling confusion between *o* and *a* in preverbs such as *do*, *ro* and *no*.¹⁸⁶ The verbal form *dorōine* (§8), the perf. 3 sg. of *do-gní* with a 3 sg. neut. infix pron, is found for *darōine*, which is a later form of OIr *dorigine*. H.2.17 has *dorinde*, preserving the *o*, but the perf. particle *ro-* is spelled as *ra-*, in perf. 3 sg. *ra-gab* (§6) vs. *ro-gab* (Ed.).¹⁸⁷

Due to the loss of the neuter gender the 3 sg. neuter infix pronoun became meaningless. As the neuter infix pronoun became petrified, forms with a petrified pronoun tended to replace the corresponding verbal forms without it.¹⁸⁸ This resulted in the preverb *at-* taking over from the preverbs *as-* and *ad-*. One example is the form *aderad* (§6), the impf. 3 sg. of *a(t)-deir*. This is a late MidIr form of the verb *as-beir*. The MidIr form *at-beir* first replaced *as-beir*,¹⁸⁹ which later becomes *a(t)-deir*, the usual form in late MidIr and ModIr.¹⁹⁰

The particle *ro*, which in OIr could give a potential or perfective sense to a verbal form, began to disappear in MidIr from all but the past tense. In the preterite, the perfect forms (i.e. forms with *ro*) began to encroach upon the preterite forms to become the standard way to form a past verbal form.¹⁹¹ This development had already begun in the ninth century, and Breatnach states that by the early MidIr period, the perfect form had become the dominant preterite form.¹⁹² McCone remarks that preterite and perfect forms were used more or less indiscriminately, and notes that surviving forms without *ro* are likely to be literary archaisms.¹⁹³ The majority of the preterite forms in *AACC* are past forms with *ro* (or later *do*). The only past verbal forms without *ro* are *luid* (§4 x2; §7; §9); *do-luid* (§7); *co-facca* (§7); *tānic* (§9). Two of these verbs are also found in the perf. in this text: the past 3 sg. form of the verb *téit* ‘goes’ is found both as pret. 3 sg. *luid* (§4 x2; §7; §9) and perf. *do-cuaid-sim* (§2) and *-dechaid* (§1), while the verb *do-icc* is only attested as pret. 3 sg. *tānic* (§9).

¹⁸⁶ *SnG*, §11.1; *EIV*, p. 169; *OIRG*, p. 175.

¹⁸⁷ *EIV*, p. 169.

¹⁸⁸ *EIV*, pp. 171–3; *WMG*, pp. 97–8.

¹⁸⁹ *GOI*, §425.

¹⁹⁰ *SnG*, §12.196.

¹⁹¹ *EIV*, pp. 183–7.

¹⁹² *SnG*, §12.27.

¹⁹³ *EIV*, p. 187.

Another feature of MidIr is the changed status of the particle *ro*. Originally a preverbal particle, *ro* was reinterpreted as a conjunct particle during the MidIr period.¹⁹⁴ The perf. 3 sg. form *do-rorchair* (§3) of the verb *do-tuit* shows doubling of the *ro*, since it is no longer perceived as the perfective particle. The position of *ro* is also indicative of a MidIr development in the perf. 3 sg. form *ro-imrāidh-sim* (§3) of the later simple verb *imrāidid*, which derived from OIr compound verb *imm-rádi*. In the OIr period, the perfective particle *ro* was infixed in the verbal complex (i.e. perf. 3 sg. *imme-ro-raid*).¹⁹⁵

The particle *do* began to take over from the older perfective particle *ro* in the late MidIr period when standing before a verb in the past tense, a development which had become widespread by the twelfth century.¹⁹⁶ This development is attested twice: *s*-pret. 3 pl. *do-marbsat-som* (§1) of *marbaid* for OIr *ro-marbsat*; pret. 3 sg. *do-fust* (§9) of *fostaid* for *ro-fust*. This latter form would have replaced the pret. 3 sg. *adsoid*, since *fostaid* is a simple verb based on the older compound verb *ad-suidi*. H.2.17 has two additional forms in which *do* replaces *ro*: *do-gab-som* (§2) for *ro-gab-som* (Ed.); *do-dorchoar* (§3) for *do-rorchair* (Ed.), but note the retention of *ro* in *ro-marbsad-sein* (§1) for *do-marbsat-som* (Ed.).

In forms where the particle *do* was replicated, it came into competition with the particle *no*, and the two came to be perceived as free variants.¹⁹⁷ H.2.17 replaces *no* with *do* in *do-ticed* (§6) for *no-ticed* (Ed.). McCone notes that this development eventually led to the particles *ro*, *do* and *no* being equated, which is why *ro* is occasionally found replacing *no*.¹⁹⁸ H.2.17 has *ro-airfidedh* (§5) for *no-airfidedh* (Ed.), but note the retention of *no* in *no-indsmat-som* (§5) for *ro-imsnad* (Ed.).

In MidIr, the particle *ro* could also be omitted before a simple verb in the past tense in poetry.¹⁹⁹ This innovation is attested as early as *SR*. While no examples of this development are found in the verses in this text, *ro* has been dropped in two instances in prose passages: the past 3 sg. form *caith-sium* (§4) is found for OIr *ro-caith* (H.2.17 has the later form *do-caithed-som*), while H.2.17 contains the past 3 sg. form *tall* (§9) for OIr *ro-tall* (Ed. has *ro-ben*).

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ eDIL s.v. *imm-rádi* or dil.ie/27906.

¹⁹⁶ Mac Gearailt, 'Some Late Middle Irish Texts', p. 198; *EIV*, p. 196; *SnG*, §11.3.

¹⁹⁷ *EIV*, p. 197.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *SnG*, §11.30.

10.4 Deponent

By the tenth century, most deponent verbs had already changed to an active inflection, and only a handful of verbs still take the deponent inflection in MidIr.²⁰⁰ No deponent forms are found in Ed., while H.2.17 contains one example: *ro-dāmair* (§7), the pret. 3 sg. of *daimid*.²⁰¹ This is not necessarily a MidIr form, however, as Jackson notes that in OIr some non-deponent verbs with suffixless preterites, such as *daimid*, ‘began to form the singulars of their preterites with deponent endings’.²⁰²

10.5 Verbal Noun

A few of the verbal nouns in H.2.17 show MidIr developments. In the case of fem. nouns, particularly verbal nouns, the dat. form (used after *do* and *oc* which are common with verbal nouns) was used very frequently, which led to the acc./dat. sg. form replacing the nom. sg.²⁰³ The nom. sg. form of the verbal noun *dígal*, an *ā*-stem deriving from the verb *do-fich*, is found here once as *dígail* (§8), while Ed. has *dígal*.

The verbal form *roachtain* (§7) is used where Ed. has the inflected verbal form with infixed pronoun *nus-certoigenn*. This is the MidIr verbal noun of *roichid*, the later simple verb based on *ro-saig*.²⁰⁴ The verbal noun formation *airgthi* (§4), which is a acc. pl. form only found in H.2.17, derives from the verb *airgid*, which is a later form of the verb *oirgid*.²⁰⁵

10.6 Tense & Mood

Present Indicative

The pres. 3 sg. forms are mostly regular and show few changes. A typical feature of MidIr is the development of the pres. 3 sg. conjunct ending *-ann/-enn*, which is attested once: *nus-certoigenn* (§7), pres. 3 sg. of the verb *certaigid*.²⁰⁶ While this innovative ending is not found in *TTr*, it is attested a few times in MidIr texts such as *TBC-LL* and *AMCG*, while a higher amount of attestations is found in the late MidIr tales *CRR* and *CCath*.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁰ *OIRG*, p. 201.

²⁰¹ *GOI*, §695.

²⁰² Jackson, ‘Date of the Tripartite Life’, pp. 24–5.

²⁰³ eDIL s.v. *dígal* or dil.ie/16293.

²⁰⁴ eDIL s.v. *rochtain* or dil.ie/35398.

²⁰⁵ eDIL s.v. *oirgid* or dil.ie/33726.

²⁰⁶ *SnG*, §12.12–13; *EIV*, pp. 205–7.

²⁰⁷ O’Daly, ‘Verbal System’, p. 36; Sommerfelt, ‘Le Système Verbal’, pp. 53–4.

Already in OIr, the distinction between independent and dependent forms of the verb were often lost, such as in compound verbs. During the MidIr period, the pres. 3 pl. absolute ending *-(a)it* is found with several old compound verbs.²⁰⁸ The only pres. 3 pl. form, *do-berait* (§7), is a MidIr form found for the OIr conjunct form *do-berat*. While *TTr* and texts from LL retain the distinction between independent and dependent forms, the spread of the absolute ending is attested in *CCath*.²⁰⁹ According to Jackson, *-(a)it* for *-at/-et* is fully established in the late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century text *Acállamh na Senórach*, and the two endings are interchangeable in Early ModIr.²¹⁰

Present Passive

The form *beror* (§4) is the pres. ind. pass. sg. form of *beirid*. The expected OIr form is *berair*, with palatal *-r*, as opposed to the conjunct form *berar*. During the late MidIr period, this distinction was eroded, accounting for the non-palatal form here.²¹¹ While *TBC-LL* maintains this distinction relatively well, the development might already be attested in *TTr*, and the distinction between the palatal and non-palatal endings is lost in *CCath*.²¹²

Imperfect Indicative

There are no developments in this tense, and all imperfect ind. 3 sg. forms have the expected ending *-ad/-ed*.

Present Subjunctive

The *a*-subj. 1 sg. deponent ending *-ur/-or/-er/-ar* spread to other verbs, becoming the most common subj. ending in the eleventh century.²¹³ As a result of the falling together of vowels in unstressed closed syllables, these endings all became pronounced as /ər/. The prototonic pres. subj. 1 sg. form of *téit*, which would be OIr *-dechus*, corresponding to the perfect, is found here as *co ndechur* (§8). In MidIr the spelling *-(i)ur* or *-or* was more common than *-er* and *-ar*, which is

²⁰⁸ *SnG*, §12.17.

²⁰⁹ Mac Eoin, 'Das Verbalssystem', p. 83; Sommerfelt, 'Le Système Verbal', p. 55.

²¹⁰ *SnG* IV, §7.3.

²¹¹ *EIV*, p. 228; *SnG*, §12.21.

²¹² O'Daly, 'Verbal System', pp. 39–40; Mac Eoin, 'Das Verbalssystem', p. 84; Sommerfelt, 'Le Système Verbal', pp. 56–7.

²¹³ *EIV*, pp. 217–8.

attested in the corresponding form from H.2.17: *co ndechar*. The other pres. form, 3 pl. *co n-ebat* (§10), is regular. Of note is that the later MidIr stem *-esb*, which derives from the perf. stem of the verb *ibid*, is used in H.2.17: *co n-esbet*.²¹⁴

Past Subjunctive

The past subj. 3 sg. conjunct endings *-ad/-ed* are used: *ro-imsnad* (§5), *nā der[n]ad* (§6), *toilled* (§10). We also find the later form *ro-ēirged* (§5) for the OIr *s*-subj. form *at-ressed*, which is preserved in H.2.17 as *at-reised*. The sole past subj. 3 pl. form *do-bertis* (§5) has the expected past *ā*-subjunctive ending.

Preterite & Perfect

During the MidIr period, the suffixless and *s*-preterite took over from the *t*-preterite, after which the *s*-preterite spread at the expense of the suffixless preterite.²¹⁵ This development is attested in Ed. in the *s*-pret. 3 sg. *ro-ben* (§9) for OIr suffixless preterite *-bí*. While this verb has adopted the *s*-pret. form in *AMCG*, Breatnach notes that the suffixless pret. form *-bí* can still be found in late MidIr, citing an example from *TBC-LL*.²¹⁶

Most past forms in this text are *s*-preterites (or perfects):

- Perf. 2 sg. *a ndernais* (§8)
- Pret. 3 sg.: *co-facca* (§7)
- Perf. 3 sg. *do-rala* (§1); *ro-marb* (§1; §2 x4); *ro-gab* (§2; §6); *ro-imrāidh* (§3; §7); *co tarla* (§7); *dorōine* (§8 x2); *do-fust* (§9)
- Perf. 3 pl. *do-marbsat-som* (§1); *ro-dībracsit* (§9); *rucsat* (§9 x2; §10).

While these verbs also take the *s*-preterite in OIr, some contain other MidIr innovations. These include but are not limited to taking the preverb *do* for *ro*, as in 3 pl. *do-marbsat-som* (§1) and 3 sg. *do-fust* (§9), or being later simple verbs instead of the original compound verb, such as 3 sg. *ro-imrāidh* (§3, §7) and 3 pl. *ro-dībracsit* (§9). The *s*-pret. 3 pl. deponent ending *-satar/-setar*, which initially spread to active forms and then to different verbal stems, is not attested.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ eDIL s.v. *ibid* or dil.ie/27135.

²¹⁵ *EIV*, p. 240.

²¹⁶ *SnG*, §12.58.

²¹⁷ *EIV*, pp. 239–40; Quiggin, ‘S-Preterite in Middle Irish’, pp. 199–200.

The remaining preterite forms are all 3 sg. suffixless preterites, most of which are strong verbs still in use in ModIr today as irregular verbs: pret. 3 sg. *luid* (§4 x2; §7; §9); *rāinic* (§4); *tānic* (§9); perf. 3 sg. *dechaid* (§1); *do-cuaid-sim* (§2); *torchair* (§3, §9); *do-rorchair* (§3); *do-fitir* (§7).

The preterite forms in H.2.17 are mostly the same, but a few older forms are found here in phrases absent from Ed. It contains the suffixless pret. 3 sg. *rot-bī* (§2) of the verb *benaid*, which begins to fall out of use during the MidIr period as the *s*-pret. spreads, but is still attested in *TBC-LL*, as noted already.²¹⁸ The *s*-pret. 2 sg. form *tāngais* (§4) of the verb *do-icc* is found where the corresponding word in Ed. is illegible. Historically, this verb has the suffixless pret. 2 sg. *-tānac*. Since the 1 and 2 sg. of the old suffixless preterite had become indistinguishable, the *s*-pret. 2 sg. ending *-(a)is* came to be used with the 2 sg. forms of the suffixless preterites.²¹⁹ The *t*-preterite form *co riacht* (§7) also survives into the MidIr period.²²⁰ H.2.17 also contains two later preterite forms, both of the verb *do-roich*: 3 pl. pret. form *do-riachtadar* (§7) vs. OIr *do-roachtatar* (Ed. has *luid*) and the pret. 3 sg. form *do-riacht* (§9) vs. OIr *doroacht* (Ed. has *tānic*).

Past Passive

The two past passive forms are regular: *tucad* (§2), past pass. sg. of *do-beir*, and *breth* (§10), past pass. sg. of *beirid*.

Future

The *f*-future and *ē*-future tended to spread to other classes in MidIr.²²¹ Only the *f*-future is found here, which occurs three times. The prototonic 3 sg. form *ticfa* (§3) is regular, while the corresponding form in H.2.17 is fut. 1 sg. conjunct *ticeab*, which remained in use from the OIr into MidIr period. The 3 sg. deuterotonic form *do-icfa* (§10) is found in H.2.17 as the MidIr *dos-ficfa* (§10), with an inorganic *f*. The 3 pl. form *not-muirbfet* (§8) of the verb *marbaid*, is found with the later fut. stem *muirb-*.²²² H.2.17 also has the later stem, but drops the *b* before the *f* of inflection: *nod-muirfead*. The remaining fut. form *tair* (§6) from the verb *do-airicc*, is usually taken as the pres.

²¹⁸ *SnG*, §12.58.

²¹⁹ *EIV*, p. 238.

²²⁰ eDIL s.v. *ro-saig* or dil.ie/35557.

²²¹ *WMG*, p. 91.

²²² eDIL s.v. *marbaid* or dil.ie/31573.

s-subj. 3 sg. form. H.2.17 preserves the archaic verbal form *roisc* here, which is the pres. subj. 3 sg. (with perfective *ro-*) form of the verb *scuchaid* ‘moves’.

Secondary Future

Two secondary future forms are found: *f*-fut. 3 sg. *rachad* (§3) and conditional pass. sg. *lēmtha* (§7). The form *rachad* (§3) shows devoicing of the original *-g-* to *-ch-*, while H.2.17 retains the older voiced *-g-* in the form *ragadh*.²²³ Toner notes that the root *rach-* is predominant in LL, while the older root *reg-* is more common in the eleventh-century text *AMCG*.²²⁴ The conditional pass. form *lēmtha* (§7) is an *ē*-future form. It may originally have had a reduplicated future, but the *ē*-future spread during and after the OIr period to forms of this verb.²²⁵

Copula

While in OIr the copula was fully inflected, it developed to become an uninflected predicating particle as pres. 3 sg. form *is* in Early ModIr, with intermediate forms consisting of the pres. 3 sg. *is* and a clitic pronominal appearing in MidIr.²²⁶ One innovatory form is attested here: *mās* (§4) for the OIr pres. 1 sg. *māsa*.²²⁷

In the MidIr period, the copula developed new endings. While these are not attested in Ed., H.2.17 contains a few innovatory forms, such as 2 sg. *-at* in the pret. 2 sg. form *robsat*.²²⁸ Another innovatory form is *isam* (§4) for the OIr pres. 1 sg. *am*.²²⁹

Another MidIr development found in H.2.17 is the loss of the final vowel in the perf. form *ropo* before vowels, lenited *f* and *s*: *rob ī* (§2). Jackson notes that this form is very rare in LU, but becomes generalised in later texts such as in the eleventh-century *AMCG*.²³⁰ The dependent form *-rbo* is found both retained before consonants, as in *nīrbo* (§1), and with the final vowel dropped when followed by a vowel: *nārb' ead* (§8).

²²³ *EIV*, p. 249.

²²⁴ Toner, *Bruiden Da Choca*, p. 82.

²²⁵ *EIV*, p. 48.

²²⁶ *WMG*, p. 91.

²²⁷ *SnG*, §12.194; *OIGR*, p. 213.

²²⁸ *OIGR*, p. 213.

²²⁹ *SnG*, §12.194.

²³⁰ Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, p. 138.

Substantive Verb

The pres. forms of the substantive verb do not show any changes. In the preterite, 3 sg. forms are found both with and without *ro* (*baī* vs. *robai*).²³¹ The two perf. 3 sg. forms are later: *nī raibi* (§1) and *con(n)ā rabi* (§3) as opposed to OIr *-robe/-rabae*, and similar forms are attested in *TTr*.²³² The verbal form *rot-fīa* (§4) is the fut. 3 sg. conjunct of the substantive verb (*-bia*), with the 2 sg. infix pronoun *-t*. eDIL notes that ‘in Mid. Ir. *rotfia* = *rotbia* [...] *f* may represent the sound of β unvoiced by preceding *t*’.²³³

OIr ol vs. MidIr ar

There are no examples of the OIr *ol* in Ed. The later form *ar* appears eleven times as an abbreviation, and is written out in full once.²³⁴ The form *or* is found three times. H.2.17 appears to be more conservative, and contains the OIr form *ol* five times, while the later form *ar* appears six times, once written out in full. The form *or* is attested four times.

10. Syntax

In MidIr, when a relative verb follows a plural antecedent, the verb in question can stand in the singular form, as in: *is īat ro-ben a c[h]enn de* (§9).²³⁵

Conclusion

Meyer noted that the two extant versions of the tale were ‘rewritten from older materials at a later age’, tentatively adding that this might have been during the thirteenth century, but without providing any linguistic or textual evidence.²³⁶ Thurneysen thought that the version of *AACC* in Ed. could not be older than the twelfth century, while noting that the language is younger than *TBC-LL*.²³⁷ Neither scholar attempted to date this tale based on its language, perhaps because of its length. Due to the brevity of the tale, it only provides a limited number of linguistic forms that can be analysed for indications of date. It should be kept in mind that this brings with

²³¹ Mac Gearailt, ‘Some Late Middle Irish Texts’, p. 185.

²³² Ó Máille, ‘Verbs of Existence in Irish’, p. 39; Mac Eoin, ‘Das Verbalssystem’, p. 134.

²³³ eDIL s.v. *F* or dil.ie/20963.

²³⁴ WMG, p. 91; Mac Gearailt, ‘Zum Irischen’, p. 44.

²³⁵ *SnG*, §14.3.

²³⁶ Meyer, ‘*Goire Conaill Chernaig*’, p. 102.

²³⁷ Thurneysen, *Die Irische Helden- und Königsaga*, p. 579.

it the risk of placing too much importance on certain linguistic features in the process of trying to assign a specific date to the text.

Ed.

The above study of the linguistic evidence suggests that the text from *Ed.* should be dated to the late MidIr period. Features such as the spread of the deponent 1 sg. ending to the *a*-subj. and the common augmentation of past verbs are comparable to those in texts that have been dated to the eleventh century and later. Compared to texts from the late eleventh century such as *AMCG* and *TBC-LL*, the language of *AACC* contains similar innovations: they contain a comparatively low amount of attestations of the new pres. 3 sg. ending *-em/-am*, a limited spread of the *s*-preterite and limited substitution of *ro* and *do* for *no*. However, *AMCG* retains older forms than *AACC*, for instance with regard to the distinction between palatal and non-palatal finals in the pres. pass. and the use of the pres. 3 pl. absolute ending *-(a)it* with old compound verbs.

The pronominal system of *AACC* shows particularly late features. Toner notes that the appearance of the 3 sg. fem. infixed pronoun *-s* as masc. is not attested in LU and first appears in texts from LL, such as *TBC* and *CRR*.²³⁸ Six infixed pronouns are used in *AACC*, three of which show MidIr innovations—including the 3 sg. fem. *-s* as masc.—while the other three are 2 sg. forms which survive into Early ModIr. Crucial is the presence of independent pronouns replacing infixed pronouns: the independent object pronoun is attested once, and there are two cases of independent subject pronouns. Although little weight can be given to the ratio of infixed (6) vs. independent pronouns (3), as only nine pronouns occur in total, the occurrence of analytic verbal forms using the independent pronoun is key, as this is indicative of a late MidIr date. Although infixed pronouns are still common in texts from the early twelfth-century LL, Breatnach notes that compared to other manuscripts, the vast majority of examples of independent subject pronouns are found in texts from LL.²³⁹

Features that are regularly attested in later twelfth-century texts such as *CCath* are not present in our tale, although it should be kept in mind that this could be due its brevity. In late MidIr, the dental pl. ending *-ada/-eda* came to be used in the *io/iā*-stems in the nom./acc. pl., as the old endings had by now become indistinguishable from the sg. endings.²⁴⁰ Greene notes that

²³⁸ Toner, *Bruiden Da Choca*, p. 76.

²³⁹ Breatnach, 'Lebor na hUidre', p. 72.

²⁴⁰ *SnG*, §5.9; Breatnach, 'Lebor na hUidre', pp. 73–4.

this ending is common in twelfth-century texts, but it is not attested here.²⁴¹ There are also no examples of the spread of the past 3 pl. ending *-atar/-etar* to weak verbs, another late MidIr feature, and it lacks the same preponderance of forms with the pres. 3 sg. ending *-enn/-ann*.²⁴² However, it should be reminded that the short length of the tale might be the cause of this.

In conclusion, the linguistic evidence supports a late MidIr date for this tale. *AACC* appears to be later than the language of *AMCG*, putting it beyond the end of the eleventh century. I would tentatively suggest a *terminus ante quem* before the late twelfth century, since typically late linguistic features, as found in the late-twelfth century text *CCath*, are also absent. Based on this, I suggest that the text is likely to be dated to the period *c.* 1100-1150.

H.2.17

While Meyer believed that the text of both Ed. and H.2.17 belonged to the same period, tentatively proposing the thirteenth century,²⁴³ Thurneysen remarked that ‘der Text hat [...] im allgemeinen eher jüngern Wortlaut als in Edinburgh’.²⁴⁴ Neither scholar, however, studied the language of H.2.17 in detail. Based on this analysis, the language of H.2.17 appears to be very close to that of Ed. The main difference between the two versions is the orthography, which in the case of H.2.17 looks comparatively later than that of Ed. The language of H.2.17 displays a much stronger tendency to render the OIr stops *-p, -t, -c* as MidIr *-b, -d, -g* and uses later spelling variants for prepositions. Most notable is the introduction of the glide vowel *a*, which suggests that the scribe of H.2.17 may have introduced some modernisations.

Although Thurneysen was of the opinion that the language of H.2.17 was younger than that of Ed., I would suggest that they can be dated to roughly the same period (late MidIr). It is likely that features such as the later orthography and the replacing of *do* for *ro* are modernisations that would have been introduced by a later intermediate scribe.

²⁴¹ Greene, ‘Distinctive Plural Forms’, p. 96.

²⁴² Compare to the late twelfth-century *In Cath Catharda* and the late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century *Acallamh na Senórach*, which show these developments.

²⁴³ Meyer, ‘Goire Conaill Chernaig’, p. 102.

²⁴⁴ Thurneysen, *Die Irische Helden- und Königsaga*, p. 579: ‘In general the text has a younger wording than Edinb.’.

Overall, the language of H.2.17 and Ed. is very similar. The developments and innovations relating to nouns and pronouns do not show any major differences. Although H.2.17 looks orthographically later, at times it preserves older forms where Ed. has introduced innovations: H.2.17 contains fewer cases of the acc. pl. being used for the nom. pl. in *o*-stem nouns than Ed. It also retains the OIr acc. pl. ending where Ed. has the dat. pl. ending *-(a)ib*. Compared to Ed., H.2.17 contains more infixes, which are often found in combination with older verbal forms where Ed. has innovatory simple verbs (i.e. *ro-ēirged* (Ed.) vs. *at-reised* (H.2.17); *do-fust* (Ed.) vs. *ron-asta* (H.2.17)). In terms of verbal forms, H.2.17 has a stronger tendency to replace *ro* with *do* than Ed., but H.2.17 occasionally retains older compound verbs where Ed. has adopted later simple verbs. Since H.2.17 retains a few older verbal forms, nouns and pronouns, it might be slightly older than Ed. However, while H.2.17 contains some archaic verbal forms (*roisc* (H.2.17) vs. *tair* (H.2.17)), it also has two later pret. forms compared to Ed. Innovatory forms of the copula are also found in H.2.17 and its verbal nouns have all undergone MidIr developments. Based on this, it is not possible to establish whether one text is older than the other, as there is not enough evidence for such a conclusion.

Verbal System Ed.

Present indicative

3 sg.:	<i>feraid</i> (§4); <i>do-ní</i> (§4); <i>nus-certoigenn</i> (§7); <i>not-guin</i> (§7); <i>marbaid-som</i> (§9)
3 pl.:	<i>do-berait</i> (§7)
Pass. sg.:	<i>do-níther</i> (§4); <i>beror</i> (§4);
Pass. pl. rel.:	<i>bertha</i> (§9)

Subjunctive

Pres. 1 sg.:	<i>co ndechur</i> (§8)
Pres. 3 pl.:	<i>co n-ebat</i> (§10)
Past 3 sg.:	<i>ro-ēirged</i> (§5); <i>ro-imsnad</i> (§5); <i>nā der[n]ad</i> (§6); <i>toilled</i> (§10)
Past 3 pl.:	<i>do-bertis</i> (§5)

Imperative

2 sg.:	<i>not-ber</i> (§8)
Pass. sg.:	<i>dēnthar</i> (§4)

Imperfect

3 sg.:	<i>ticedh</i> (§4); <i>do-nīd-sium</i> (§4); <i>no-airfitedh</i> (§5); <i>no-marbad-som</i> (§5); <i>no-ticed</i> (§6); <i>aderad</i> (§6); <i>do-comraiced-som</i> (§6); <i>no-ticedh</i> (§9)
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Preterite/perfect

2 sg. perf.:	<i>a ndernais</i> (§8)
3 sg. pret.:	<i>luid</i> (§4 x2; §7; §9); <i>do-luid</i> (§7); <i>co-facca</i> (§7); <i>tānic</i> (§9)
3 sg. perf.:	<i>ro-marb-som</i> (§1; §2 x4); <i>ro-gab</i> (§2; §6); <i>do-rala</i> (§1); <i>dechaid</i> (§1); <i>do-cuaid-sim</i> (§2); <i>torchair</i> (§3; §9); <i>do-rorchair</i> (§3); <i>ro-imrāidh-sim</i> (§3; §7); <i>rāinic</i> (§4); <i>caith-sium(?)</i> (§4) ²⁴⁵ ; <i>do-fitir</i> (§7); <i>dorōine</i> (§8 x2); <i>ro-ben</i> (§9); <i>do-fust</i> (§9)
3 pl. perf.:	<i>do-marbsat-som</i> (§1); <i>ro-dībracsit</i> (§9); <i>rucsat</i> (§9 x2; §10)

²⁴⁵ As the *ro* has most likely been dropped here, this form formally qualifies as a perf. form.

Pass. sg.: *tucad* (§2), *breth* (§10)

Future

3 sg.: *ticfa* (§3); *tair* (§6); *do-icfa* (§10)

3 pl.: *not-muirbfet* (§8)

Secondary Future

3 sg.: *rachad* (§3)

pass. sg.: *lēmtha* (§7)

Copula

3 sg. pres. ind.: *is* (§2 x3; §2 x2; §4; §5; §6; §8; §9 x2; §10)

3 sg. pret. ind.: *ba* (§1; §2; §6 x4; §8; §9)

3 sg. perf. ind.: *rob-som* (§7)

3 sg. pres. subj.: *ba* (§8)

3 sg. past. subj.: *comad* (§7)

3 sg. fut.: *bid* (§3); *ba* (§8)

Substantive verb

3 sg. pres.: *atā* (§8; §10 x3)

3 sg. subj. imp.: *no-bīth* (§6)

3 sg. pret.: *baī* (§1; §7 x2); *a mbaī* (§4)

3 sg. perf.: *robaī* (§1 x2); *nī raibi* (§1); *con(n)ā rabi* (§3); *robuī* (§7)

3 sg. fut.: *rot-fīa* (§4)

3 pl. pret.: *bātar* (§9)

3 pl. perf.: *robātar* (§9 x2)

2.2 Editorial Method

The tale *AACC* survives in two manuscripts: Ed. and H.2.17. The linguistic analysis has shown that although the text from H.2.17 displays modernisations and modifications which may have been introduced by an intermediary copyist, the two texts most likely derive from the same source. For this edition of *AACC*, I have chosen to produce a critical edition based on Ed., with variant readings from H.2.17. *AACC* forms part of the anthology of death-tales in Ed., which also contains the only extant text of *ACMM*. For the purposes of analysing *AACC* as part of this larger collection and to facilitate literary analysis between these tales, I have chosen this manuscript witness as the base text. However, it should be noted that both texts are important in their own right and their individual study sheds light on different aspects of the transmission, development and different interpretations of the tale.

My reason for defining this edition as critical as opposed to diplomatic is based on the idea that critical judgement has been applied in the editing of this text, leading to alterations being introduced into the text.²⁴⁶ Several forms of editorial intervention have been employed for the readers' convenience: I include word separation, capitalisation and punctuation, which have been added or emended at the editor's discretion. All abbreviations have been expanded and italicised. If the expansion is problematic, the manuscript reading is provided in a footnote and the form is discussed in a textual note. The unexpanded forms can be found in the transcription. Ligatures have not been italicised. Both the spiritus asper and superscript dot indicating lenition have been expanded as an italicised *h*, whereas an *h* written in the manuscript to indicate lenition is transcribed using normal font. Length-marks are rare in this manuscript, but when they occur where this would not be expected they have been left to stand. Where length-marks are expected but absent from the manuscript, macrons have been added.

Expanded suspension strokes are always marked by italics. In the case of subscripted and superscripted letters, only the omitted letter is printed in italics. Hyphens have been added to indicate nasalisation of vowels, separating the nasalisation from the following word. Hyphens have also been used to separate proclitic and enclitic elements from the stressed word, and for nasalisation when this occurs before a vowel. Parentheses and square brackets have been employed in both the edition and the translation. Parentheses suggest that something should be omitted from the text,

²⁴⁶ See Tanselle, 'Varieties of Scholarly Editing', pp. 17–8.

whereas square brackets signal elements that are not present in the text but that I have added to make the text more intelligible.

Although I have kept emendation to a minimum, at times the text in Ed. is damaged beyond legibility, which is where readings from H.2.17 have been supplied. When this occurs, it is noted in the variant readings and discussed in fuller detail in the textual notes. The corresponding variant readings from H.2.17 have been provided at the bottom of the page. A single superscript number is used when a different word is found in H.2.17, while two superscript numbers are used to mark out a range of text of two or more words, or to indicate when one or more words have been omitted. These include all words that deviate from the text in Ed., excluding minor orthographical variations such as *c > g*, the MidIr spelling of the article *an* for *in* and alternations between *ar* and *ol*. The latter forms are discussed in the linguistic analysis above and can be found in the transcription. In the variant readings, the same editorial policy has been adopted, but length-marks have not been introduced, nor has spelling been emended.

The language of *AACC* is late MidIr, but I have chosen not to normalise the language, as I agree with Hollo that it is of more value to the reader ‘to have the text in front of her or him more or less as it stands in the manuscript, including features which may not have been present when the text was first written, intact’.²⁴⁷ Therefore, a relatively faithful reproduction of the manuscript text with minimal editorial emendation has been provided, which reflects the linguistic forms of its period. A translation has been provided that is as faithful to the original Irish text as possible to make the text accessible to a wider audience. More natural or modern English is adopted in the edition when a direct translation of the original Irish would hinder the readability of the text. In this case, the literal translation can be found in the textual notes. The translation is presented on the opposite page from the edited text so the reader can easily switch between both. When the historic present is used in the text, this has been changed to the past tense in the translation.

²⁴⁷ Hollo, *Fled Bricrenn*, p. 50.

2.3 Edition & Translation

[Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig]

§1. Baī *fer amnus* do *Ultaib*, *Con(n)all*¹ *Cernach maic Aimaírgin*, *lōech*² *is dech* ³*robaī* a *n-Ērinn*.³ Ba *mōr* a *c[h]rōdatu*⁴ .i. *fer nā dechaid*⁵ ⁶*as a naīndin*⁶ *rīam* ⁷*erat robaī*⁷ *gaī* *ina lāim* ⁸*gon cenn Connachtaig* *lais*.⁸ *Do-rala* ⁹*fri Connacht* *co mór*⁹, ¹⁰*ōir do-marbsat-som* a *brāit[h]ri*.¹⁰ ¹¹*nī raibi do Chonnachtaib immorro fer nā ro-marb-som* a *mac nó* a *brāthair nó* a *athair*.¹¹

§2. ¹²*ro-marb-som trī maic Oilella*¹² *7 Medba*, *7 is ē* ¹³*didiu*¹³ *ro-marb* ¹⁴*Bēlc[h]ū Brēfne*¹⁴ *7 a trī maic*. *7 is ē ro-marb secht maccu Mághach* ¹⁵*do Chonnachtaib*¹⁵ .i. *Anluan mac Māgach 7 Docha*¹⁶ *mac Māgach 7 Mag Curp mac Māgach 7 Find mac Māgach 7 Scannlān mac Māgach 7* ¹⁷*Cet 7 Ailill mac Māgach*.¹⁷

¹⁸*7 is ē ro-marb Ailill mac Māta Muirsci*¹⁸ *do Chonnachtaib*, ¹⁹*ōir ba hí a māthair-som Māta Muresc*,¹⁹ ²⁰*7 mac sōn immorro Rosa Rūaid do Laignib*.²⁰ *7 do c[h]osnum rīge Laigm*²¹ *do-cuaid-sim*²² *sīar*, *7 ro-gab-som rīge Connacht fo dēigh thīar 7 sloinmed* ²³*in maic a tīr a māthar tucad fa[i]r-sim tīar*.²³

1	.i. <i>Conall</i>	17–17	<i>Ailill mac Magach 7 Céat mac Magach.</i>
2	<i>laech</i>		<i>Ut dixit:</i>
3–3	<i>robui a n-Ērinn</i> [...] <i>remes</i>		<i>Conall Cernac[h] cli fri cath,</i>
4	<i>crodaiti</i>		<i>rot-bi seacht mac[c]u Magach:</i>
5	<i>d[e?]achad</i>		<i>Finn, Moghorb, Dotha, ros-digail</i>
6–6	<i>asa inad catha</i>		<i>Scannal, Cet, Anluan, Ailill.</i>
7–7	<i>iaret robi</i>	18–18	<i>is e didiu ro-marb Ailill Cruachan maic</i>
8–8	<i>om.</i>		<i>Mada Muirsce a mathair Mada</i>
9–9	<i>co mor fri Connachtaibh</i>	19–19	<i>ar rob i a mathair Mada</i>
10–10	<i>ar ro-marbsad-sein a tri braitri</i>	20–20	<i>Tri maic Sroibcind maic Rosa Ruaidh do</i>
11–11	<i>nirbo coimdig do Chonnachtaibh fer nar marb-som mac no [br?]athar nó athar</i>		<i>Laignibh dia ndebrad:</i>
12–12	<i>ro-marb tri maccu Ailella</i>		<i>Tri maic Rosa Ruaidh</i>
13–13	<i>om.</i>		<i>in righ roinnset in tir tolaibh:</i>
14–14	<i>Bélcoín Breifne</i>		<i>fri Ailill Cruachan, Finn a hAlmain,</i>
15–15	<i>om.</i>		<i>Coirbri sund a Temair Breg.</i>
16	<i>Dhota</i>	21	<i>Laighne</i>
		22	<i>do-coid-sim</i>
		23–23	<i>maic a tīr a ma[t]har do-radad fair-sium,</i>
			<i>7 do-gab-som rige Connacht tiar co tren</i>

[The Violent Death of Ailill and Conall Cernach]

§1. There was a strong man of the Ulaid, Conall Cernach son of Amairgen, he was the best warrior in Ireland. His valour was great, that is [he was] a man who never departed from his fight, as long as there was a spear in his hand, without [having] the head of one of the Connachta with him. He greatly opposed the Connachta, because they had killed his kinsmen. However, there was not a man of the Connachta whose son or whose brother or whose father he had not killed.

§2. He killed three sons of Ailill and Medb, and it is he who also killed Bélchú of Bréifne and his three sons. And it is he who killed the seven sons of Mágu of the Connachta, namely Anluan son of Mágu and Docha son of Mágu and Mac Corb son of Mágu and Finn son of Mágu and Scannlán son of Mágu and Cet and Ailill son of Mágu.

And it is he who killed Ailill son of Máta Muresc of the Connachta, since Máta Muresc was his mother,²⁴⁸ and in addition he²⁴⁹ was a son of Ross Rúaid of the Leinstermen. And he went westwards to defend the kingship of Leinster, and he took the kingship of Connacht on her account in the west and the son's matronymic name was given to him in the west in the land of his mother.

²⁴⁸ i.e. Ailill's mother.

²⁴⁹ i.e. Aillil.

§3. Do-rorchair²⁴ ²⁵immorro²⁵ lupra 7 trūaigi fo deoigh for Con(n)all Cernach, ²⁶iar marbad²⁶ a ²⁷c[h]umalta .i. Conchobair 7 Con Culand,²⁷ co(n) torchair cumha 7 ²⁸trōige 7 claime mōr²⁸ fair-sium, con(n)ā rabi²⁹ nert 'na c[h]osaib ³⁰do imthecht.³⁰ 7 ³¹ro-imrāidh-sim aici³¹ cīa teglach³² a rachad ³³dia gaire 7 dia bethugud.³³

'Ailill 7 ³⁴Medb ām,³⁴ ar sé, 'is iat-sin³⁵ lānemain ³⁶dia ticfa mo lesugud-sa. Acht is mōr mo f[h]altanus friu cena, 7 cid mōr chena, bid ēigin dam dol ann,' ar sē.³⁶

§4. Luid iārum a aenor³⁷ co rāinic Rāith Crūachan. ³⁸7 luid isin rāith āit a mbaī Ailill 7 Medb,³⁸ 7 feraid Ailill fāilti fris.

'Is mochen ³⁹duit³⁹,' ar Medb⁴⁰, ⁴¹a Chon(n)aill,⁴¹ acht ⁴²cena it mōr t'faltana in let[h] a tānga[i]s.'

'Maith do dēnum forom,' ol sē. 'Isam lāec[h] maith. Is alma donī do-nī maith form.'⁴²

'Rot-fīa ⁴³ām fāilti,⁴³ ar Medb.

⁴⁴Dēnthar tech fo leit[h] d[am-sa] co mōr for mūr na rātha.⁴⁴

24	do-dorchoar (with dot of erasure under the second o)	37	aenar siar
25–25	om.	38–38	om.
26–26	iar n-eg	39–39	om.
27–27	da comalta-som .i. Conchobar 7 Cu Culand	40	Ailill 7 Medb
28–28	claime 7 troighñi	41–41	om.
29	raibi	42–42	Reading taken from H, as Ed. is damaged: cena [.....] ar Conall: 'Maith do demum form. Is[.....]sa didiu donti doni form.' (The words t'fala in H have been emended to t'faltana, see textual note).
30–30	imt[h]echt no ina lamaibh do luth	43–43	fāilti ém
31–31	ro-imrāidh iarom	44–44	Cuingit[h]er tech ar leith diam-sa fri mur na ratha. (The words dam-sa in the edited text have been taken from the reading in H, as Ed. is damaged here)
32	leaglach		
33–33	doc[h]om a lesaigt[h]i 7 a beathaighiti 7 a gaire		
34–34	Meadba ém		
35	isi-sin		
36–36	gusa ticeab dom lesugud. Is olc mo lathar,' ol se. '7 gid olc, is ecen duin dul ar sibal.'		

§3. However, weakness and misery befell Conall Cernach in the end, after his foster-brothers were killed, namely Conchobar and Cú Chulainn, so that great grief and misery and infirmity befell him, so that there was no strength in his feet to move. And he considered to which household he should go for his care and maintenance.

‘Ailill and Medb indeed,’ he said, ‘they are the married couple who will tend to me. But my enmity towards them is great already, but even though it is already great, I have to go there,’ he said.

§4. Thereafter he went on his own until he reached Ráth Crúachan. And he went into the fort where Ailill and Medb were, and Ailill welcomed him.

‘You are welcome,’ said Medb, ‘o Conall, however your hostility towards the side to which you have come to is great.’

‘Good is your behaviour towards me,’ said Conall, ‘I am a good warrior. There will be flocks for the one who behaves well towards me.’

‘You will certainly be welcome,’ said Medb.

‘Let a house apart be made [for me] high on the wall of the rampart.’

⁴⁵7 do-nīther tec[h] dó,⁴⁵ 7 beror muc 7 ⁴⁶ad 7⁴⁶ fuigell ⁴⁷Meidbe 7⁴⁷ Ailella 7⁴⁸ dā [b]a[i]rdin⁴⁹ déc 7 molt 7 in ⁵⁰cori anbruiti,⁵⁰ 7 caith-sium⁵¹ sin uili ⁵²a n-ainfecht.⁵² Do-ní-sium tochailt ⁵³fo mūr na rātha, 7 do-nīd-sium a dāithin gac[h] n-oidc[h]i a Connachtaib,⁵³ 7 ticedh⁵⁴ ria matin⁵⁵ dia t[h]ig.⁵⁶

§5. Blīadan lān dōip ac a bīathad fon alt-sin 7 ⁵⁷in combfēith cétnai⁵⁷ do dēnum dō-som ⁵⁸frissin⁵⁸. Is ed no-airfitedh⁵⁹ Connachtaí⁶⁰ gac[h] lāi⁶¹: ēisin⁶² ac a indisi ⁶³dōip⁶³ amail ⁶⁴no-marbad-som a maic 7 a mbrāithri 7 a n-aithri. Do-bertis Connacht[a] a n-gaī dō dia n-imsna 7 dia snaide,⁶⁴ 7 ro-imsnad⁶⁵ resū ⁶⁶ro-ēirged gac[h] bō.⁶⁶

§6. ⁶⁷Mōr trā cumachta 7 armitin 7 ordan inti⁶⁷ Medba, 7 ba mōr ⁶⁸a hacobur im gac[h] ní⁶⁸ .i. trīcha fer cach ⁶⁹lāi do c[h]lāemc[h]lōdh⁶⁹ dī nō ⁷⁰tagall Fergus aonfecht.⁷⁰ Ba comāosa⁷¹ ⁷²dī-si immorro⁷² a c[h]ēili ⁷³.i. Ailill,⁷³ fer cin ainim ⁷⁴.i. cin ēd, cin omun, cin neōid.⁷⁴ Ba maith a c[h]rut[h] 7 ⁷⁵a brīg 7 a breth an f[h]ir-sin⁷⁵ ⁷⁶.i. in fer⁷⁶ no-bīth ac imirt⁷⁷ fri hAilill, no-ticed⁷⁸ gilla Meidbe dia gairm do ⁷⁹c[h]omrac fria.⁷⁹ 7 is ed aderad Ailill: ⁸⁰An bhic co tair in cluithi.⁸⁰

45–45	Donit[h]er ón	64–64	ro-marb a maccu 7 a mbraith(ē)ri 7 a n-aithru. Do-berdis flaiti Chonmacht a n-gó dó dia n-indsma 7 dia snaidh
46–46	adh dó [7]	65	No-indsmat-som
47–47	om.	66–66	at-reised cath
48	.i.	67–67	ba mor trath a cumachta 7 a ordan 7 airmidiu na hí
49	bairgín	68–68	acor um cach red
50–50	coiri enbruiti	69–69	n-aidhchi do claechlodh
51	do-caithed-som	70–70	adhall Fergusa aenfecht
52–52	om.	71	comais
53–53	fo din na cat[h]rac[h] .i. Rata Cruachan, co-ndenad airgt[h]i cech n-aidchi ar Connachtaibh	72–72	om.
54	co-ticed	73–73	inti Ailill .i.
55	madain	74–74	cin loct, cin ainim, cin neoid, cin ed, cin uaman
56	tigh fein	75–75	a bruth 7 a brigh in fer
57–57	in coimeid cetna cach n-oidchi	76	om.
58–58	om.	77	imirt fidhchill(ch)e (with dots under and above second c to indicate erasure)
59	ro-airfidedh	78	do-ticed
60	Connachta fesin	79–79	do coimriachtain ria
61	dia	80–80	co roisc in cluithi seó
62	Conall		
63–63	om.		

And a house was made for him, and a pig and a cow and Medb and Ailill's leftovers and twelve loaves of bread and a ram and the cauldron of broth were brought [to him], and he consumed them all at the same time. He dug under the rampart of the fort, and he used to get his fill every night from the Connachta, and before morning he came [back] to his house.

§5. They were feeding him for a whole year in that manner, and the same amount being made for him at that. This is what entertained the Connachta every day: he described to them how he killed their sons and their brothers and their fathers. The Connachta would bring their spears to him for him to rivet and for him to cut, and he would set [them] before any cow got up.

§6. Great was the power and honour and dignity of that Medb, and great was her desire for everything, that is each day thirty men [are] alternated by her or [she has] one visit from Fergus. She was the same age as her husband, namely Ailill, a man without blemish, that is without jealousy, without fear, without stinginess. Good were the appearance and strength and judgement of that man; for instance [when a] man was playing against Ailill, Medb's servant used to come to summon him for an encounter with her. And Ailill used to say: 'Wait a little while until the game will be finished.'

⁸¹Do-comraiced-som fria mnāib⁸¹ ⁸²aili⁸² dia cind sī, 7 ba hét ⁸³lé-sium anní-sin,⁸³ gur ro-gab⁸⁴ sī Conall Cernach ⁸⁵ina tegais for Ailill,⁸⁵ nā ⁸⁶der[n]ad aní-sin⁸⁶ ⁸⁷tar a cet.⁸⁷

§7. Laa ⁸⁸n-ōen ann matin⁸⁸ moch a cētemain baī Ailill ⁸⁹[oc] comrīachtain fri mnāi a tāib in lis.⁸⁹ Baī ⁹⁰didiu⁹⁰ Conall ac imsna⁹¹ gaī forsān rāith. ⁹²Do-luid dono Medb amac[h], oir do-fitir sí in cētlud. ⁹²Robuī⁹³ crāeb cuill fri tāob⁹⁴ na lānamna for glúasacht, co-facca⁹⁵ Medb aní-(i)sin.⁹⁶

‘Maith,⁹⁷ a Chonaill,’ ar Medb, ‘Conall Cernach ⁹⁸t’ainm-si cusaniu.⁹⁸ Conall ⁹⁹clāen trūag t’ainm festa.⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰An tan rob-som Cernach-som,¹⁰⁰ nī lēmtha¹⁰¹ techt tar do rāthaigecht. ¹⁰²Aniū is focus¹⁰² duit in sārugud ūt.’

Ro-imrāid ¹⁰³iarum¹⁰³ Conall: ‘Baī dīgal Fergusa ann ām!’ ar sē, 7 nus-certoigenn¹⁰⁴ in gaī cuca,¹⁰⁵ co tarla a n-Oilill ōn tāob ¹⁰⁶co arail, ¹⁰⁶¹⁰⁷nō comad a fāstig not-guin triana t[h]uighi sūas.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁸Luid cách cuci 7 do-berait leo anunn hē.¹⁰⁸

§8. ‘Cīa dorōine?’¹⁰⁹ ar cāch.

‘Conall dorōine,’¹¹⁰ ar Ailill.

¹¹¹‘Amāi, nī fīr ōm,’ ar Conall.¹¹¹

‘Is fīr,’¹¹² or Medb.

81–81	Con-riced-som didiu fria mnai	96	inní-sin
82–82	om.	97	Maith tra
83–83	le-si on	98–98	t’ainm gusaníu
84	ra-gab	99–99	grana clam truath tu bud esta
85–85	ar aig(id)echt fri Alella	100–100	Ar in tan robsat Cernach-sa
86–86	dernadh inní-sin	101	lamar
87–87	om. (in Ed., following after cet is the word Luid with dots underneath, indicating erasure	102–102 103–103 104	Aniu ro-damair is. Iss follus om. Roachtain
88–88	n-and didiu madan	105	cuigi
89–89	i cedhludh, 7 tic ic dul co mnai a scei caille i taib na ratha a leath aneas	106–106 107–107	co ’raili, co riacht a sguma om.
90–90	om.	108–108	Do-riachtadar fir co hAilil no-beraid dochum in tig
91	indsma		
92–92	om.	109	dorinde so
93	Bui	110	dorinde
94	taebh	111–111	Alla amai, or Conall. Ní fīr ón
95	co-n-aca	112	fīr ón

He used to meet with other women in disregard of her,²⁵⁰ and she was jealous [of] that, so that she took Conall Cernach into her household over Ailill, that he would not do that against her will.

§7. One day early in the morning in May, Ailill was meeting with a woman near the courtyard. Conall was riveting a spear on the rampart then. Medb came outside as well, because she discovered the adultery. There was a hazel-branch moving beside the couple, and Medb noticed that.

‘Well, Conall,’ said Medb, ‘Conall the Victorious [has been] your name until today. Conall the crooked wretch [will be] your name from this time on. When [it] was Victorious, no one would have dared to go against your guarantee. Today that insult is close to you.’

Then Conall said: ‘Indeed, there was revenge for Fergus in this!’ he said, and he aimed the spear at them, so that it passed into Ailill from one side to the other, or that he wounded him in an empty house upwards through its roof. Everyone went to him and they brought him hither with them.

§8. ‘Who has done [it]?’ said everyone.

‘Conall has done [it],’ said Ailill.

‘Indeed, it is not true at all,’ said Conall.

‘It is true,’ said Medb.

²⁵⁰ i.e. Medb.

‘Mās¹¹³ fir¹¹⁴ dono¹¹⁴,’ ar sē, ‘atā¹¹⁵ dīgal Fergus[a] ann.¹¹⁵

‘Olc duit¹¹⁶ a ndernais, a Chonaill,’ ar Ailill, ‘olc do dēnum frim-sa.¹¹⁶ Not-ber¹¹⁷ ēm as do m’inchaib,¹¹⁷ resīu ba marb-so(m).¹¹⁸ Ar not-muirbfet¹¹⁹ Connachta iar m’hēcuib-so(m).¹²⁰

‘Lōr lem¹²¹,’ or Conall, ‘co¹²² ndechur am c[h]arpat a ndorus in lis.’

‘Nī ba¹²³ marb-so(m) fri sin¹²³,’ or Ailill.

§9. Luid¹²⁴ ina c[h]arpat. [Ba] marb Ailill tall¹²⁵ fo c[h]ētoir.¹²⁵ Īarsin¹²⁶ trā¹²⁶ 127 ro-dībracsit Connachta co(m)-mōr eisim.¹²⁷ Marbaid-som sochaidi¹²⁸ mōr dīb-som. Ba geis dō-som¹²⁹ dol a n-āth gan sīthlōd¹²⁹ ina díaiġh. Bātar mīanaigi¹³⁰ ac nide mīanaigh¹³¹ isin abaind leth fūas de¹³¹ 7¹³² no-ticedh a būadred-sin cuici,¹³² comid ed¹³³ sin¹³³ 134 do-fust rē cāch.¹³⁴ Co torchair leo¹³⁵ ĩarsin,¹³⁶ ar cur āir.¹³⁶ 137 Connacht.¹³⁷ 138 Na trī Ruadcoin Mairtine a tīr Fer Muigi,¹³⁸ is ĩat ro-ben¹³⁹ a c[h]enn de.¹⁴⁰ 7 do Ernaib dōip¹⁴⁰ 7 i teġlach Ailella robātar. 7¹⁴¹ asin dīgail Conraig¹⁴¹ rucsat¹⁴² a c[h]enn de.¹⁴² 7 in tan robātar¹⁴³ ac a airlech, is and tānic¹⁴⁴ Medb isin ĩarmōracht.¹⁴⁵ Medb: ‘A c[h]enn bān, bertha 7 reliqua.¹⁴⁵

113	masa	132–132	con-ticed a mbuaidred cuigi san
114–114	om.		abaind
115	digail Fergasa and	133–133	om.
116–116	a Conaill, or Ailill, a ndernais. Narb’	134–134	ron-asta leo co-mor
	ead tarmart-sa do dēnum fort-sa	135	acu
117–117	as iarum do m’inchaib-si	136–136	cur an air
118	marb-sa	137–137	om.
119	nod-muirfead	138–138	Reading taken from H; Ed. is
120	m’egaib-si		damaged: Na [...] Martine do
121	lim-sa		Feraib Muigi
122	acht co	139	tall
123–123	marb-sa co si	140–140	.i. d’Ernaib doib sein
124	Luid Conall	141–141	do digail Conrai
125–125	om.	142–142	in cend leo
126–126	om.	143	ro-bas
127–127	ro-lenaid Connachta Conall	144	ann do-riacht
128	soc(c)haide	145–145	is an adubart Medb:
129–129	techt o at gu rod-sitlod		A ceann ban, berta iar ngle
130	i man(n)aigi		na tri Ruac(on)oin Martaine
131	san abainn uasa		is dreach(?) curad rus-nít sin cenn Conaill maic Aimirgin

‘If it is true then,’ he said, ‘it is in revenge for Fergus.’

‘What you have done will be bad for you, o Conall,’ said Ailill, ‘namely doing evil towards me. Escape then under my guarantee, before I die. Because the Connachta will kill you after my death.’

‘It is enough for me,’ said Conall, ‘that I may go in my chariot in front of the fort.’

‘You will not die because of that,’ said Ailill.

§9. He went into his chariot. Ailill died there immediately. After that the Connachta shot at him greatly then. He killed a great number of them. There was a *geis* on him to go into a ford without filtering [it] after him. There were miners washing ore in the river upwards from him, and the unfiltered water came to him, so that that detained him before everyone. And he was killed by them then, after inflicting slaughter on the Connachta. The three Red Wolves of Martine of the land of the Fir Maige—it is they who cut off his head. And [they were] from the Erna and they formed part of Ailill’s household. And out of revenge for Cú Roí they carried away his head. And when they were slaughtering him Medb then arrived in pursuit. Medb [said]: ‘His pale head, which they carried off etc.’

§10. ¹⁴⁶Rucsat sein ¹⁴⁷leo: *cenn Chonaill asin dīgail Conrai*, ¹⁴⁷ r[uc]sat¹⁴⁸ Ulaid ¹⁴⁹leo¹⁴⁹ fo¹⁵⁰ thūaid¹⁵¹ 7 atā tīar fós in *cenn*. ¹⁵¹ Toilled¹⁵² ¹⁵³cet[h]ri(g) ghamma ann, nó¹⁵³ cet[h]rar ac imirt f[h]ichilli, ¹⁵⁴ nó lānamain a cosair. Atā a ¹⁵⁵tarnaire do Ulltaib¹⁵⁵ a ¹⁵⁶breth bud thūaid dorīs¹⁵⁶ 7 do-icfa¹⁵⁷ a nert cétna¹⁵⁸ intib arīs, ¹⁵⁸ acht co n-ebath¹⁵⁹ ¹⁶⁰as as. ¹⁶⁰ 7 is de ¹⁶¹sin¹⁶¹ atā ¹⁶²dīth Ulad le dīth Ulad'. ¹⁶² A[i]da(i)d¹⁶³ Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernach comuici sin.¹⁶⁴

146	Ed.: dom dioigh is olc so (written in the top of the margin above the main text, in a different hand)	154	fidcilli and
		155–155	tarnaire d'Ulltaib
		156–156	breit sair aridisi
		157	dos-ficfa
147–147	siar a ceann do digail Conri	158–158	om.
148	rucsat	159	co n-esbet
149–149	om.	160–160	om.
150	bud	161–161	om.
151–151	om.	162–162	Ulaidh beiti, Ulaid batar iat
152	tallad	163	aided
153–153	om.	164	Finit

§10. They took that with them: Conall's head, to avenge Cú Roí, which the Ulaid carried with them northwards,²⁵¹ and the head²⁵² is still in the west. There is room for four yearling calves in it, or four people playing *fidchell*, or a married couple in their bed. It is prophesied for the Ulaid that it will be carried north again and that their same strength will come to them again, as soon as they drink milk out of it. And it is from this that is [said] '[the] destruction of the Ulaid [caused] by [the] destruction of the Ulaid'. [This is] the violent death of Ailill and Conall Cernach up to that [point].

²⁵¹ i.e. Cú Roí's head.

²⁵² i.e. Conall's head.

2.4 Textual Notes

§1. *lōech is dech robāi a n-Ērinn*. ‘he was the best warrior in Ireland’. H.2.17 contains the variant reading *robūi a n-Ērinn [..] remes*. The word *remes* is a form of *reimes* ‘a period or lapse of time (of indefinite length, but generally fairly long)’.²⁵³ This noun is usually preceded by the prep. *fri*, meaning ‘for a long time’. As can be seen in the manuscript image here, the space preceding *remes* in H.2.17 is damaged. It is likely that the prep. *fri* (or the later *re*) would have been written here.

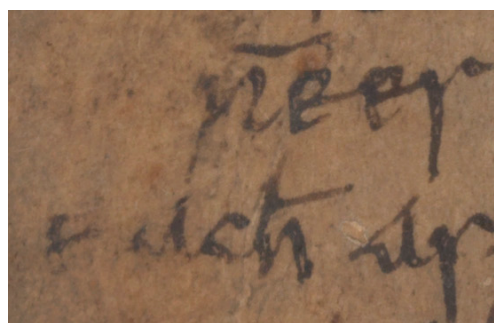


Image 4: Courtesy of TCD Library

§1. *dechaid as a naīndin*. Meyer translates this phrase as ‘went from his childhood’ in his edition of *ACMM*.²⁵⁴ As suggested by Thurneysen, he takes the noun *naīndin* as *noīdin*,²⁵⁵ the gen. sg. form of the noun *noīdiu* ‘infant’. However, Ó Broin has demonstrated that *noīnden* and *noīdin* are forms of the same compound noun *noīnden*, consisting of the numeral *noí* ‘nine’ and the neut. noun suffix *-de(n)*, and do not derive from the noun *noīdiu*.²⁵⁶

eDIL gives three meanings for *noīnden*.²⁵⁷ The first is ‘the name given to the Ulster couvade or period during which the Ulstermen were debilitated and unable to fight’,²⁵⁸ which is excluded in the current context, since Cet is from Connaught and does not suffer from this debility. The next meaning in eDIL is ‘assembly(?)’, which is only attested in O’Davoren’s Glossary, where it is equated with *tinól* ‘gathering, assembly’.²⁵⁹ This translation is very similar to the last given meaning in eDIL: ‘warlike gathering, mêlée, fray’, which is described as doubtful. Slotkin takes it as ‘adventure, warlike fray, heroic activity’ based on its occurrence in *Fled Bricrenn ocus Longes mac nDuil Dermait*, but notes that the meaning is unclear in the examples from the *Táin*.²⁶⁰ The latter

²⁵³ eDIL s.v. *reimes* or dil.ie/34968.

²⁵⁴ *Aided Cheit* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §1).

²⁵⁵ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 361.

²⁵⁶ Ó Broin, ‘Word *noīnden*’, p. 167.

²⁵⁷ For a discussion of these meanings, see Slotkin, ‘*Noīnden*’.

²⁵⁸ eDIL s.v. *noīnden* or dil.ie/33275.

²⁵⁹ O’Davoren’s Glossary (ed. and transl. Stokes, no. 1296). Slotkin argues that the word is a ‘metonymic extension from the *óenach* of which it was thought originally to be a part or actually a part’ and interprets it as a grander *tinól*, raised to a tribal level (Slotkin, ‘*Noīnden*’, pp. 145–6).

²⁶⁰ Slotkin, ‘*Noīnden*’, pp. 146–7.

meaning is found in contexts highly similar to that of *AACC*, combining the verb *téit* with the 3 sg. neut. prep. *ass*, which according to eDIL means ‘departs; escapes’, followed by the noun *noínden*. I propose to take *noínden* as ‘gathering’, and would tentatively suggest that the last two categories in eDIL could be taken together. Literally translated, this gives the phrase ‘who never went out of his gathering’. Alternatively, it could be taken as ‘a man who never left a gathering’. The prepositional pronoun *as* ‘out of it’ can be translated with the verbal form *dechaid* as ‘left’, while the second *a* can be taken as the preposition *a* + 3 sg. masculine possessive pronoun *a* to mean ‘out of his’.

As far as the usage of the phrase in this tale is concerned, I would suggest to take this noun as a hostile encounter, more specifically as a fight between warriors. This interpretation is supported by the parallel use of this word and its variants in the different recensions of *TBC*. *TBC-I* contains the sentence *Níon íagait a noíndin itir nach erdalta gona duine bís leó-som*, which O’Rahilly translated as ‘They never go to an assembly but that they are sure to kill someone,’ taking *noíndin* as assembly.²⁶¹ *TBC-LL* has the corresponding sentence *Ní thecat-sain i móenden acht ra hirdalta gona duine do grés*, translated by O’Rahilly as ‘They never go into battle that they are not assured of wounding a man.’²⁶² It is likely that the translation ‘battle’ is based on the reading in the fifteenth-century Stowe recension: *Ní teaccait-sin i ccath na i comlonn nach ba demin leó neach do ghuin do ghrés*,²⁶³ in which *i móenden* has been replaced by *i ccath*. Similarly, in *AACC* the variant reading of the phrase *as a nāíndin* in H.2.17 is *asa inad catha* ‘out of his battle-place’. Presumably this means that Conall would not flee or surrender, instead maintaining his position in battle. The close correspondence between the use of *noíndin* in the recensions of *TBC* and the Ed. text of *AACC* underlines that the word should be taken as ‘encounter’ and not as ‘childhood’. The readings *asa inad catha* in H.2.17 and *i ccath* in the Stowe recension of *TBC* further suggest that this encounter would have been of a martial nature. In the case of *AACC*, the use of *inad catha* for *noínden* by the scribe of H.2.17 lends further strength to the idea that it was indeed interpreted as meaning ‘hostile encounter, fight’, rather than ‘gathering’.

²⁶¹ *TBC-I*, ll. 3224-5.

²⁶² *TBC-LL*, ll. 3691-2.

²⁶³ *The Stowe Version of TBC* (ed. O’Rahilly, ll. 3617-18).

§1. *do-rala fri Connacht*. The first word is the perf. 3 sg. form *do-rala*, a form of the verb *do-cuirethar*, which has a wide variety of meanings, including but not limited to ‘puts, produces, throws’. This verb is followed here by the prep. *fri* ‘towards; against’. According to eDIL, this combination of the verb *do-cuirethar* and the prep. *fri* can be translated as ‘encounters, opposes’, in which sense it has been used here.²⁶⁴

§1. *ōir do-marbsat-som a brāit[h]ri*. While Ed. states that Conall’s reason for hating the Connachta is that they killed his brothers or kinsmen, H.2.17 is more specific and notes that *ro-marbsad-sein a trī brāitri* ‘they had killed his three brothers’.

§1. *nā raibi do Chonnachtaib [...] nó a athair*. This sentence contains a relative construction with the genitive, as described by Thurneysen in *GOI* §507c. The noun *fer* ‘man’ functions as the antecedent of the relative clause *nā ro-marb-som a mac nó a brāthair nó a athair*. Thurneysen notes that a relative construction with the genitive is only found accompanied by the negative, and is not found in early language. However, Breatnach has shown that this construction is not limited to relative clauses with the negative, and its use is also attested in early sources.²⁶⁵ While the three nouns in the relative clause in Ed. are all acc. sg., H.2.17 has gen. forms of the nouns *brāthair* and *athair*: *mac no brāthar nó athar*. Either the scribe may not have understood the construction and used the genitive here, or the *i* has faded in both cases, as the text in this section is badly damaged (see image 5 below).

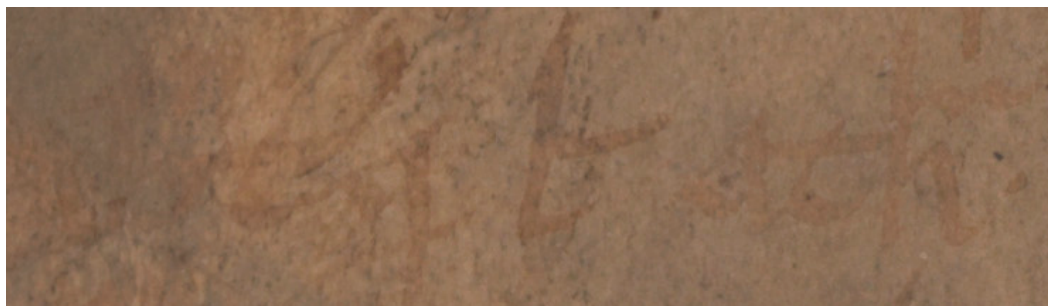


Image 5: Courtesy of TCD Library

²⁶⁴ eDIL s.v. *do-cuirethar* (III, d) or dil.ie/17442.

²⁶⁵ Breatnach, ‘Some Remarks on the Relative’, p. 2.

§2. *trī maic Oilella*. The nom. pl. form *trī maic* (§2) is found here for the OIr acc. pl. form *maccu* (note that this ending is retained in *secht maccu Mághach* (§2)). H.2.17 retains the OIr acc. pl. *maccu* here. See also 3.3 of the linguistic analysis for a discussion of this development.

§2. *secht maccu Mághach*. The list of seven sons of Mágu killed by Conall includes Cet mac Mágach, whose death is described in *ACMM*. The late Middle Irish tale *Cath Airtig* ('The Battle of Airtech') notes that the seven sons died as a consequence of the war that broke out after Conchobar's death between the Ulaid and the Connachta (described in *Bruiden Da Chocae* 'Da Coca's Hostel'), but not during the battle of Airtech itself.²⁶⁶

§2. [...] *Cet 7 Ailill mac Māgach*. In H.2.17 the list of the sons of Mágu killed by Conall is followed by a stanza mentioning the same slayings:

Conall Cernac[h] clī fri cath, 7¹

rot-bī seacht mac[c]u Māgach, 7²

Finn, Moghorb, Dotha, ros-dīgaíl 8²

Scannal, Cet, Annluan, Ailill 7²

('Conall Cernach champion of battle, who slayed the seven sons of Mágu: Finn, Mac Corb, Docha, and he attacked them, Scannlán, Cet, Anlúan, Ailill'). The stanza appears to be a form of *deibide scáilte* (*fota*), which has the following syllabic pattern: 7^x 7^{x+1} or 2 7^x 7^{x+1} or 2. In this case, the third line is hypermetric and likely faulty. The rhyme scheme is a:b c:d, as indicated by the bold letters.²⁶⁷ The verbal form *rot-bī* is the past 3 sg. form of *benaid*, translated here in the sense of 'slays, wounds'. The infixed pronoun *t* is most likely an orthographical variation of the 3 sg. relative infixed pronoun *d*, which Strachan notes is well established in MidIr.²⁶⁸

§2. *Ailill mac Māta Muirsci* [...] *Rosa Rūaid do Laignib*. The lines that follow *Ailill mac Māta Muirsci* are concerned with explaining the ancestry of Ailill, with the expanded version in H.2.17 showing a strong interest in Ailill's genealogy. As argued in Part II, section 2.2.2.b, these

²⁶⁶ *Cath Airtig* (ed. Best, §10).

²⁶⁷ Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 65.

²⁶⁸ Strachan, 'Infixed Pronoun', p. 172; Ó hUiginn, 'Old Irish Nasalizing Relative Clause', p. 71.

lines likely represent an attempt by the author to reconcile different traditions regarding Ailill's ancestry.

§2. *mac sōn immorro Rosa Rūaid do Laignib.* For this phrase, H.2.17 has the variant reading *Trī maic Sroibcind maic Rosa Rūaidh do Laignibh dia ndebrad* 'Three sons of Srobcenn sons of Ross Rúaid of the Leinstermen of whom is said', after which the following quatrain is introduced:

<i>Trī maic Rosa Rūaidh</i>	The three sons of Ross Rúad
<i>in rīgh roinnset in tīr tōlaibh:</i>	of the king who divided the land in large portions:
<i>fri Ailill Cruachān, Finn a hAlmain,</i>	between Ailill Crúachan, Finn in Almain,
<i>Coirbri sund a Temair Breg.</i>	Coirpre here in Temar of Brega.

The metre of this verse is corrupt. eDIL notes that the verb *rammaid* is found in combination with the prep. *fri* meaning 'divides with, shares, passing later into sense apportions to, bestows'.²⁶⁹ I have chosen to translate it in the latter sense, since Ross Rúad, the king of Leinster, gives his kingdom to his three sons. This verse shows close textual parallels with a verse from the ninth-century Leinster poem *A Chóicid Choín Chairpri Crúaid*, for which see the discussion in Part II, section 2.2.2.b.

In H.2.17, the line preceding this verse ends halfway down the column, leaving the rest of the line empty. A symbol resembling a *cenn fo eitte* is drawn at the end of the sentence, as can be seen to the right (image 6). The verse itself is written continuously over three lines, and also ends halfway down the line, ending with the same symbol. While the space-saving device of *cenn fo eitte* is normally used to indicate continuity of text, it appears that the symbols used here are not *cenn fo eitte*, but ornamental symbols to distinguish the verse from the prose.

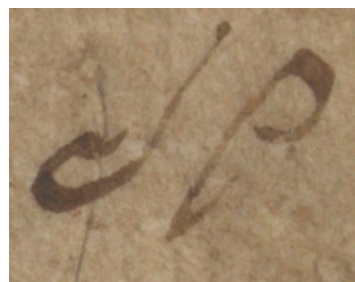


Image 6: Courtesy of TCD Library

§2. *do cosnum rīge Laigni do-cuaid-sim sīar.* Meyer translates this sentence as 'and he (i.e. Ailill) went eastward to contest the kingship of Leinster', taking the adv. *sīar* 'westwards' as a misspelling for *sair* 'eastwards', since the province of Leinster lies on the eastern side of Ireland. However, the form *sīar* is found in H.2.17, rendering the chances of it having been a mistake less

²⁶⁹ eDIL s.v. *rammaid* or dil.ie/34809.

likely.²⁷⁰ Meyer translates the verbal noun *cosnum* as ‘to contest’, but it makes more sense that Ailill would defend Leinster rather than attack it, as he is the son of Ross Rúad, king of Leinster. eDIL notes that in later language, *cosnam* more often takes on the meaning ‘act of defending, protecting’. However, an attestation of the meaning ‘to defend’ can already be found in one of the legal heptads, which were put together in the Old Irish period.²⁷¹ The heptad in question, which concerns pleadings made by a judge, reads: *cosnum a breithe o rosnuca*, (‘to defend his decision, when he has given it’).²⁷²

Based on this, my understanding of this sentence is as follows: Ailill went westwards to the Connachta to defend the kingship of Leinster, perhaps because of a conflict between the two provinces. Because of his family connections to the Connachta, he was then made king there. Of note is the absence of any mention of Medb, since the genealogies in Rawlinson B502 mention that it was she who went to Leinster to take Ailill away with her.²⁷³ This raises the possibility that there may once have existed another tradition of how Ailill became king of Connacht.

§2. *fo dēigh*. In his edition, Meyer supplies *a máthar* between square brackets after prepositional phrase *fo déig*.²⁷⁴ I take it as ‘on her account’, by analysing the prep. as *fo* + the possessive pronoun 3 sg. fem. This refers to Ailill’s mother Máta Muirisc, as it was because of her connection to Connacht that he was able to rule this province.

§2. *sloinned in maic a tīr a māthar tucad fa[i]r-sim tīar*. Lit.: ‘he was given in the west the naming of the son in the land of his mother’. The first word is the verbal noun of the verb *sluindid* ‘expresses; names’.²⁷⁵ I take *sloinned in maic* here as ‘the naming of the son’, more specifically of how Ailill was given the matronymic Máta. This explains why Ailill does not use the patronymic Ross Rúad, his father’s name, but Máta, his mother’s name. H.2.17 contains the perf. pass. sg. deuterotonic form *do-radad* (§2) from *do-beir* where Ed. has the expected prototonic form *tucad* (§2).

²⁷⁰ Although the possibility that this mistake would have been contained in the common exemplar cannot be excluded.

²⁷¹ Kelly, *Guide*, p. 266.

²⁷² *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* I (ed. Binchy, 36.6–7); *Ancient Laws* V (ed. and transl. Neilson et al., p. 253).

²⁷³ *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (ed. O’Brien, pp. 22–3).

²⁷⁴ ‘Goire Conaill Chernaig’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 103)

²⁷⁵ eDIL s.v. *slondud*, *sloinded* or dil.ie/38000.

§3. *c[h]umalta*. This is the gen. pl. form of the *io*-stem noun *comalta* ‘foster-brothers’. I have chosen to expand *cumalt-* as *cumalta* instead of *cumaltae*, since the word is also spelled as such (*comalta*) in H.2.17.

§3. *ro-imrāidh-sim aici*. The form *ro-imrāidh* is the perf. 3 sg. of the MidIr simple verb *imrāidid*, which was formed from the compound verb *imm-rádi* ‘thinks’. eDIL notes that when forms of this verb are followed by the prep. *oc* it has a reflexive meaning. The form of the conj. prep. which follows here is the 3 sg. masc. form, in MidIr spelling *aici* for OIr *occo/occa*.²⁷⁶

§3. *dia gaire 7 dia bethugud*. Literally: ‘for his caring and for his feeding’. eDIL notes that the *iā*-stem noun *goire*, here found in the dat. sg., can mean either ‘piety, dutifulness’ or—mostly in legal contexts—‘care, attendance’.²⁷⁷ When used as a verbal noun, it takes on the latter meaning, and can be translated as ‘act of attending, caring for, maintaining’. The second verbal noun, also a dat. sg., *bethugud*, derives from the verb *bethaigid* ‘quickens; feeds’.²⁷⁸ H.2.17 contains the variant phrase *doc[h]om a lesaigti 7 a beathaighiti 7 a gaire* ‘in order to be cared for and nourished and maintained’. The prep. *dochum* is used here to express purpose, and I take it as ‘in order to’. H.2.17 adds a third verbal noun to the sequence: *lesaigthe*, which is the gen. of the verbal noun *lesugud*, from the verb *lesaigidir* ‘improves; remedies; tends to’.²⁷⁹

§3. *dia ticfa mo lesugud-sa*. Literally: ‘by whom will come my tending to’. Similar to Meyer, I have translated this construction as a relative, referring back to the *lānemain* ‘married couple’, i.e. Ailill and Medb.

§4. *acht cena [......] ar Conall*. The letters at the top of the page are badly faded and mostly illegible. The corresponding line in H.2.17 reads: ‘*Is moc[h]en,*’ ar Ailill 7 Medb, ‘*acht cena it mōr t’fal[t]a in let[h] a tāngais.*’ (‘Welcome,’ said Ailill and Medb, ‘however, your feud with the side you have come to is great.’) It is likely that Ed. contained a similar reading, as the wording of the lines

²⁷⁶ *SnG*, §13.21.

²⁷⁷ eDIL s.v. 2 *goire* or dil.ie/26324.

²⁷⁸ eDIL s.v. *bethaigid* or dil.ie/5783.

²⁷⁹ eDIL s.v. *lesaigidir* or dil.ie/30002.

from Ed. and H.2.17 in this paragraph correspond closely to each other, which is why the reading from H.2.17 has been supplied in the edition.

Since the copula is the pres. 3 pl. *it*, a plural subject is expected. The fem. dental stem *fala* is a nom. sg., the nom. pl. being *folta* or later *foltana*.²⁸⁰ As it is rare to find *is* used for *it*, I suggest to read *falta* here. Since Ed. has the later form *fhaltanas* in the preceding paragraph (§3), we would expect the form *faltana* where H.2.17 has *fal[t]a*, which is why this form has been emended in the edited text. The ending of the final verbal form, which is the past 2 sg. form of *do-icc*, contains the abbreviation 3, which can be expanded in various ways (*-us*; *-as*; *-ais*). I have expanded it here as the *s*-preterite 2 sg. form *tāngais*. This is a MidIr form, the OIr form being *tánac*.

§4. ‘*Maith do dēnum forom [...] donti do-nī form*. As the text from Ed. is damaged here, the reading from H.2.17 has been inserted. However, the lacuna in Ed. would have contained more words than H.2.17. Also, the phrase *Isam laec[h] maith* is absent from Ed. Instead, it reads [...] *ar Conall*: ‘*Maith do dēnum form. Is[.....]-sa didiu dontī do-nī form*.’

It seems unlikely that the phrase *Isam laec[h] maith* would have been omitted from Ed., since these phrases all include a play on the word *maith*. Although Medb bids Conall welcome, she adds that he has been very hostile towards them. In his response, Conall first argues that he is a good warrior (*Isam laec[h] maith*), followed by the remark *maith do dēnum form*. eDIL notes that the verb *do-gní* in combination with the prep. *ar*, and later with *for*, can be taken as ‘obeys, acts according to the wish or advice of’.²⁸¹ This gives the literal translation ‘your behaviour towards/treatment of me is good’. For a discussion of the word-play in this exchange, see Part II, section 2.2.3.a. I therefore suggest that A phrase similar to *Isam laec[h] maith* would likely have been found in the illegible section before the first readable words on the top line of Ed., which are *ar Conall* (see marked section in image 7 below).



Image 7: Courtesy of ISOS

²⁸⁰ eDIL s.v. 2 *folta*, *fala* or dil.ie/23041.

²⁸¹ eDIL s.v. *do-gní* (III) or dil.ie/17752.

For the second lacuna, the reading from H.2.17 has also been inserted, giving *Is alma donti do-nū maith form*. I take *alma* as the nom. pl. form of *alam* ‘herd, flock’, referring to the riches that would come to Medb and Ailill if they host Conall. Alternatively, it could have been the nom. sg. noun *almsa*, the *s* having dropped out, meaning ‘alms’.²⁸²

§4. *Dēnthar tech fo leit[h] d[am-sa] co-mōr for mūr na ratha*. The first words are faded, but a faint *d* can be seen at the beginning of the line. The reading found in H.2.17 broadly agrees with Ed.: *Cuingit[h]er tech ar leith dam-sa fri mūr na ratha*. (‘Let a house apart be sought for me against the rampart of the fort’). This reading suggests that this is a lean-to house against the inside of the rampart. It is likely that the Ed. scribe confused the abbreviations for *for* and *fri* here, as *fri* ‘against’ would be expected. I also propose reading *dam-sa* for the lacuna, although possibly one or two more letters may have been lost here. It is likely followed by the words *co-mōr*, although the *c* and *m*-stroke are badly faded, as can be seen in the marked section in the image below.

The combination *co mōr* is an instance of an adverb being formed with the prep. *co* + the neuter acc. of the adjective.²⁸³ Thurneysen notes that this is a rare construction in OIr, and cites the form *co-mmór* as literally meaning ‘up to a high degree’. This later becomes the usual formation for adverbs. I have translated it here as ‘high’, referring to the position of the house on the wall of the rampart.



Image 8: Courtesy of ISOS

§4. *ad 7 fuigell*. The first word is the *s*-stem noun *ag* ‘bovine animal, cow’;²⁸⁴ the second is the *o*-stem noun *fuidel* ‘remnant’.²⁸⁵ In the MidIr period, lenited *d* and *g* began to fall together,

²⁸² I am thankful to Thomas Owen Clancy for this suggestion.

²⁸³ *GOI*, §381.

²⁸⁴ eDIL s.v. *ag* or dil.ie/671.

²⁸⁵ eDIL s.v. *fuidel* or dil.ie/24768.

explaining the spelling *fuigell* for *fuidell*.²⁸⁶ This development later spread to unlenited *d* and *g*, becoming widespread in the Early ModIr period, which accounts for the spelling *ad* for *ag*.²⁸⁷

§4. *dā [b]a[i]rdin dēc*. The words here are faint and difficult to read. Since H.2.17 contains the reading *dā bairgín dēc* ‘twelve loaves of bread’, I suggest reading a *b* at the start of the second word.



Image 9: Courtesy of ISOS

§4. *Do-ní-sium tochailt fo mūr na rātha*. The prep. *fo* is badly faded and hard to read, as can be seen in the outlined section in image 10 below. Meyer takes it as *for* in his edition, but leaves it untranslated as he has omitted the verbal phrase *do-ní-sium tochailt* from his edition, which is clearly legible in the manuscript. Likely due to this oversight, he left part of this sentence untranslated in his edition (‘He makes ... the rampart of the rath’).²⁸⁸ Thurneysen seems to have been aware of Meyer’s mistake, as in his summary of *AACC* he includes the following: ‘Doch gräbt er (Conall) den Burgwall an und sättigt sich jede Nacht draußen in Connaught’.²⁸⁹ Meyer was also unaware of the existence of the variant reading in H.2.17: *Do-gnū-sium tochailt fo dīn na cat[h]rac[h] .i. Rāta Crūachan* (‘He dug under the top of the fortress, that is of Rath Crúachan’). Based on the reading



Image 10: Courtesy of ISOS

²⁸⁶ *SnG*, §3.18; Breatnach, ‘*Lebor na hUidre*’, p. 75. See also section 2.1 above, subsection 1.9 for a discussion of this development.

²⁸⁷ *SnG* IV, §2.10.

²⁸⁸ ‘*Goire Conaill Chernaig*’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 107).

²⁸⁹ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 580: ‘But he (Conall) digs the ramparts and feeds himself every night outside in Connacht’.

in H.2.17, I take the prep. as *fo* ‘under’ instead of *for*. What is implied here is that Conall is burrowing into the walls of Ráth Crúachan from his house against the side of the rampart, tunnelling his way out of the fort to go on a nightly raid. This implies that despite of the great amount of food he receives every evening from the Connachta, Conall’s huge appetite still is not satiated. This is further corroborated in the next phrase (see following note).

§4. *do-nīd-sium a dāithin gac[h] n-oidci a Connachtaib*. Literal translation: ‘he used to make his sufficiency’. The first word is the impf. 3 sg. form of *do-gní* ‘does, makes’, followed by the emphasising pronoun 3 sg. masc. *-sium*. It is followed by *dāithin*, which is the masc. noun *doithin* ‘a sufficiency, enough’. The examples from eDIL show that it is often used to refer to food, and here it likely refers to the amount of food Conall steals every night from the Connachta.²⁹⁰ The variant reading in H.2.17 is less specific about what Conall took from the Connachta: *co-ndēnad airgt[h]i cech n-aidchi ar Connachtaibh* ‘so that he would plunder the Connachta every night’. The verbal form *dēnad*—the dependent form of *do-nīd*—is followed by the pl. form of the later verbal noun formation *airged* ‘slaughtering, plundering’, which derives from the verb *airgid*, a later form of the verb *oirgid* ‘slays; ravages’.²⁹¹ This suggests that while Conall receives food and drink from the Connachta during the day, at night he digs out of Ráth Crúachan and plunders Connacht for food, perhaps because he has an insatiable appetite.

§5. *fon alt-sin*. The noun *alt* has a variety of meanings. eDIL notes that in abstract applications, it is frequently found with the prep. *fo* meaning ‘in (that) way, manner’.²⁹²

§5. *in combfēith cétnai do dēnum dō-som frissin*. Meyer takes the noun *combfēith* as ‘feast’, and suggests reading it as *coibleid*.²⁹³ Based on the variant reading found in H.2.17, which is *coimēid*, I take it as the noun *comméit* ‘equal, amount’.²⁹⁴ The scribe may have applied hypercorrect spelling, changing *mm* into *mb*. I take this to mean that the same amount of food was being prepared for him every night for a year, referring back to the description of the food provisions Conall is given

²⁹⁰ eDIL s.v. *doithin* or dil.ie/17980.

²⁹¹ eDIL s.v. *oirgid* or dil.ie/33726.

²⁹² eDIL s.v. 1 *alt* or dil.ie/3016.

²⁹³ ‘Goire Conaill Chernaig’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 103).

²⁹⁴ eDIL s.v. *comméit* or dil.ie/11512.

in §4 (i.e. *beror muc 7 ad 7 fuigell Meidbe 7 Ailella 7 dā [b]a[i]rdin déc 7 molt 7 in cori anbruithi*). The final word *frissin*— a combination of the prep. *fri* ‘towards’ and the demonstrative pronoun *sin* ‘that’—is absent from H.2.17. The word does not fit very well into this sentence, and eDIL lists no examples of *frissin* being used in a similar sentence-final position. I have tentatively translated it as ‘at that’, taking *fri* in the sense of ‘with respect to, with regard to’.²⁹⁵

§5. *dia n-imsna*. Like Meyer, I have expanded *n-imsn*— as *imsna*, a form of the verbal noun *indsma*, which derives from the verb *indsmaid* ‘thrusts in; sets’.²⁹⁶ The variant reading found in H.2.17 is *dia n-indsma*, which suggests that the same verb is meant in Ed. Two developments seem to have occurred here: assimilation of *-nd-* to *-nn-* and metathesis.²⁹⁷ A similar change is also attested in the Metrical Dindshenchas, where the pres. 3 sg. form *indsmais* is found in most of the manuscripts, but variant readings include *intsnaiss* in LL, *imsnais* in the Book of Ballymote and *insnas* in the Book of Lecan.²⁹⁸ I have translated the verbal noun *imsna* in a similar sense to Gwynn, (*indsmais cen docair gáí nglan* ‘he fitted the bright spear without difficulty’), taking it as ‘to rivet’, referring to Conall preparing spears for the Connachta.

§5. *resū ro-ēirged gac[h] bō*. Presumably what is meant here is that Conall would prepare the spears before the cows would be milked, which implies that he finishes this task before daybreak, when the first people wake up (i.e. the cowherds). H.2.17 contains the alternative reading *resū at-reised cath* ‘before a battle might take place’, preserving the older compound verb *at-reised*. These verbal forms are preceded by the conjunction *resū*, which in MidIr takes the indicative ‘when the action of the follg. vb. is already past, the vb. in the main clause being in pret. or perf. tense’.²⁹⁹ While both retain the OIr subj., H.2.17 also preserves the older *s*-subjunctive verbal form. The implication of this seems to be that it is very early in the morning and still relatively dark when Conall throws his spear in the episodes that follow, meaning he cannot see clearly for whom he is aiming.

²⁹⁵ eDIL s.v. *fri* (V, a) or dil.ie/24329.

²⁹⁶ eDIL s.v. *indsma* or dil.ie/28544.

²⁹⁷ Thomas Owen Clancy suggests that this verb may have been influenced by compound verbs with the preverbal *imm-*, such as the verb *imm-sna* ‘swims about’.

²⁹⁸ Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas* III, pp. 248–9.

²⁹⁹ eDIL s.v. *resú*, *riasú* or dil.ie/35150.

§6. *a hacobur*. This is the *o*-stem noun *accobar* ‘desire, wish’, which derives from the verbal noun of the verb *ad-cobra* ‘desires, wishes’.³⁰⁰ H.2.17 has the form *acor*, which is the verbal noun of the verb **ad-car*, which Pedersen takes as a form of the verb *caraid* ‘loves’, with prefixed *ad*.³⁰¹ Although not often attested, the noun is found in other MidIr texts: *Scéla Alaxandair: Do-thidnaic in talam dún chena ar n-accor[...]*;³⁰² and the short exemplum *Rí irissec ro boi do Grecaib: ‘Ní accor lend, or na gillai*.³⁰³

§6. *im gac[h] ní*. I have translated the prep. *imm* ‘about, around’ as ‘for’ here. eDIL notes that the prep. *imm* is used ‘after words expressive [...] of desire, greed, jealousy, envy’, and I have taken it here as such, as it follows after *a hacobur* ‘her desire’.³⁰⁴

§6. *do c[h]laemc[h]lōdh dī*. The verbal form *claemclōdh* could have been derived from the verb *cláemchláid*, which is the later simple verb deriving from the verb *con-imchloí* ‘changes; interchanges’. Another possibility is to take it as a variant form of the verbal noun *coímchloud*, which derives from the same verb. eDIL notes that the prototonic and later simple forms of *con-imchloí* are very variable, listing alternative spellings such as *claechlódh*; *claechlúdh*.³⁰⁵ I suggest to take it as a verbal noun, as this would make most sense on a syntactic level: the verbal noun is preceded by *do*, and followed by the conj. prep. *dī*, which I suggest to take as ‘by her’. The implication of this phrase seems to be that Medb used to sleep with thirty men every day, or with Fergus once, to satisfy her sexual desires. Although this sexual connotation of this verb is not found elsewhere, this is the most appropriate interpretation in the current context.

§6. *Tagall Fergus aonfecht*. This is the (verbal) noun *tadall* ‘a visit’, which is the verbal noun of the verb *do-aidlea* ‘comes to, approaches’.³⁰⁶ It refers to Fergus mac Róich, former king of the Ulaid, who has sexual relations with Medb, as is related in both *TBC-I* and his own death-tale

³⁰⁰ eDIL s.v. *accobar* or dil.ie/165.

³⁰¹ Pedersen, *Vergleichende Grammatik* II, p. 481 (§677).

³⁰² *Scéla Alaxandair* (ed. and transl. Meyer, ll. 863–4): ‘Die Erde gibt uns schon unser Begehrunder unser Genüge [...]’

³⁰³ LL, ll. 36313: ‘We have no desire [for it].’

³⁰⁴ eDIL s.v. 1 *imm*, *imb* (III, iii) or dil.ie/27635.

³⁰⁵ eDIL s.v. *con-imchloí* or dil.ie/12191.

³⁰⁶ eDIL s.v. *tadall* or dil.ie/39428.

(*Aided Fergusa maic Róich*).³⁰⁷ The gen. form of Fergus is Fergusa, but the final *a* would have been subsumed with the initial of the following word, i.e. *aonfecht*.

§6. *Ba comāosa dī-si immorro a c[h]ēili*. The word *comāosa* is a later form of *comáes* ‘contemporary’, which consists of *com* + *áes* ‘age’.³⁰⁸ It is used here as a predicative adj. with the meaning ‘of the same age as’.

§6. *fer cin ainim .i. cin ēd, cin omun, cin neōid*. Meyer believes that this line is borrowed from the introductory Pillow-Talk episode in *TBC-LL*: *.i. fer cen neóit, cen ét, cen omon* ‘to wit, a husband without meanness, without jealousy, without fear’.³⁰⁹ However, it is also possible that the phrase was borrowed from this text into *TBC-LL*, or that it was a well-known phrase that both authors drew on independently, as similar lists of Ailill’s qualities appear in the genealogies.³¹⁰ The close correspondence between the phrase in *AACC* and *TBC-LL* is significant as it provides additional support for the proposed twelfth-century date for the former tale.³¹¹ Note also that the variant phrase in H.2.17 retains the same order as the line from *TBC-LL*, but prefixes *loc[h]t* ‘fault’ to the list: *.i. fer cin loc[h]t, cin ainim, cin neōid, cin ēd, cin ūaman* ‘a man without fault, without a blemish, without stinginess, without jealousy, without fear’.³¹²

§6. *Ba maith a c[h]rut[h] 7 a brīg 7 a breth an f[h]ir-sin*. Of note in this sentence is the 3 sg. masc. proleptic possessive pronoun *a* preceding the three descriptive nouns, which refers to *an f[h]ir-sin* ‘that man’. Similar to the line discussed in the preceding note, this description of Ailill is related to the ideology of kingship as found in medieval Irish literature.³¹³ The first quality in this list, *cruth* ‘shape, appearance’, relates to the concept of the king being physically unblemished. This is essential for the king’s role as personification of his land, since the bodily wellbeing of the king symbolised that of his *túath*. The king’s *brīg* ‘strength’ is connected to his military prowess. A king

³⁰⁷ *TBC-I*, ll. 1030–46; *Aided Fergusa maic Róich* (ed. Meyer, §2).

³⁰⁸ eDIL s.v. *comáes* or [dil.ie/10588](#).

³⁰⁹ *TBC-LL*, l. 28.

³¹⁰ See section 2.2.2.b for a discussion of Ailill’s pedigree in H.2.17.

³¹¹ See the conclusion of Part I, 2.1 for this date.

³¹² Thomas Owen Clancy suggests this could perhaps be read ironically, as Ailill’s lack of jealousy could imply that he is a cuckold and therefore blemished.

³¹³ The ideology is described in texts belonging to the genre of the *Speculum Principum* ‘Mirror of Princes’, such as *Audacht Moraimn* ‘The Testament of Morann’. This text contains instructions for kings and rulers on righteous rule and behaviour. For a discussion of kingly qualities in medieval Irish literature, see O’Leary, ‘Foreseeing Driver’.

has to protect his borders and defend his kingdom during times of war. Also, success in battle meant that he could enlarge his territory and increase his wealth and power. Lastly, *breth* ‘judgement’ is associated with the concept of *fír flathemon* ‘ruler’s justice/truth’. A king should be just and he must possess the ability to pronounce true judgements, and thus maintain peace and prosperity in his territory and protect his people and land.

§6. *do c[h]omrac fria*. The verbal noun *comrac*, which derives from the verb *con-ricc* ‘meets’, has a variety of meanings, all pertaining to some type of encounter or confrontation, ranging from violent to legal.³¹⁴ In the current context, I take it as a sexual encounter, as this paragraph describes Medb’s almost insatiable sexual desires. H.2.17 has the variant reading *do cōimriachtain ria*, which contains the verbal noun *comríachtain* (also from *con-ricc*), which is often found denoting a meeting ‘of sexual intercourse’.³¹⁵

§6. *An bhic co tair in cluithi*. The first word, *an*, is the imperative 2 sg. form of the verb *anaid* ‘waits’. The verbal form *tair* is a form of *do-airicc* ‘comes (to an end)’, and is usually taken as the pres. *s*-subj. 3 sg. form. However, it can also be used as a fut. perf. hypothetical form, as I have done here. eDIL lists four different ways in which this verb forms its future tense, listing *do-n-air* and *-tair* last.³¹⁶ H.2.17 contains the variant reading *co roisc in cluichi seó*. This is the pres. subj. 3 sg. (with perfective *ro-*) form of the verb *scuchaid* ‘moves’. eDIL notes that the archaic forms, including the form *roisc* found here, usually only occur in the sense of ‘comes to an end, is finished’.³¹⁷ H.2.17 also retains the older spelling *ch* in *cluichi* vs. MidIr *cluithi*.

§6. *dia cind sí*. eDIL notes that the combination of the prep. *di/do* and the noun *cenn* can be used in the sense of ‘soliciting or having intercourse with a woman *in spite of or unknown to* her husband’.³¹⁸ Since the prep. *do/di* is followed here by the 3 sg. fem. possessive pronoun *a*, and *cind* is followed by the 3 sg. fem. pers. pronoun *sí*, the opposite is happening here, as it refers to Ailill cheating on Medb. The translation ‘in spite/disregard of’ is more appropriate than ‘unknown to’,

³¹⁴ eDIL s.v. 1 *comrac* or dil.ie/11625.

³¹⁵ eDIL s.v. *comríachtain* or dil.ie/11665.

³¹⁶ eDIL s.v. *do-airicc* or dil.ie/17140.

³¹⁷ eDIL s.v. *scuchaid*, *scuichid* or dil.ie/36681.

³¹⁸ eDIL s.v. 1 *cenn* (37) or dil.ie/8622.

as Medb is clearly aware that this is happening, and takes Conall into her household for this very reason (see also the following note).

§6. *ro-gab sī Conall Cernach ina tegais for Ailill*. The sense here seems to be that Medb took Conall into her household with Ailill's knowledge, to keep him from cheating on her.³¹⁹ I have taken the prep. *for* as 'over, above', since Conall's role is to prevent Ailill from meeting up with women against her will (although it cannot be excluded that there may have been a sexual connotation here, and that Medb intended to have an affair with Conall). This interpretation is confirmed by the variant reading found in H.2.17: *gor ra-gab sī Conall Cernach ar aig(id)acht fri Alella* 'so that she took Conall Cernach as a guest against Ailill', in which the prep. *fri* 'against' is used instead of *for*. I suggest to take the words preceding the prep. *fri* as *ar aig(id)acht*. The letters *arai* are found at the end of the line (see image 11 below), and the next line has the letter *g* followed by an *s* with a suspension stroke (see image 12 below).

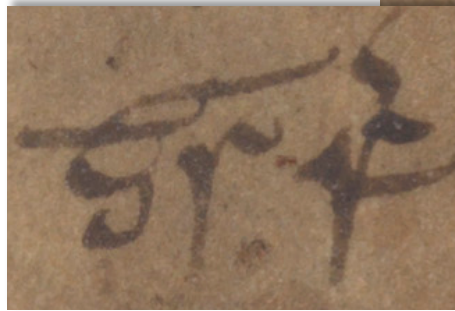


Image 11: Courtesy of ISOS

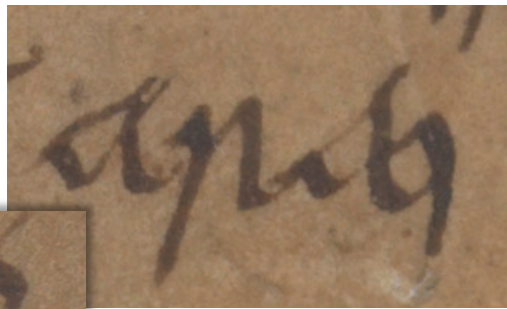


Image 12: Courtesy of ISOS

I propose to take the first word as the prep. *ar*, and to expand *aiḡs* as the noun *aig(id)echt* 'entertainment, lodging, hospitality',³²⁰ a word which may have had a sexual connotation. The *s* with a suspension stroke can either be expanded as *-acht*, giving the form *aigacht*, a variant of which is attested in Early ModIr (i.e. *aoidheacht*)³²¹ or it may be abbreviating more letters than just *-acht*, in this case *-idacht*. This gives the longer and more regularly attested MidIr form *aigidacht*. As the

³¹⁹ See Part II, '2.2.3.a Conall's *Goire* at Crúachan'.

³²⁰ eDIL s.v. *oígidecht* or dil.ie/33645.

³²¹ 'The Training of Cú Chulainn' (ed. Stokes, §60).

examples listed in eDIL show, the combination *for* + *aigidacht* is often taken as ‘as a guest’ (cf. *As ferr damsa dul ar aidhidhecht* ‘It is better for me to go as a guest’).³²² This is also the case here, but with the prep. *for* having been replaced by the form *ar*, which was common in later manuscripts.

§6. *nā der[n]ad*. This verbal form is the impf. subj. 3 sg. of *do-gní* ‘does’ with infix *ro*. Based on the variant reading in H.2.17, which has the form *nā dernadh*, I suggest adding the *n* here, as the form *derad* is not attested.

§7. *cētemain*. eDIL notes that the noun *cētemain* can be taken as both ‘May’ and ‘Mayday’. Since the sentence starts with *laa n-ōen* ‘one day’, I have taken it as ‘May’.

§7. [*oc*] *comriachtain fri mnāi a tāib in lis*. A prep. like *oc* would be expected to govern the verbal noun *comriachtain* here, but is absent in the MS, which is why I have added it here. H.2.17 has the variant reading *i cēdhluadh*, a noun meaning ‘sexual activity, wantonness’. eDIL notes that it also means ‘state or act of being a bedfellow’, especially to a king.³²³ It is also noted that the verbal noun *comriachtain* can carry a sexual connotation,³²⁴ which points to the meeting between Ailill and the unnamed woman being an illicit affair. As for the location of the meeting, Ed. has this taking place *a tāib in lis* ‘near the courtyard’, while H.2.17 gives the more exact location *a scēi caille i taib na rātha a leath aneas* ‘in a whitethorn of the forest near the fort on the south side’.

§7. *ac imsna*. I have expanded *imsn*— as *imsna*, the verbal noun *indsma* from the verb *indsmaid* ‘thrusts in; sets’. H.2.17 has *ac indsma*. See also the note on *dia n-imsna* (§5).

§7. *Conall Cernach*. I have translated the epithet *cernach* as ‘Victorious’ here, as opposed to the alternative translation ‘angular’, as this contrasts with the *clāen trūag* ‘crooked wretched one’, used by Medb in the next sentence. See Part II, section 2.2.1.b for a discussion of this threat.

³²² ‘How Samson slew the Gesteda’ (ed. and transl. Marstrander, l. 165).

³²³ eDIL s.v. *cétluth* or dil.ie/8940.

³²⁴ eDIL s.v. *comriachtain* or dil.ie/11665.

§7. *Conall clāen trūag t'ainm festa*. There appears to be a form of wordplay at work in the phrase *clāen trūag*—eDIL notes that in moral sense, *clāen* can mean ‘iniquitous, perverse, unjust, biased’.³²⁵ See Part II, section 2.2.1.b for a discussion of this wordplay. H.2.17 contains the variant reading *Conall grān[n]a clam trūath tū bud esta* ‘you will be Conall the horrible leprous wretch from this time on’, which shows the MidIr development of the use of the independent pronoun as object.

§7. *rob-som Cernach-som*. Meyer proposes to read this as *robsat Cernach-su*, most likely based on the reading in H.2.17, which is *robsat Cernach-sa*.³²⁶ However, I take the verb to refer to *Cernach* in the preceding sentence, which requires no emendation of the text.

§7. *nī lēmtha*. This is the cond. pass. sg. form of the verb *lamaid* ‘dares, ventures’. H.2.17 has the variant reading *nī lāma[i]r*, which is the pres. pass. sg. of *lamaid*. Since this does not agree with the tense of the previous phrase (i.e. pret. 2 sg. *robsat*), I propose to insert an *i* and reading the verb as *lāmair*, which is the pret. 3 sg. form of *lamaid*.

§7. *Aniū is focus duit in sārugud ūt*. ‘Today that violation is close to you’. Medb tells Conall that his guarantee has been violated, as he let the affair between Ailill and the woman happen, while she took him into her household as a means of prohibiting Ailill from cheating on her. This is reason for Medb to incite Conall into action, so that he may take revenge for this dishonour on Ailill. See Part II, section 2.2.2.c for a discussion of the verbal incitement used in this passage.

H.2.17 contains the variant reading *Aniū ro-dāmair(is)*. *Iss follus duit in sārugud ūt*, as can be seen in image 13 below. In his edition, Meyer omitted the letters *is* which follow *rodāmair* and precede *iss*, instead giving the reading *Aniū rodamair, is follus*. Presumably, he took the double *is* as a dittography. I follow this emendation, and have placed the double *is* in round brackets. The

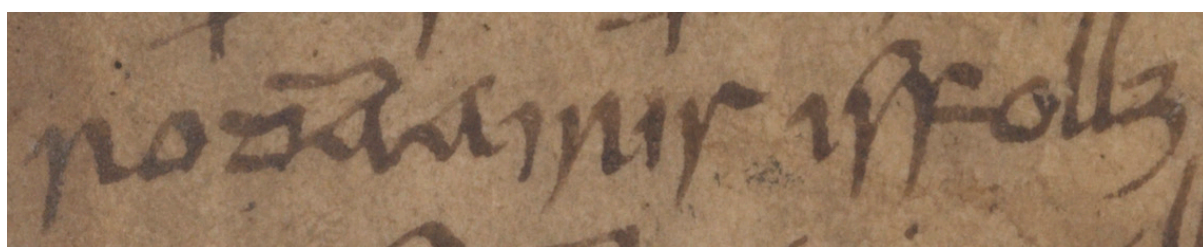


Image 13: Courtesy of TCD Library

³²⁵ eDIL s.v. *clāen* (d) or dil.ie/9306.

³²⁶ ‘Goire Conaill Chernaig’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 104).

verbal form *ro-dāmair* is the past. pass. sg. form of the verb *daimid*, which eDIL notes has a variety of meanings.³²⁷ In the current context, I translate it as ‘allows’, which gives the sentence ‘today, it was allowed’, referring to the fact that Ailill’s illicit affair took place while Conall was supposed to prevent this from happening.

§7. *nus-certoigem*. This is the pres. 3 sg. form of the verb *certaigid* ‘puts right, adjusts’. eDIL notes that in combination with weapons, it is taken as ‘adjusts, poises, aims’.³²⁸ The preverb *no* is followed by the Class A 3 sg. fem. infixed pronoun *-s*, which spread beyond its limits and came to be used to mark a masc. object.³²⁹ I take it here to refer to *in gāi* ‘the spear’, which is a masc. noun. The variant reading in H.2.17 is *Roachtain in gāi cuigi*. The sense here seems to be that Conall reached for the spear and threw it at the couple. I have taken *in gāi* ‘the spear’ as the gen. sg., translating the phrase as ‘he reached for the spear’ (lit.: ‘reaching of the spear to him’). The readings of both manuscripts are highly elliptical, as the aiming of or reaching for the spear is immediately followed by Ailill being pierced by it, lacking a verb to describe the action of the throwing.³³⁰

§7. *No comad a fāstig not-guin triana t[h]uighi sūas*. The first word is the conjunction *co n-*, which means ‘that’ after the subj, and the verbal form *-bad*, the past. subj. 3 sg. form of the copula. In the MidIr period, the consonant cluster *-mb-* often assimilates to *-mm-*, resulting in the spelling *comad* for *combad*.³³¹ eDIL notes that with the impf. subj. of copula and subst. verb, the conj. *co n-* is used to introduce ‘a tentative or alternative explanation’, as is the case here. It is likely that the second explanation of how Ailill was wounded by Conall was originally a gloss, which was later incorporated into the main text. This alternative explanation suggests that a different tradition once existed concerning the circumstances leading to Ailill’s death, of which the scribe of Ed. or of its exemplar was aware and incorporated here. Of note is also the occurrence of the Ailill’s fatal wounding by Conall in a *fāstig* ‘empty house’, which echoes the situation in *ACMM* where Cet is staying in an empty house when Conall finds him.

³²⁷ eDIL s.v. *daimid* or dil.ie/14221.

³²⁸ eDIL s.v. *certaigid* or dil.ie/8799.

³²⁹ *SnG*, §10.8; *EIV*, p. 171.

³³⁰ There are other instances in which a verb that would express an important action is being omitted: in the final lines of *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin*, Créd’s death is described as follows: *Amail ad-c(h)ondairc-si a gnúis-seom,[do-rochair] co nderna brúar dia cind imon carraic* ‘As she saw his face, [she fell], and she smacked her head on the rock and the stone broke at her side.’ Here, the verb *do-tuit* has been added by the translator (Nuijten, ‘*Scéla Cano*’, p. 73).

³³¹ *WMG*, p. 86.

§7. *not-guin*. The infix pronoun *-t* in this verbal form could be a Class B 2 sg., which spread beyond its limits and came to be used to mark a 3 sg. masc. object in the MidIr period.³³² As this is relatively uncommon, alternatively it could be the relative infix pronoun *-d*. The spelling *-t* for *-d* is most likely an orthographical variation of the 3 sg. relative infix pronoun *-d*, and is well established in MidIr.³³³

§8. *Cīa dorōine?* The verbal form *dorōine*, which is the perf. 3 sg. of *do-gní*, requires an object. A form of the demonstrative pronoun could be inserted here, which is what we have in the variant reading *dorinde so* in H.2.17. However, the next sentence (*Conall dorōine*) lacks an object in both manuscripts, which makes it more likely that the verb contains an infix pronoun. Due to the confusion of pretonic vowels that occurred during the MidIr period, there would be no formal distinction between *da-* and *do-*.³³⁴ Therefore, I suggest that the *do-* contains the 3 sg. neut. infix pronoun.

§8. *Olc duit a ndernais [...] olc do dēnum frim-sa*. Meyer takes the first phrase as ‘evil for thee for what thou hast done’, expanding *d-n3* as the perf. 2 sg. *dernais*.³³⁵ I have also adopted this expansion, which can be literally translated as ‘[It is] evil for you what you have done’, meaning ‘what you have done is bad for you’. The second phrase has been translated as ‘to do evil to me’, which refers to Conall’s wounding of Ailill. The implication of Ailill’s words is that what Conall has done—namely fatally wounding him, which is a criminal act—was a bad action on Conall’s part.

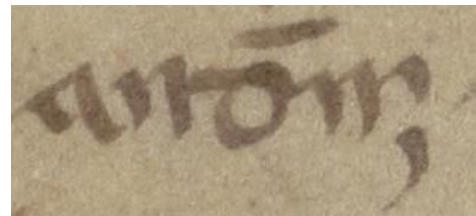


Image 14: Courtesy of ISOS

For the second phrase, H.2.17 has the variant reading *nārb’ ead tarmart-sa do dēnum fort-sa* ‘that was not what I intended to do to you’. The first word, *nárbo*, consists of the negation + perf. 3 sg. form of the copula, with the final vowel having been dropped because of the initial vowel of the following word *ead*, which is the 3 sg. neut. pronoun. The word *tarmart* comes from the verb

³³² *SnG*, §10.6.

³³³ Strachan, ‘Infix Pronoun’, pp. 171–2; Ó hUiginn, ‘Old Irish Nasalizing Relative Clause’, p. 71.

³³⁴ Strachan, ‘Infix Pronoun’, p. 163.

³³⁵ ‘*Goire Conaill Chernaig*’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 108).

do-armairt, and is only found in the pret. with the meaning ‘intended, attempted’.³³⁶ The form *tarmart* is the pret. 1 sg., as is confirmed by the 1 sg. emphasising pronoun *-sa*. This statement from Ailill implies that while Conall has done him ill, Ailill had not intended to do the same to Conall.

§8. *not-ber ēm as do m'inchuib*. This is the ipv. 2 sg. form of *beirid* ‘carries (away)’. eDIL notes that ‘with adverbial *as*’ it comes to mean ‘takes away’, and with a refl. pronoun it has the sense of ‘takes oneself off; escapes’.³³⁷ Meyer translates this phrase as ‘take thyself away from my face’,³³⁸ taking the noun *inchuib*, the dat. pl. form of *enech*, as its primary meaning ‘face’.³³⁹ I suggest taking *inchuib* in a less literal sense, instead translating it as ‘protection, security, guarantee’. eDIL notes that the combination *d(i) inchuib* is often taken as ‘by the guarantee of; by means of’. I would propose to translate *do m'inchuib* as ‘under my guarantee’, in the sense that Ailill allows Conall to flee under his protection, until he dies, after which he is not able to offer his protection anymore.

§8. *ba marb-so(m)*. In a footnote, Meyer proposed emending these words to *marb-sa*.³⁴⁰ The form in the MS is *bamarbs-*, with a hooked abbreviation mark indicating that it is to be expanded as *Vm* (see image below). The resulting form is the 3 sg. masc./neut. or 3 pl. emphasising pronoun *-som*. We would expect either the 1 or 2 sg. form of the emphasising pronoun here. H.2.17 has the variant reading *marb-sa*, which suggests that this emphasising pronoun should be taken as a 1 sg. form. The *m*-stroke likely represents a mistake on the part of the scribe, which occurs more often, only in this specific paragraph (see *m'hēcuib-so(m)* and *marb-so(m)*). I have placed round brackets around the *m*, as this letter would not be expected here. Since there was no longer a distinction between unstressed vowels in final position in MidIr, *-so*, *-su* and *-sa* could be used interchangeably.

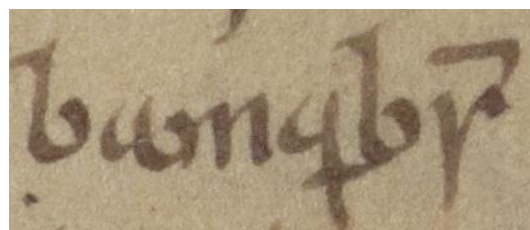


Image 15: Courtesy of ISOS

³³⁶ eDIL s.v. *do-armairt* or dil.ie/17186.

³³⁷ eDIL s.v. *beirid* (VI) or dil.ie/5583.

³³⁸ ‘Goire Conaill Chernaig’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 108).

³³⁹ eDIL s.v. 1 *enech*, *ainech* or dil.ie/20066.

³⁴⁰ ‘Goire Conaill Chernaig’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 105).

§8. *not-muirbfet*. This is the fut. 3 pl. form of the verb *marbaid* ‘kills, slays; dies’. The stem *muirb-* is a later form of the fut. stem *mairb-*. Although the infixed pronoun starts to fall out of use in the MidIr period, the 1 and 2 sg. forms are still being used, especially in bardic verse.³⁴¹

§8. *m’hēcuib-so(m)*. The word *ēcuib* is the dat. pl. form of the masc. noun *éc* ‘death’. eDIL notes that the plural form can be used to refer to an individual death.³⁴² The emphasising pronoun *-som* is a 3 sg. masc. form, which is why I have placed the *m* between round brackets, as this appears to be a scribal error (see also the note on *ba marb-so(m)* above). The resulting form can be read as a 1 sg. form. H.2.17 has the phrase *m’ēgaib-si*. The emphasising pronoun *-si* is a 3 sg. fem., where a 1 sg. *-sa/-se* would be expected. However, there was no distinction between unstressed vowels in final position in MidIr anymore, so these forms could be used interchangeably.

§8. *co ndechur am c[h]arpat*. Like Meyer, I have expanded *dech-* as *dechur*, the subj. 1 sg. of the verb *téit* ‘goes’. This is a late MidIr development, as the *a*-subj. 1 sg. ending *-ur* spread to other subj. stems. In Early ModIr it has taken over as the standard 1 sg. subj. ending.³⁴³ The OIr *s*-subj. 1 sg. form is *dechus*, but the abbreviation 3 would be expected here, which is consistently employed (see also the note on *tegaib* (§7) and *a ndernus* (§8), and the accompanying images).

§8. *am c[h]arpat a ndorus in lis*. The prep. phrase *i ndorus* ‘in front of’ is usually followed by the gen. case, as noted by eDIL,³⁴⁴ which in this case would be *lis*, gen. sg. of the masc. *o*-stem noun *les*. H.2.17 also gives the reading *a ndorus an lis*, which is why the manuscript form *l3* in Ed. has been expanded as such (see image 16).

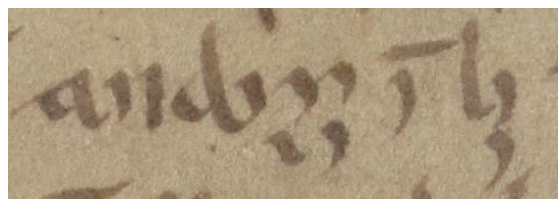


Image 16: Courtesy of ISOS

§8. *Nī ba marb-so(m) fri sin*. The verbal form *marb* is followed by an *s* with *m*-stroke, which should be expanded as the emphasising pronoun *-som* is a 3 sg. masc. This appears to be a scribal error again (see notes on *ba marb-so(m)* and *m’hēcuib-so(m)* above), which is why the *m* has been

³⁴¹ *SnG* IV, §9.2.

³⁴² eDIL s.v. *éc* or dil.ie/19360.

³⁴³ *SnG*, §12.88; *EIV*, pp. 217–8.

³⁴⁴ eDIL s.v. *dorus* or dil.ie/18427.

placed between round brackets. The resulting form *-so* is a 2 sg. form, while H.2.17 has the 1 sg. form *-sa*. Since there was no longer a distinction between unstressed vowels in final position in MidIr, these forms could be used interchangeably. This is followed by *fri sin*, which consists of the prep. *fri* ‘towards; against; because of’ + the demonstrative pronoun.

The implication of Ailill’s response is that by promising Conall not to die before the latter reaches his chariot, he grants Conall a head-start before the Connachta begin their pursuit of him to avenge Ailill’s death. This much is confirmed in the next paragraph, which states that as soon as Ailill dies the Connachta start to chase Conall. This sense is clearer in the variant reading in H.2.17, where instead of *fri sin* we have *co sin* ‘until that’, referring to Ailill’s act of dying.

§9. *[Ba] marb Ailill tall*. The adj. *marb* ‘dead’ requires the copula, which is why I have added the past 3 sg. form *ba* here between square brackets.

§9. *ro-dibracsit*. This is the perf. 3 pl. form of the simple verb *dibraicid*, which derives from the compound verb *do-bidci* ‘shoots, casts’. The stem of the simple verb (*díbaireg-*, *díbairec-*) here has undergone metathesis, resulting in the stem *díbraic-*.³⁴⁵ H.2.17 has the variant reading *ro-lenaid Connachta Conall* ‘the Connachta wounded/pursued Conall’. The verbal form can either be taken as the past 3 pl. form of *lénaid* ‘impairs, injures’, or of *lenaicid*, which can be translated as ‘pursues, chases’.³⁴⁶

§9. *dol a n-āth gan síthlód ina díaign*. The verbal noun *síthlód*, which derives from the verb *síthlaicid*, can mean ‘act of straining, filtering’, ‘act of flowing, pouring away’ or ‘act of melting, softening’.³⁴⁷ The first two meanings are often related to the pouring of drinks or the flowing of blood and other liquids, while the third meaning is later and less literal. In combination with the miners washing ore upstream the river and thus muddying and perturbing the water, the verb is likely to be taken as ‘straining, filtering’, referring to the state of the river water. The implication of this *geis* or taboo seems to be that Conall can only cross a body of water if the water that flows away from him is clean and undisturbed.

³⁴⁵ eDIL s.v. *do-bidci* or dil.ie/17231.

³⁴⁶ I am thankful to Paul Russell for this suggestion.

³⁴⁷ eDIL s.v. *síthlad*, *síthlód* or dil.ie/37751.

H.2.17 has the variant reading *techt ṽ at[h] gu rod-sīt[h]lod* ‘to come from a ford so that it was strained after him’. This seems to mean that it was forbidden for Conall to emerge from a ford if the water after him was perturbed, which implies that he has to filter the water before he can continue. The verbal form *rod-sīt[h]lod* is most likely the past pass. sg. form of the verb *síthlaid*, although no other examples are attested in eDIL. The infix pronoun *-d* is a MidIr form, as the relative 3 sg. neuter *-d* of class C began to spread beyond its limits and came to be used to mark a masc. object.³⁴⁸ It refers here to the masc. *u*-stem noun *āt[h]* ‘ford’.

§9. *māanaigi*. eDIL lists *míanaige* as an *io*-stem noun meaning ‘a miner’, which is solely based on its attestation in this particular text.³⁴⁹ The word derives from *o*-stem noun *míanach* ‘ore; a vein of ore, a mine’.³⁵⁰ In H.2.17, this word is faded and appears to read *i man(n)aigi* (see image 17). There appears to be a suspension stroke for *n* above the first *a*, which I have placed between rounded brackets as this would not be expected here. The word in H.2.17 is likely a misspelling for *mían(n)aigi*, perhaps due to confusion of the minims. Since the noun *míanaige* is only attested in Ed., this raises the possibility that the scribe of H.2.17 confused the minims in his exemplar, erroneously turning *míanaigi* into *i man(n)aigi*.

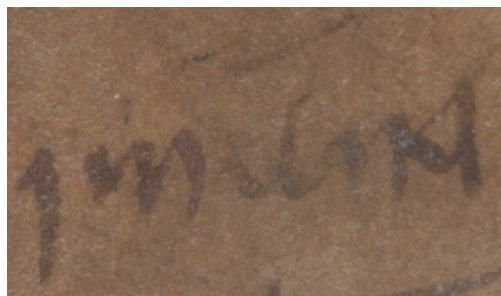


Image 17: Courtesy of TCD Library

§9. *leth fūas*. eDIL notes that the noun *leth* ‘side, direction’ is used ‘in a large variety of adverbial and prepositional phrases’. In this case, it is an adverb of direction, together with the adverb *fūas*, which is most likely the lenited form of *súas* ‘up, upwards (implying motion)’.³⁵¹ O’Brien has suggested that OIr adverbs of direction, such as *súas*, would have commenced with *sv-* in Primitive Irish. In OIr, this would normally develop into *s-*, but in some circumstances it could end up as *f-*.³⁵² He notes that although most of the form with *f* have fallen out of use, he cites this tale as an example of *fúas* for *súas*, and the OIr poem ‘Song on Summer’: *lingit fainnle fanna*

³⁴⁸ *SnG*, §10.6; Strachan, ‘Infix Pronoun’, pp. 171–3.

³⁴⁹ eDIL s.v. *míanaige* or dil.ie/32138.

³⁵⁰ eDIL s.v. 2 *míanach* or dil.ie/32136.

³⁵¹ eDIL s.v. *súas* or dil.ie/39119.

³⁵² O’Brien, ‘Varia II’, p. 236.

fuas.³⁵³ Alternatively, it could be an inorganic *f*, which would have been prefixed since the *s* was lenited.

§9. *a būadred-sin*. This noun derives from the verbal noun *búaidred*, which in turn comes from the verb *búaidrid* ‘disturbs’. When referring to water, this verb carries the meaning ‘stirs up, muddies, makes turbid’.³⁵⁴ Literally translated, *a būadred-sin* is ‘its disturbance’, referring to the troubled and muddied water coming down the stream, carrying the dirt from the ore that is being washed further upstream by the miners. I have taken it as ‘unfiltered water’ in my translation. H.2.17 has the variant reading *a mbūaidred* (see image 18 below). The suspension stroke here is hooked, indicating an *m*, where we would expect an *n* for the article *an*. The scribe may have put an *m*-stroke for an *n*-stroke, or the *a* could be taken as the 3 pl. possessive pronoun *a*, which nasalises the following word. I take *a* as the latter, referring to the miners who caused the disturbance of the water.

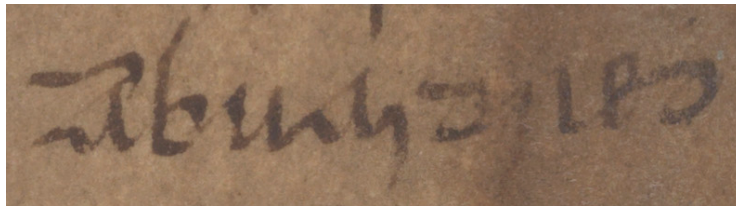


Image 18: Courtesy of TCD Library

§9. *do-fust re cach*. The first word is the perf. 3 sg. form of the verb *fostaíd* ‘stops, detains’, a simple verb derived from the compound verb *ad-suidi*. H.2.17 has the variant reading *ed ron-asta leo co-mōr*, which is literally translated ‘it detained him by them greatly’. It contains the pret. 3 sg. form of *fostaíd*, but marks the nasalisation of the 3 sg. masc. infixed pronoun *a* where the text of Ed. does not. I suggest to take the conjugated prep. *leo* as ‘by them’ to express agency instead of ‘with them’. eDIL notes that the prep. *la* can denote an agent after an active verb.³⁵⁵ In this case, this would refer to the miners, who create the unfiltered water that Conall is forced to strain.

§9. *ar cur āir*. The first word is the prep. *iar* ‘after’, found in the MidIr spelling *ar*. It is followed by *cur*, the later form of the verbal noun *cor* of *fo-ceird* ‘puts, places’, and the gen. sg. form

³⁵³ ‘Four Old Irish Songs’ (ed. Meyer, §8).

³⁵⁴ eDIL s.v. *búaidred* (b) or dil.ie/7228.

³⁵⁵ eDIL s.v. *la* (IV, c) or dil.ie/29233.

of the *o*-stem noun *ár* ‘slaughter’. eDIL notes that the verb *fo-ceird* in combination with *ár* means ‘slaughters; overthrows in battle’.³⁵⁶

§9. *Na [...] Martine*. The beginning of this line is illegible in Ed. due to fading. H.2.17 contains the following words for this lacuna: *no trī Ruadcoin Mairtine*. The *no* could be the pl. article *na*, or the short form for *danó* ‘then’. Meyer has supplied the reading from H.2.17 in his edition, although he has not indicated this. Although it is unlikely that the faded area in Ed. would have contained the longer reading found in H.2.17, part of it may have been written in the top margin, where some very faint writing can be detected in the upper left corner, which has been marked in image 19 below.

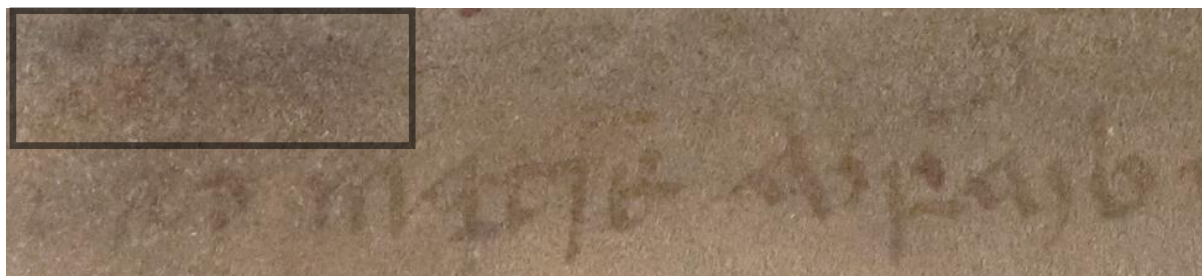


Image 19: Courtesy of ISOS

§9. *Feraib Muigi*. This refers to the *Fir Maigi Féine*, who were a non-Éoganacht tribe living around the territory of modern-day Fermoy, County Cork, the region to which they also gave their name.³⁵⁷ They traced their descent to Mug Roith, allegedly a druid disciple of Simon Magus and one of the many sons of Fergus mac Róich.³⁵⁸ Although the region is named after the *Fir Maigi Féine*, from the early eighth century onwards, they were vassals to their more powerful neighbours the Éoganacht Glendamnach, one of the three Éoganachta septs belonging to the inner circle of the dynasties.³⁵⁹ The kingship of Fir Maige Féine was held by the Uí Dubacáin, who belonged to Fir Maige Féine, until the mid-twelfth century, when they submitted to the Uí Chaím of the Éoganacht Glendamnach.

³⁵⁶ eDIL s.v. *fo-ceird* (I, i) or dil.ie/22405.

³⁵⁷ Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, p. 177.

³⁵⁸ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 545.

³⁵⁹ Bhreatnach, ‘*Críchad an Chaoilli?*’, p. 92.

§9. *ro-ben a c[h]enn de*. Meyer expanded this section as *ro-ben[sat a chemn]*.³⁶⁰ Although the letters of this section are faded, the words *a cenn* can still be made out on the right-hand side in image 20 below. It is unlikely that the verbal form *ro-b* should be expanded as *ro-bensat*, as the *b* is usually expanded as the perf. 3 sg. form *ben*. H.2.17 has the verbal form *tall* here, which is the past 3 sg. of the compound verb *do-alla* or later simple verb *tallaid* ‘takes away, strips away’. Although this is not expected in prose, the particle *ro* has been dropped here. While both clauses would require a plural verbal form, when a relative verb follows a plural antecedent, the verb may occur in the singular in MidIr.³⁶¹

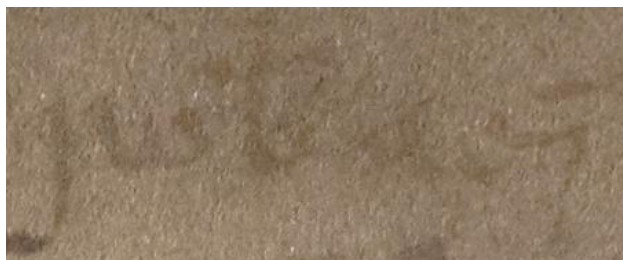


Image 20: Courtesy of ISOS

§9. *do Ernaib dōip*. This construction with the 3pl. conjugated prep. *dōip* is listed in eDIL as an impersonal construction, used ‘after the copula to introduce the virtual subject in (a) an adverbial expression’.³⁶² A more specific use of this construction occurs especially after the prep. *de* ‘of, from’, ‘followed by a noun in pl. to denote class to which the virtual subject belongs’. An example of this can be found in the St Gall glosses: *di grecaib dōib huili* ‘of the Greeks were they all’.³⁶³ The prep. *do* has been confused here with the prep. *de*, while the elision of the copula is similar to that in the phrase from *AACC*.

§9. 7 *rl-*. This is the abbreviation *ocus araille* or its Latin counterpart *et reliqua*, which indicates here that there are more lines to this stanza that have not been included in the manuscript. The complete stanza is found in H.2.17:

³⁶⁰ ‘*Goire Conaill Chernaig*’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 105).

³⁶¹ *SnG*, §14.3.

³⁶² eDIL s.v. 1 *do* (B, 7, a) or dil.ie/17096

³⁶³ *St Gall Priscian Glosses* (ed. Bauer, Hofman and Moran, s.v. *cecropidae*).

A c[h]eann bān, berta īar nglē	His pale head, that the three Red Wolves of
na trī Ruac(ōn)oin Martaine.	Martaine carry off after the fight.
is dreach(?) curad, rusnī[i]t sin	It is a warriorlike face, they were contending for
cenn Chonaill maic Aimirgin	that(?), the head of Conall son of Amergen

The stanza itself is a form of *deibide scailte (fota)*, and has the following syllabic pattern: $7^x 7^{x+1}$ or $2 7^x 7^{x+1}$ or 2 . The rhyme scheme is a:b c:d, as indicated by the bold letters in the stanza below.³⁶⁴

A c[h]eann bān, berta īar nglē	7 ¹
na trī Ruac(ōn)oin Martaine.	7 ³
is dreach(?) curad, rusnī[i]t sin	7 ¹
cenn Chonaill maic Aimirgin	7 ³

As discussed in the analysis of the language of *AACC*, the rhyme between the long *é* in *glē* and *Martaine* in the following line, which ends on an unstressed *e* or schwa (*/ə/*), is not a mistake, but rather a MidIr development.³⁶⁵

Meyer translates the phrase *īar nglē* in the first line as ‘after the decision (of the battle)’.³⁶⁶ I take it as the dat. sg. form of the noun *gleo* ‘a fight, a combat’, which has a wide range of inflexions.³⁶⁷ In the second line, the first *on* in *Ruac(ōn)oin* has been put between brackets, since correctly expanding the abbreviation <ō> here would give the word *ruaconoin* (see image 21). Based on the earlier appearance of this noun in the same paragraph as *Ruadcoin* and the syllable count of the metre, it is likely that a regular *c* should have been written here.

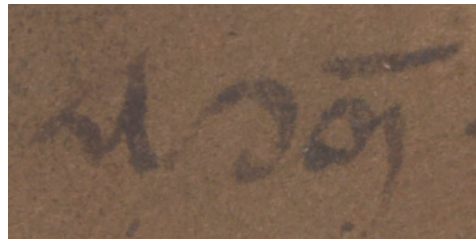


Image 21: Courtesy of TCD Library

There is some damage that has made part of the third line hard to read (see image 22), affecting the end of the word *drea[ch]*. A faint dot may be detected over the last letter, for which I suggest reading a *c* with a punctum delens over the top to indicate lenition. This gives the word *dreach*, which is the fem. *ā*-stem noun *drech* ‘face, countenance’, with the later glide vowel ‘a’. This is followed by the noun *curad*, which is the attributive gen. form of the masc. dental-stem noun

³⁶⁴ Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 65.

³⁶⁵ See section 2.1, subsection 1.2.

³⁶⁶ ‘*Goire Conaill Chernaig*’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 108).

³⁶⁷ eDIL s.v. *gleo* or dil.ie/26052; Thurneysen, ‘IR. *gleo*’, pp. 364–5. Paul Russell suggests that it could also be read with a short final *e* as *iamgle* ‘with an iron-fight’. However, since *glé* with a long *é* is commonly attested in poetry, I have chosen to take it as such (cf. *SnG* §2.11).

caur ‘warrior, hero’, and means ‘warriorlike’.³⁶⁸ The combination *drech curad* is also found in *FB*, where it is translated by Henderson as ‘in mien a hero’ (cf. *breó digla/drech curad* ‘a flame of vengeance; in mien a hero’).³⁶⁹



Image 22: Courtesy of TCD Library

In the same line, Meyer erroneously transcribes the words *rusnít[h] sin* as *rusrit sin*, leaving it untranslated in his edition (see image 23).³⁷⁰ The reading of this half of the line is problematic. A possibility would be to take it as *rus-nít[h]*, which is the pret. 3 sg. form of the verb *níthaid* ‘defeats, overpowers’. Alternatively, it could be from the verb *díthaid* ‘destroys’, with *n* for *nd*.³⁷¹ The 3 pl. infix pronoun *-s* here would likely refer to the three Red Wolves, giving the translation ‘he defeated them there’, taking *sin* as an adverb. However, this makes no sense in the context of the tale, as Conall did not defeat the three wolves, but was killed by them. This suggests that the verb may be an active form used for a passive, which was a MidIr development, and would give the more appropriate ‘he was defeated by them’.

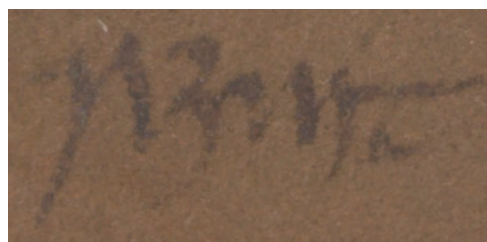


Image 23: Courtesy of TCD Library

Alternatively, it could be a form of the verb *sníid*, which ranges in meaning from ‘twists’ and ‘contends’ to ‘grieves’, although eDIL also lists a number of cases where the meaning is uncertain.³⁷² A similar form occurs in the early Middle Irish tale *Cath Maige Tuired Cunga* (‘The battle of Mag Tuired at Cong’), which is only attested in H.2.17. Fraser’s edition of the tale contains the following two forms: *Rosníid a slegha re sithuargain* (‘their spears were twisted by continual smiting’)—although he notes that the spelling in the MS is *rosnigid*³⁷³—and *rosinit a slegha ga semannaib* (‘the rivets of their spears loosened’).³⁷⁴ O’Curry, however, has a different verbal form

³⁶⁸ eDIL s.v. *caur* or dil.ie/8406.

³⁶⁹ *FB*, §46.

³⁷⁰ ‘*Goire Conaill Chernaig*’ (ed. Meyer, l. 38).

³⁷¹ eDIL s.v. *díthaid* or dil.ie/16848.

³⁷² eDIL s.v. *sníid* or dil.ie/38166.

³⁷³ ‘First Battle of Moytura’ (ed. and transl. Fraser, §39).

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, §36.

for the latter reading: *ro sníit a slegha da semannaib* ('their spears were wrenched from their rivets').³⁷⁵ These are MidIr forms, as they have the past pass. pl. ending *-it*.³⁷⁶ Possibly, the intended form in *AACC* was *rusníit*, and the scribe confused the minims, forgetting one during copying. In the current context, the second meaning listed in eDIL, 'contends, struggles, strives after', would be most appropriate. This would give the translation 'they were contending for that', meaning that the Red Wolves were seeking Conall's head.

§10. *a ndīgail*. Meyer suggests reading *a n-againd*, although the text is legible (see image 24). The *an* is followed by a *d* with straight ascender, which is consistently used as the ligature *di* in this MS. This same combination of the ligature *di* followed by *g* with a suspension stroke is also found a few lines earlier in the text, where Meyer has expanded it as *digail*.³⁷⁷



Image 24: Courtesy of ISOS

§10. *r[uc]sat Ulaid leo fo thūaid*. The superscript over the letter *r* is badly faded, but a *c* would be expected here. Based on the reading *rucsat* in H.2.17, which has a superscript *c* over the *r*, I have inserted *-uc-* here to reconstruct the verbal form *rucsat* in Ed. The subject of the verb has been omitted, but it refers to Cú Roí's head. The

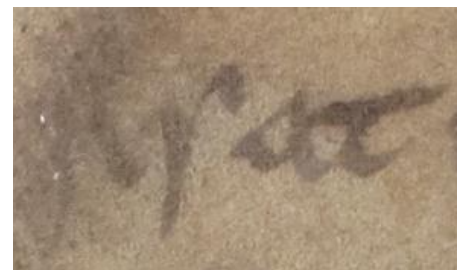


Image 25: Courtesy of ISOS

different accounts of Cú Roí's death say that he was killed by Cú Chulainn. According to *AACC*, the Ulaid had carried Cú Roí's head with them after he had been killed. This is not mentioned in the three extant versions of Cú Roí's death-tale,³⁷⁸ which suggests that this detail has either been lost or that it was added in *AACC* to give the Connachta more reason to take Conall's head.

§10. *toilled*. This verbal form could either be the past subj. or impf. ind. 3 sg. form *no-toilled*, of the compound verb *do-alla* 'there is room for', missing the required preverbal particle.

³⁷⁵ O'Curry, *On the Manners and Customs* II, p. 241.

³⁷⁶ *EIV*, p. 230.

³⁷⁷ 'Goire Conaill Chernaig' (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 105).

³⁷⁸ For the different version of the death-tale of Cú Roí, see Thurneysen, 'Die Sage von CuRoi', pp. 189–234 for Version 1; Meyer, 'Irish Miscellanies', pp. 187–91 for Version 2 and Best, 'Tragic Death of Cúroi', pp. 18–35 for Version 3.

While dropping of the preverbal particle is not commonly attested, other verbal forms occur in this text without the required preverbal particle (i.e. *caith-sium* (§4)). H.2.17 has the form *tallad* here, which is a pres. subj. 3 sg. form of *do-alla*, and most likely the original form.

eDIL notes that this verb was originally used in impersonal construction with the acc., denoting ‘there is room for’.³⁷⁹ In MidIr it came to be used in personal constructions as ‘fits, finds room (in), is contained (in)’. Since the verb is a 3 sg. form but some of the subjects of the verb are plural, the former construction appears to be used here. As this construction takes the acc., this suggests *lánamain* is a later form of this *ī*-stem noun, as the OIr form is *lánamnai*.

§10. *cet[h]ri(g) ghamna*. Meyer is uncertain how to take this phrase, and tentatively suggests in a footnote to read it as *cethri gamna*, which would mean omitting a *g*.³⁸⁰ No comparison can be made with H.2.17, as the phrase is absent there. It could also be taken as *cēt rīgghamna* ‘a hundred royal yearling calves’, or as *cēt rīgdamna* ‘a hundred heirs/princes’, as the *d* is sometimes replaced by the *g* in this text. However, this seems unlikely, as the space available in Conall’s head seems to be limited to four people, as the next two comparisons indicate. Based on this, I suggest reading the phrase as *cet[h]ri(g) ghamna*, following Meyer’s suggestion.

§10. *a cosair*. This is the verbal noun of the verb *con-sern* ‘spreads out, strews’. Meyer takes this phrase as ‘on a litter’, based on the appearance of the word in *Cath Finntrágha*.³⁸¹ However, in the examples from this source the word appears in the phrase *isin cosair cró*, which means ‘gravely wounded’, a phrase which according to eDIL is also found in multiple other sources.³⁸² The combination of a form of the verb *do-alla* and the phrase *no lanamain i cosair* is attested in *TTr*, specifically in the version found in H.2.17: *i tallfad torc trebliadan no lanamain i cosair*, where Stokes translates it as ‘wherein would fit a three years’ boar or a couple in a bed’.³⁸³ Based on this similar usage, I have chosen to translate it as ‘bed’.

³⁷⁹ eDIL s.v. 2 *do-alla* or dil.ie/17179.

³⁸⁰ ‘*Goire Conaill Chernaig*’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 105).

³⁸¹ *Cath Finntrágha* (ed. O’Rahilly, ll. 1148, 1326 and 1365).

³⁸² eDIL s.v. *cos(s)ar* or dil.ie/12623.

³⁸³ *TTr* (ed. Stokes, l. 1002).

§10. *a breth bud thūaid dorīs*. Meyer takes this part of the sentence as *a breth budthes aris*, translating it as ‘it shall be taken south again’. There are several problems with this interpretation. Firstly, he seems to have made mistakes in his transcription of the passage, as *aris* should be *dorīs*, as can be seen in image 26. Secondly, Meyer has expanded *bud th–* as *bud thess*, taking it as a form of *fo dess* ‘southwards’. On a textual level, choosing ‘south’ makes little sense, as the province of Ulster is in the north of Ireland. Instead, I have expanded it as *bud thūaid* ‘northwards’, which is a later form of *fo thūaid*, and is also found in H.2.17.³⁸⁴ This refers to Cú Roi’s head, which the Ulaid had taken north with them.

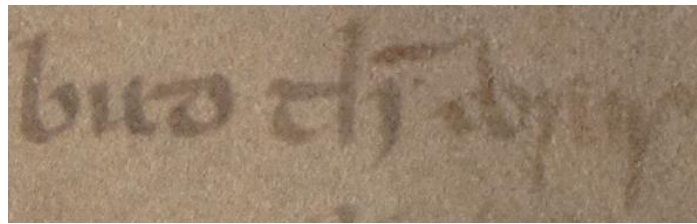


Image 26: Courtesy of ISOS

§10. *co n-ebat as as*. I have translated the first *as* as the *o*-stem noun *as* ‘milk’, but, as Meyer notes, the double *as as* could also be a dittography.³⁸⁵ I have taken the verbal form *ebat* as a subj., as the preceding conjunction *acht co* expresses that it is to be taken as a condition.³⁸⁶

§10. *dith Ulad le dith Ulad*. Meyer translates this literally as ‘the destruction of Ulster by the destruction of Ulster’.³⁸⁷ However, it is likely that a form of wordplay is at work here. Greene has explored the changing meanings of this noun, and shows that during the medieval period it could be taken as ‘loss, destruction’ and ‘absence’.³⁸⁸ What is likely meant here is that the destruction caused by the Ulaid is brought to an end by the killing of the last of the Ulaid. We learn in the first paragraph that all the Ulaid, except for Conall, have died, and that he is the last one remaining. With his death, the violence and ravaging by the Ulaid has finally come to an end. H.2.17 contains the variant reading *Ulaidh beiti, Ulaid bātar iat* ‘Ulaid there will be, Ulaid they were’. Perhaps the wordplay was lost on the scribe of H.2.17 and he therefore changed it.

³⁸⁴ eDIL s.v. *túaid, thūaid* (c) or dil.ie/42157.

³⁸⁵ Meyer, ‘Goire Conaill Chernaig’, p. 111.

³⁸⁶ *GOI*, §904.

³⁸⁷ ‘Goire Conaill Chernaig’ (ed. and transl. Meyer, p. 109).

³⁸⁸ Greene, ‘Recent Semantic Shift’, pp. 48–9.

§10. *A[i]da(i)d*. Of note is the spelling of the noun *aided* as *adaid* in Ed., while H.2.17 has the expected form *aided*. Peculiarly, the scribe consistently spells the term without an *i* in the other death-tales found in Ed., while other internal palatal consonants are marked by inserting the expected vowel (*i/e*). I have supplied an *i* in my edition between brackets, since the spelling *aded* is not attested elsewhere in eDIL.³⁸⁹ The noun *aided* appears to be an old *ā*-stem and is defined by eDIL as ‘violent death’, or ‘act of killing’ and ‘(unpleasant) fate, plight’.³⁹⁰ Pedersen suggests that the word *aided* might be the verbal noun of the verb *ad-etha* ‘goes against, attacks’,³⁹¹ but Marstrander disagrees with this idea.³⁹² Mikhailova and Nikolaeva oppose the meaning ‘violent death’ and propose to interpret it as ‘ill fate, plight, fatum’, yet fail to elucidate how they arrive at this meaning.³⁹³ I agree with Ingridsdotter that their conclusion that ‘*aided* is something that comes suddenly, that differs from a certain standard and can be predicted, because, logically, only unnatural death is worth to be predicted’ is ill-defined and makes little sense.³⁹⁴ I have chosen to translate the term as ‘violent death’, since this meaning best suits this context.

³⁸⁹ There only example with the similar spelling *adhaigh* is very late: it is found in the Irish Life of Bevis of Hampton, where the editor corrected it to *aidhedh*; cf. *conidh i aidhedh iarla Hamtuir sin* ‘Thus was the violent death of the Earl of Hampton’ (*Irish Life of Bevis* (ed. and transl. Robinson, pp. 275 and 300)).

³⁹⁰ eDIL s.v. *aided* or dil.ie/866.

³⁹¹ Pedersen, *Vergleichende Grammatik*, II, p. 524.

³⁹² Marstrander, ‘Review: J. Vendryes: *Lexique étymologique*’, p. 206. Marstrander suggests that the word may have derived from the Indo-European root *ped-*, Lat. *Pessum* (supine) *dare* ‘strike down, kill’.

³⁹³ Mikhailova and Nikolaeva, ‘Denotations of Death’, p. 110.

³⁹⁴ Ingridsdotter, *Aided Derbforaill*, p. 14; Mikhailova and Nikolaeva, ‘Denotations of Death’, p. 111.

3. AIDED CHEIT MAIC MÁGACH

3.1 Linguistic Analysis

The main linguistic features of *ACMM* are discussed below. Developments that have already been treated in the linguistic analysis of *AACC* are prefaced with a shorter description, while features that are particular to *ACMM* are discussed in more detail. The relevant words are referenced by paragraph number, and noteworthy forms are also considered in the textual notes. References to more extensive discussions of specific linguistic developments are provided in the footnotes.

1. Orthography

Vowels and Diphthongs

1.1 Reduction of proclitics

The only word that loses a final short vowel in this text, reducing a disyllabic proclitic to a monosyllable, is the preverbal particle *ro*, which loses the *-o* in *gur* (§8; §9), for OIr *co-ro*.³⁹⁵

1.2 Glide vowel *a*

This early ModIr feature is attested in *meabal* (§3) for OIr *mebal*, and perhaps also in *spreathach* (§9) for OIr *sprédach*, although *sprédach* is rarely attested.³⁹⁶

Consonants

1.3 Spelling of the stops *b*, *d* and *g*

The stops /b/, /d/, /g/, which were written as *-p*, *-t*, *-c* in OIr, could be written as *-b*, *-d*, *-g* in MidIr.³⁹⁷ Examples from this text include *gadaid* (§3) for OIr *gataid*; *caradrad* (§4) for OIr *caratrad*; *lebaid* (§8; §9) for OIr *lepaid*.

³⁹⁵ *OIGR*, p. 177.

³⁹⁶ *SnG* IV, §2.2.

³⁹⁷ *SnG*, §2.2.

2. Phonology

Vowels and Diphthongs

2.1 Unstressed vowels

In unstressed final open syllables, vowels began to fall together.³⁹⁸ Nouns affected by this development include the acc. pl. of *o*-stem *na heocha* (§4) for OIr *na echu*; the masc. acc. pl. of *i*-stem *leaga* (§8) for OIr *le(i)gi*; and the acc. pl. of *ā*-stem noun *sligi* (§9) for OIr *slega*. Other parts of speech were also affected: we find the adjectival participle acc. sg. *fuslaicthi* (§9) for OIr *fuslaicthe*; and the preposition *i* ‘in’: *a crīch* (§1) for OIr *i crích*.

2.2 Hiatus

Already in the OIr period, hiatus syllables were contracted to monosyllables:³⁹⁹ *atā* (§3); *ataī* (§7).

2.3 *e* > *eo/eu* before *ch/g*

When appearing before a slender *ch/g*, the short and stressed vowel *e* could change to *eo/eu* in MidIr.⁴⁰⁰ Examples of this development all occur in forms of the *o*-stem noun *ech*: *na eochu* (§2) for OIr *inna echu*; *forsna eochu* (§3) for OIr *forsna echu*; *na n-eoch* (§3) for OIr *inna n-ech*; *na heocha* (§4) for OIr *na hechu*. Note retention of the *e* in *h-echu* (§6).

2.4 Falling together of *iu* with *i*

In MidIr, *i* and *iu* fell together before a broad consonant, merging into *i*.⁴⁰¹ Examples include the dat. sg. forms of the *o*-stem *a cinn* (§3) for OIr *a ciunn* and *ar bar cinn* (§8) for OIr *ar far ciunn*.

³⁹⁸ WMG, p. 87.

³⁹⁹ *SnG*, §3.2.

⁴⁰⁰ *SnG*, §3.7.

⁴⁰¹ *SnG*, §3.11.

Consonants

2.5 Assimilation of consonants

The OIr internal consonant clusters *-ln-*, *-nd-*, *-mb-* were assimilated to *-ll-*, *-nn-*, *-mm-* in MidIr.⁴⁰² This occasionally led to the hypercorrect spelling of *nd* etc. for historical *nn*, as in *arlaindi* (§7) and *irlaind* (§7) for OIr *airlann*; *cend* (§9) for OIr *cenn*, but note also the expected form *cinn* (§3; §8).

2.6 Confusion between *d* and *g*

Lenited *d* (ð) and *g* (γ) began to fall together in later MidIr,⁴⁰³ and we find *bēogacht* (§3) for OIr *béodacht*, *lāighedh* (§5) for OIr *láided*; *ro-maigset* (§6) for MidIr *ro-maidset* (for OIr *ro-memaid*); *buige* (§7) for OIr *buide*; and *dūnaig* (§9) for OIr *dúnaid*. The Early ModIr development of the falling together of unlenited *d* and *g* is also attested here: *intógh* (§5) for OIr *intód*; *māgat* (§7) for OIr *mádat*; *dagaid* (§8) for OIr *dadaig*.

2.7 Prosthetic *f*

The following examples of an inorganic or prosthetic *f* in initial position are found:⁴⁰⁴ *faro-fēimid* (§6); *fosclaihi* (§8); *fuslaicthi* (§9); *fuslaici* (§9).

2.8 Unstressed words

In unstressed words, initial *c* could be spelled as *g*:⁴⁰⁵ *gur* (§8; §9) for OIr *co-ro*, but note that this development has not yet taken place in *can* (§4) (OIr *cen*). The prep. *co* is not affected here.

3. Nouns

3.1 Loss of Neuter

No clear instances of neut. nouns are found in *ACMM*, and it is highly likely that historically neut. words are either taken as masc. or fem., since the neut. gender already fell into

⁴⁰² *SnG*, §3.16; *WMG*, p. 86; *OIGR*, p. 177.

⁴⁰³ *SnG*, §3.18; Breatnach, ‘*Lebor na hUidre*’, pp. 74–5.

⁴⁰⁴ *SnG*, §3.21; *EIV*, pp. 199–200.

⁴⁰⁵ Mac Gearailt, ‘Some Late Middle Irish Texts’, pp. 177–8; *SnG*, §3.23.

disuse in the ninth century and had disappeared by the eleventh century.⁴⁰⁶ Examples include *gona* (§1); *an gemrid* (§2); *fāstīg* (§2); *in t-anocul* (§4); *in airecal* (§8); *in immid* (§8), although it is not always clear from the context whether these nouns are now taken as masc. or fem. In the case of *gona* (§1), while the retained old *-a/-o* ending of the *i*-stem is the same for both the neut. and fem. of the *i*-stem, it is likely taken as fem. here.

3.2 Changes to noun stems

The gen. sg. noun *cotach* (§2) of the fem. *i*-stem *cuit* is inflected as a guttural stem here, which is later development. The noun *díthrub* in the phrase *fon díthrub uli* (§5) may have originally been a masc. *o*-stem, but was already declined as a masc. *u*-stem or fem. *ā*-stem stem in the OIr period.⁴⁰⁷

The prep. *fo*, here with suffixed sg. article, can take either the acc. or dat. case. If the *io-/iā*-stem adj. *uli* shows retention of the *-i* ending, this may indicate that it is declined as an *iā*-stem and that the noun *díthrub* is taken as an *ā*-stem stem. Since the nom. is occasionally adopted as the acc. form in MidIr because of a tendency to abandon the distinctions between these two cases,⁴⁰⁸ this might explain these forms.

The gen. sg. noun *arlaindi* (§7), which is a form of *airlann*, is originally an *o*-stem, but later becomes an *ā*-stem, spelled *urlann*, *orlann*, *erlann*.⁴⁰⁹ The dat. pl. noun *fraithaib* (§9), which derives from the OIr fem. *i*-stem *fraig*, is declined as a dental stem here, which is MidIr development.⁴¹⁰

3.3 Forms spreading to other cases

In MidIr, *u*-colouring was often lost in the dat. sg. of the *o*-stems.⁴¹¹ However, the only dat. forms in this text are *a cinn* (§3) and *ar bar cinn* (§8). The loss of *u*-colouring in the noun *cenn* was already common in the late OIr/early MidIr period.⁴¹²

Confusion arose during the MidIr period in the use of the nom. and acc. pl. Under specific circumstances, this resulted in the use of acc. pl. for the nom. pl. in the *o*-stem nouns of the

⁴⁰⁶ *SnG*, §5.4

⁴⁰⁷ eDIL s.v. *díthrub* or dil.ie/16909.

⁴⁰⁸ *SnG*, §5.6.

⁴⁰⁹ eDIL s.v. 2 *airlann* or dil.ie/2175.

⁴¹⁰ eDIL s.v. 1 *fraig* or dil.ie/24233.

⁴¹¹ *WMG*, p. 86.

⁴¹² *GOI*, §174.

syncopating type.⁴¹³ As this development would not be expected to occur in the noun *ech*, the acc. pl. *na eochu* (§2) that is found for the OIr nom. pl. *eich* is taken as an error (see Textual Note for discussion). The old acc. pl. ending in *-u* is found in the following acc. pl. nouns: *eochu* (§3); *bēolu* (§3); *h-echu* (§6); *Ultu* (§3; §6) The spelling of acc. pl. *na heocha* (§4) with final *-a* is a later MidIr development, due to vowels in unstressed final open syllables falling together in speech as ə.⁴¹⁴

The falling together of unstressed vowels also accounts for the acc. pl. *trī sligi* (§9) of the fem. *ā*-stem noun *sleg* and the acc. pl. form *leaga* (§8) of the masc. *i*-stem noun *líraig*. In Early ModIr, the *-a* ending had become the standard spelling for the masc. *o*-stem acc. pl.⁴¹⁵

The dat. pl. ending *-(a)ib* came to be used after all prepositions and by the late MidIr period had in effect become a prepositional ending.⁴¹⁶ The prep. *imm* normally governs acc. case nouns in OIr, but the noun is found here with this prepositional ending: *imna fraighthaib* (§9).

3.4 MidIr forms

Some later forms of nouns are also found, such as *m'anum* (§3), acc. sg. of the fem. noun *ainim(m)*, for OIr *anmain/anim*.

4. Adjective

Adjectives are very rare in this text, and mostly appear as regular predicate adjective nom. sg. forms (e.g. *maith* (§4 x2); *olc* (§6)). The predicative adjective *trūag* (§7) is found in MidIr spelling, as opposed to OIr *tróg*.

There is one comparative adjective in the text: *robo ferr lem inā* (§6). The form *inā* is the rel. form of *indaas*, *indás* ‘than’, which consists of *ind* (dat. sg. form of the neut. article used as demonstrative) + rel. *-n-* + subst. verb.⁴¹⁷ In the construction of nasalising subordinate clauses after a comparative in MidIr, the variant *in-* frequently supplants *ol-* in the formation of nasalised forms of the substantive verb, although forms with *in-* are already found in the Milan Glosses.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹³ *SnG*, §5.5.

⁴¹⁴ *SnG*, §3.1.

⁴¹⁵ *SnG* IV, §4.14.

⁴¹⁶ *WMG*, p. 89; Mac Gearailt, ‘Zum Irischen’, p. 36.

⁴¹⁷ eDIL s.v. *indaas*, *indás* or dil.ie/28307.

⁴¹⁸ *OIGR*, p. 185; *SnG*, §6.16.

5. Article

5.1 *in/ind/int* vs. *an*

The nom., acc., and dat. sg. forms of the masc. and fem. article are mostly written *in* (19 times). When written as *an* (7 times), all these instances represent the MidIr form of the article.⁴¹⁹ Instead of the form *ind^{hL}*, found before vowels and lenited *f*, the form *in* appears (gen. sg. *in imnid* (§8)).⁴²⁰

5.2 Generalisation of pl. article *na*

The shorter form *na* has replaced all instances where the long pl. form *inna* would have been expected in OIr, although this development had already begun at the end of the OIr period.⁴²¹ The gen. pl. masc. form *inna* is found as *na* once: *na scur* (§5). The new form (*in*)*na* has also taken over the OIr nom. pl. masc. *in/ind/int*:⁴²² *na eochu* (§2). In the gen. sg. fem., the short form of the article *na* has superseded the long form *inna*: *na imdaidi* (§9).

6. Numeral

6.1 Dual

The numeral two is found once: *in dā arc[h]oin* (§7). The form *in dā* may look like the dual, but this is unlikely since the dual was already falling out of use during the OIr period in articles and nouns and was not used for the adjectives.⁴²³ In MidIr, the use of the dual declined further and there was a tendency to use *na*, the pl. form of the article, instead of *in*, preceded by the indeclinable num. *dá* ‘two’.⁴²⁴ Although the form *na* more commonly appears in texts as early as the tenth century, the form *in* is occasionally found in late MidIr texts, as mentioned by Strachan.⁴²⁵

6.2 Form of numerals

The numeral one (OIr *óen*) is found in the early ModIr spelling *aon* twice: *aonfer* (§6 2x); *aonfir* (§6). The numeral three appears in the nom.: *trī noī cinn* (§2), and in the acc.: *trī sligi* (§9). In

⁴¹⁹ *SnG* IV, §2.4 (13).

⁴²⁰ *SnG*, §7.7.

⁴²¹ *SnG*, §7.6; WMG, pp. 89–90.

⁴²² *SnG*, §7.4.

⁴²³ *OIGR*, p. 187.

⁴²⁴ *SnG*, §8.3

⁴²⁵ Strachan, ‘Middle Irish Declension’, pp. 241–2.

OIr, the numeral *trí* took the form *téora* if it preceded an acc. fem. noun.⁴²⁶ However, in the MidIr period the distinction between masc. and fem. forms of the numerals disappeared, in favour of the masc. forms, as is apparent in *trī sligi*.⁴²⁷

7. Adverbs

Adverbs are often lenited in MidIr.⁴²⁸ While this development is not attested in forms such as *fešta* (§7), it should be noted that lenition is often not marked by the scribe in this text. We also find some MidIr forms of adverbs: *minic* (§1) for OIr *meinic(c)*; *immorro* (§5; §7) for OIr *immurgu*; *aniū* (§5) for OIr *indiu*; *anunn* (§5) for OIr *inonn*; (assertive particle) *ām* (§4; §6) for OIr *ém*;⁴²⁹ *sunna* (§7) for OIr *sunda*; *ar tūs* (§7) for OIr *ar thus*. The adverbial phrase *do sunrad* (§2) is found for OIr *do sainriud*.

8. Pronouns

8.1 Infixes Pronouns

The following infixes pronouns are found: *nīt muirbeb-so(m)* (§7); *not-bēr* (§7); *not-īcfait[h]er* (§7). All three are Class A 2 sg. object infixes pronouns and found in the same sentence. Although the object infixes pronouns start being replaced by the independent pronouns during the MidIr period, the 1 and 2 sg. infixes pronouns continue to be used in written language, especially bardic verse.⁴³⁰

8.2 Independent Pronouns

In late MidIr, independent pronouns begin to replace infixes pronouns as the object of active verbs.⁴³¹ The independent pronoun is used as the object of a transitive verb once: *co fūair Conall [...] hē* (§2). The independent pronoun is twice used as the predicate of the 3 sg. copula:⁴³² *bid maith hē* (§4), *is marb cena tū* (§7). These appear alongside the 1 sg. *am* (§7) and 2 sg. *at* (§7) copular forms, which were still in use in the Early ModIr period.⁴³³

⁴²⁶ *GOI*, §385.

⁴²⁷ *SnG*, §8.4; Mac Gearailt, 'Zum Irischen', p. 39.

⁴²⁸ *SnG*, §4.7.

⁴²⁹ Mac Gearailt, 'Some Late Middle Irish Texts', p. 177.

⁴³⁰ *SnG IV*, §9.2.

⁴³¹ Breatnach, 'Lebor na hUidre', p. 70; *SnG*, §10.15; Strachan, 'Infixes Pronoun', pp. 76–7.

⁴³² *SnG*, §10.14.

⁴³³ *SnG IV*, §7.27.

8.3 Emphasising Pronouns

Since unstressed vowels in final position fell together in MidIr, this caused the 1, 2 and 3 sg. fem. and 3 pl. emphasising pronouns to become interchangeable.⁴³⁴ As in *AACC*, we find one instance of the 3 sg. masc./neut. or 3 pl. emphasising pronoun *-som/-sium* occurring where a 2 sg. form is expected: *nīt muirbeb-so(m)* (§7). For both the 1 and 2 sg. the form *-sa* is used: 1 sg.: *co fācar-sa* (§8) and *am lebaid-sa* (§9); 2 sg.: *am beō-sa* (§7); *form-sa* (§7); *nī dingēn-sa* (§7); *dīt-sa* (§9).

8.4 Possessive pronouns

The 2 pl. possessive pronoun *for/far* appears in OIr as *bar* when preceded by the prepositions *di, do, fo, fri, tri* and *i*.⁴³⁵ In MidIr, the three forms become interchangeable. It is found in this text after the preposition *ar* in the prepositional phrase *ar bar cinn* (§8).

9. Prepositions

9.1 Case following prepositions

The use of the correct case governing a prep. began to be confused in the MidIr period due to the falling together of the nom., acc. and dat. sg. forms. Often the dat. case is found after a prep. where the acc. case would have been expected in OIr.⁴³⁶ The following cases are used after prepositions in this text:

- *a* ‘out of, from’ which historically takes the dat. case, is followed here by the acc. sg.: *asa nēl* (§6), while the dat. form would be *níul* or MidIr *néol* (*neól*).⁴³⁷
- *fri* ‘against’ takes the historically correct acc. here: *fri Bēlcoin* (§9).
- *co* ‘to’ takes the historically correct acc.: *co h-Ultu* (§3; §6).
- *imm* ‘about’ normally governs acc. case nouns, but in late OIr and MidIr the prep. is sometimes followed by the dat. when the noun is pl.:⁴³⁸ *imna fraighthaib* (§9).

Some instances of prepositions from this text which could take either the dat. or the acc. in OIr include:

- *ar* ‘before’ takes the dat. in the expression *ar bar cinn* (§8).

⁴³⁴ *SnG*, §10.2.

⁴³⁵ eDIL s.v. 2 *for, far, bar, uar* or dil.ie/23273.

⁴³⁶ *SnG*, §5.1 and §5.5

⁴³⁷ eDIL s.v. *nēl* or dil.ie/33060.

⁴³⁸ eDIL s.v. 1 *imm, imb* or dil.ie/27635.

- *fo* ‘under’ takes the dat. in *fon dithrub* (§5), describing location, but the acc. is found in *fon carpat* (§2).
- *for* ‘on’ is found with the acc. in *forsna eochu* (§3), which may imply motion.

9.2 Base forms of prepositions

Due to the falling together of unstressed final vowels, the spelling of prepositions in MidIr varied. Examples from this text include *ac* (§2; §5 2x) < OIr *oc*,⁴³⁹ as well as in the 1 sg. conjugated preposition *acum* (§7) for *ocum*; *can* (§4 2x) < OIr *cen*.⁴⁴⁰ The preposition *i* ‘in’ is spelled as *a*:⁴⁴¹ *a crích* (§1); *a fāstig* (§2); *a cinn* (§3); *a nēl* (§5); *am lebaid-sa* (§9), except when followed by the article: *isin āth* (§5), *isin carpat* (§6), *isin lebaid* (§9).

There is also some confusion between the prep. *di* and *do*, mostly when used to denote descent or belonging to a certain group: *do Chonnachtaib* (§6 4x); This development occurs early on, as it is already attested in the Cambrian and Würzburg glosses.⁴⁴²

9.3 Forms of conjugated prepositions

The 1 pl. conjugated form of the prep. *do* can appear in MidIr with a slender final *n*, as in *dūin* (§3).⁴⁴³ The initial consonant of the conjugated forms of the preposition *co* can be lenited in MidIr, but the forms in this text lack lenition: *cucui* (§8 2x).⁴⁴⁴

10. Verbs

10.1 Simplification of compound verbs

Many compound verbs are reanalysed as simple verbs during the MidIr period, as a consequence of the complexities of the alternation between deuterotonic and prototonic forms.⁴⁴⁵ These new simple verbs were mainly modelled on the protonic stem or the verbal noun of the old compound verb. *ACMM* contains many of these simple verbs, mostly based on the prototonic form of the verb: pres. 3 sg. *dūscid* (§6) from OIr *do-fíuschi*; pres. 3 sg. *tōcbaid* (§8) from OIr *do-fócaib*;

⁴³⁹ *SnG*, §13.21.

⁴⁴⁰ *SnG*, §13.5.

⁴⁴¹ *SnG*, §3.1; *WMG*, p. 87.

⁴⁴² eDIL s.v. 1 *de, di* or dil.ie/14787.

⁴⁴³ *SnG*, §13.8.

⁴⁴⁴ *SnG*, §13.7.

⁴⁴⁵ *SnG*, §§11.16–19; *EIV*, pp. 191–4; *WMG*, p. 99.

pres. 3 sg. *fācbaid* (§9) from OIr *fo-ácaib*; pres. 3 sg. *ēirgid* (§9) from OIr *at-reig*; pres. 3 sg. *imrid* (§9) from OIr *imm-beir*.

10.2 Developments in verbal stems

The fut. 3 sg. form *nī dingna* (§8) of *do-gní* has the MidIr stem *dingn-*.⁴⁴⁶ The future verbal forms *muirfed* (§6) and *nīt muirbeb-so(m)* (§7) from the verb *marbaid* have the stem *muir-*, which is a later form of the fut. stem *mairb-*, occurring before the *f* of inflection.⁴⁴⁷

The form *fosclaiithi* (§8) is the past participle of the verb *osclaid*.⁴⁴⁸ This verb is a later form of the MidIr simple verb *oslaicid* (based on the OIr compound verb *ass-oilgi*). The stem has undergone metathesis, causing *oslaic-* to become *oscail-*.⁴⁴⁹ The earlier form without metathesis is attested twice: as the acc. sg. adj. *fuslaicthi* (§9), and the pres. 3 sg. form *fuslaici* (§9).

10.3 Preverbal particles

In MidIr, unstressed proclitic vowels merge and are all pronounced as /ə/, resulting in spelling confusion between *o* and *a* in preverbs such as *do*, *for*, *ro* and *no*.⁴⁵⁰ In the one instance in this text, *fa* is written for historic *fo*: *faro-fēimid* (§6) (see the textual note on this form).

The 3 sg. neut. infix pronoun lost its meaning but continued to be used, becoming petrified and eventually displacing the corresponding verbal forms which lacked the pronoun.⁴⁵¹ Parallel to this, preverbs ending in a final vowel (i.e. *ro-* and *ní-*) could cause lenition, as the Class A 3 sg. neut. infix pronoun caused lenition. One example is attested here: *do-thecait* (§9).

The particle *do* began to replace the older perfective particle *ro* in the early MidIr period and eventually took over as a preterite particle in the twelfth century.⁴⁵² An example here is *do-loitsitar* (§7), *s*-pret. 3 pl. of *loittid*, vs. OIr *ro-loited*. The particle *do* also appears in the verbal forms *do-torc[h]air* (§7) and *do-rorchair* (§5). The verbal form *do-torc[h]air* (§7) is the perf. 3 sg. of *do-tuit* (OIr *-torchair*). While the perfective particle *ro* was infix in the verb in the OIr period, it was no

⁴⁴⁶ *SnG*, §3.14.

⁴⁴⁷ eDIL s.v. *marbaid* or dil.ie/31573.

⁴⁴⁸ eDIL s.v. *osclaid* or dil.ie/34066.

⁴⁴⁹ *EIV*, p. 192.

⁴⁵⁰ *SnG*, §11.1; *EIV*, p. 169; *OIGR*, p. 175.

⁴⁵¹ *EIV*, pp. 171–3; *WMG*, pp. 97–8.

⁴⁵² Mac Gearailt, ‘Some Late Middle Irish Texts’, p. 198. McCone argues that the production of pairs such as *ro-thidnacht* and *do-thidnacht* caused *ro* and *do* to be perceived as ‘free variants in proclisis before preterites unaccompanied by a further conjunct particle’, an explanation which is also supported by Breatnach (*EIV*, p. 196; *SnG*, §11.3) This caused the formal distinctions between the preverbal part. *ro-* and *do-* to fall away during the MidIr period.

longer perceived as a particle in MidIr but as part of the verb, which is why *do-* was prefixed to the verb again. The verb *do-rorchair* (§5), the perf. 3 sg. of *do-tuit*, shows doubling of the *ro*, likely because the *ro-* is no longer perceived as the perfective particle. Similarly, pres. 3 pl. *do-thecait* (§9) is reanalysed in the MidIr period as a simple verb (*ticc*), on the basis of which the hypercorrect form *do-ticc* was formed. This doubling of the preverb already occurred in the OIr period, but became widespread in early MidIr.⁴⁵³

10.4 Verbal Noun

The loss of the final *-d* in the verbal noun *cuingi* (§1; §7), from the verb *con-dieig*, indicates that this is a later form of *cuingid*.⁴⁵⁴ The verbal noun *lāighedh* (§5) from the verb *laídid* has a *g* for *d* as these consonants began falling together when slender in MidIr.⁴⁵⁵

10.5 Tense & Mood

Present Indicative

The preponderance of the endings of the pres. 3 sg. forms are regular and show few innovations. When in independent position, absolute endings appear in former compound verbs, as in *tōcbaid* (§8) and *fācbaid* (§9), as a consequence of the formation of new simple verbs. The pres. 3 sg. conjunct ending *-ann/-enn*, which developed during the MidIr period, is attested once in *no-thuairgenn* (§5), pres. 3 sg. of *do-fúairc*.⁴⁵⁶

Two pres. 3 pl. forms are found in this text: *do-thecait* (§9) and *do-berait* (§9). Although the 3 pl. endings remain virtually unchanged, the pres. 3 pl. absolute ending *-(a)it* is now found for the OIr conjunct ending *-at/-et* of old compound verbs.⁴⁵⁷ In OIr, compound verbs with *to*, *fo* or *ro* followed by a vowel could appear in either the prototonic or deuterotonic form in independent position (e.g. OIr ind. pres. 3 pl. *do-ecat* and *tecat*).⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵³ *SnG*, §11.20.

⁴⁵⁴ eDIL s.v. 1 *cuingid* or dil.ie/13614.

⁴⁵⁵ *SnG*, §3.18

⁴⁵⁶ *SnG*, §12.12–3; *EIV*, pp. 205–7.

⁴⁵⁷ *SnG*, §12.17.

⁴⁵⁸ *EIV*, p. 193

Imperative

The imperative barely changes in the MidIr period, and the forms in this text are regular:⁴⁵⁹

2 sg.: *beir* (§6); *fair*(?) (§7); *dūn* (§9); *tarr* (§9)

2 pl.: *marbaid* (§8); *tigid* (§8)

Present Subjunctive

The only two pres. subj. forms in this text are *fācar* (§8) and *tísi* (§9). During the MidIr period, the OIr pres. *a*-subj. 1 sg. ending *-ur/-or/-er/-ar* of the deponent verbs fall together and spread to active verbs, specifically to the non-deponent endingless 1 sg. conjunct forms of the *a*-subj.⁴⁶⁰ This development is already attested in the Würzburg glosses, but it became the most common ending for act. 1 sg. conjunct forms in the eleventh century.⁴⁶¹ The verb *fācar*, the pres. subj. 1 sg. of *fo-ácaib*, has adopted the *a*-subj. 1 sg. deponent ending. The form *tísi* is the pres. subj. absolute 2 sg. form of the verb *do-icc*, although the conjunct form *tís* would be expected here (see textual note on this form).

Preterite

The *s*-preterite, which was mostly confined to weak verbs in OIr, spreads during the MidIr period at the expense of other types of endings.⁴⁶² The following OIr *s*-preterites are found in this text: 1 sg. (with *ro*) *ro-gellus* (§6); 3 sg. *marbsat* (§9); (with *ro*) *ro-lá* (§4). The remaining two *s*-preterite forms are MidIr developments: the 3 sg. *ro-maigset* (§6) for OIr *ro-memaid*,⁴⁶³ which has taken over the *s*-pret. ending, and the *s*-pret. 3 pl. form *do-loitsitar* (§7) for OIr *ro-loited*, which contains the old *s*-pret. 3 pl. deponent endings *-setar/-satar*. In the MidIr period, these deponent endings initially spread to active forms, then to different verbal stems.⁴⁶⁴

One *t*-preterite form is found: *co riacht* (§9). The *t*-preterite began to fall out of use in favour of the suffixless and *s*-preterite, after which the *s*-preterite eventually took over from the suffixless preterite.⁴⁶⁵ The remaining pret. forms in this text preserve the suffixless preterite:

⁴⁵⁹ *SnG*, §12.23–4.

⁴⁶⁰ *WMG*, pp. 95–6.

⁴⁶¹ *EIV*, pp. 217–8.

⁴⁶² *WMG*, pp. 92–3.

⁴⁶³ Mac Gearailt, ‘Zum Irischen’, p. 28.

⁴⁶⁴ *SnG*, §12.37 and 12.38; *EIV*, pp. 239–40.

⁴⁶⁵ *EIV*, p. 240.

- 3 sg.: *luidh* (§1; 2); *dechaid* (§1); *luid* (§6); *fūair* (§2); (with *ro*) *faro-fēimid* (§6); *tānic* (§7); *rāinic* (§8); (with *ro*) *ro-fitir* (§8)
- 3 pl.: *lotar* (§4); (with *ro*) *co torchair* (§5); (with *do*) *do-rochair* (§5) and *do-torc[h]air* (§7)

Most of these are strong verbs that are still in use in ModIr as irregular verbs and can therefore not be taken as indications of an Old or MidIr date.

Past Passive

Only three past pass. forms are found: sg. *do-curedh* (§2), *[i]-laad* (§2) and *clos* (§5). The forms *do-curedh* and *[i]-laad* have the regular conjunct ending *-ad/-ed*.⁴⁶⁶ The past pass. *co clos* (§5) is a MidIr development of the pret. pass. sg. of *ro-cluinethar*. This variant, which is formed on analogy with *ad-cess* from the related verb *ad-ci*, had already begun to replace the older form *-cloth* in OIr and is common in MidIr.⁴⁶⁷

Future

All the future forms found in the text are either *f*-future or *ē*-future, which are the two productive future formations in MidIr.⁴⁶⁸ Eight out of the eleven future forms are *ē*-futures:

Act. 1 sg.: *nī tibur* (§3); *do-bēr* (§3); *nī dingēn* (§7); *not-bēr* (§7)

Act. 3 sg.: *toircēba* (§4); *nī dingna* (§8)

The irregular fut. forms *racha* (§5) and *raga* (§8), from the verb *téit*, are MidIr developments of the OIr fut. 3 sg. form *-rega*.⁴⁶⁹ The form *racha* (§5) shows devoicing of the original *-g-* to *ch*, while the form *raga* (§8) retains the older voiced *-g-*.⁴⁷⁰

The remaining three forms are *f*-futures: *nīt muirbeb* (§7); *not-īcfait[h]er* (§7); *caithfet* (§7). The form *caithfet* (§7) has the fut. 1 sg. absolute ending *-et/-at*, which developed during the MidIr period.⁴⁷¹ The ending *-eb* in *nīt muirbeb* (§7) is a variation of the old *f*-future 1 sg. conjunct ending *-ub*, which is retained during the MidIr period. While the absolute 1 sg. *-(f)et/at* ending eventually takes over, this does not occur in the dependent forms until the end of the Early ModIr period.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁶ *EIV*, p. 229.

⁴⁶⁷ *GOI*, §708; *EIV*, p. 232.

⁴⁶⁸ *WMG*, p. 91.

⁴⁶⁹ *SnG*, §12.144.

⁴⁷⁰ *EIV*, p. 249.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid*, pp. 174–5 and 227; *SnG*, §12.122.

⁴⁷² *SnG*, §12.122; *EIV*, p. 227.

Secondary Future

Only two forms of the secondary future are found: *f*-future 3 sg. *muirfed* (§6) and pass. 2 sg. *lēm[h]a* (§7). The latter form may originally have had a reduplicated future, but the *ē*-future spread during and after the OIr period to forms of this verb.⁴⁷³ Both fut. forms of the verb *marbaid* (i.e. *muirfed* (§6) and *nīt muirbeb* (§7)) have the later fut. stem *muirb-*, which turns into *muir-* when followed by an ending with initial *f*, as is the case in the sec. fut. form *muirfed*.⁴⁷⁴

Copula

The innovatory subj. impf. 3 sg. form *beith* (§6) is found for OIr *bit*.⁴⁷⁵ The regular pres. 1 sg. *am* (§7) and 2 sg. *at* (§7) are attested, but the innovatory forms *isam* and *isat* are not.⁴⁷⁶ The impersonal use of the 3 sg. form of the copula with the appropriate pronoun gradually takes over from the conjugated forms. This process is first attested in *SR* and becomes standard in Early ModIr.⁴⁷⁷ Outside the 3 sg., one conjugated form is found: pres. subj. 2 sg. *māgat* (§7), against one example using a pronoun: *is marb cena tū* (§7). In the 3 sg., there is one example with a pronoun: *bid maith hē* (§4), against *bit maith (an) Ēriu* (§7); *bo slān* (§8); *bid fīr* (§8); *bid ēicin* (§9).

Old Irish *ol*

The OIr form *ol* is attested once, whereas the later forms *or* and *ar* appear 30 times.⁴⁷⁸ All 21 occurrences of *ar* are represented by an abbreviation, whereas the nine instances of *or* are written out in full.

Conclusion

On the basis of this linguistic analysis, *ACMM* can be assigned to the MidIr period. Features such as the spread of the *a*-subj 1 sg. deponent ending *-ar* and the fut. 1 sg. absolute ending *-et/-at* are in support of this date. The verbal system shows mostly new, simple verbs and a few compound verbal forms that remain in use throughout the Early ModIr period. These compound verbs often show doubling of the preverb or have a MidIr ending, which are further indications

⁴⁷³ *EIV*, p. 48.

⁴⁷⁴ eDIL s.v. *marbaid* or dil.ie/31573.

⁴⁷⁵ eDIL s.v. *attá* or dil.ie/4927; Mulchrone, 'Die Verbalformen Der Vita Tripartita', p. 443.

⁴⁷⁶ *SnG*, §12.194; *OIGR*, p. 213.

⁴⁷⁷ *SnG*, §10.14.

⁴⁷⁸ *WMG*, p. 91; Mac Gearailt, 'Zum Irischen', p. 44.

that the scribe was writing some time after the OIr period.⁴⁷⁹ However, assigning a specific date within the MidIr period to this text is problematic. It is important to keep in mind that due to the short length of the tale, it only provides a very limited number of linguistic forms that can be analysed for indications of date. Assigning a specific date to the text on the basis of this limited evidence inevitably brings with it the risk of placing too much weight on a limited number of forms.

On the basis of linguistic features such as the appearance of the independent object pronoun and the preponderance of newly created simple verbs based on compound verbs, it is likely that an early MidIr date can be ruled out. Compared to texts from the late eleventh century such as *AMCG*, *ACMM* can be seen to contain more innovations, such as in its use of the pres. 3 pl. absolute ending *-(a)it* with old compound verbs—a development which is commonly attested in the later *CCath*. This would place our text further towards the middle of the twelfth century. *ACMM* also contains a number of MidIr developments found in texts that belong to the late MidIr period such as *TBC-LL* and *CRR*: the new pres. 3 sg. ending *-enn/-ann*; the falling together of *d* and *g*; the preterite preverb *do-* replacing *ro-*; the occurrence of analytic verbal forms.⁴⁸⁰ Sufficient evidence to narrow this down to a more precise date is lacking. I would tentatively suggest a *terminus ante quem* of the later twelfth century, since typically late linguistic features as found in *CCath* are present but not as prevalent. This would date this tale between the early and mid-twelfth century (c. 1100–1150 AD).

⁴⁷⁹ Mac Gearailt, 'Zum Irischen', p. 25.

⁴⁸⁰ Compare for instance to the late twelfth-century texts *CRR* and *TTr* from *LL*, which show these developments. For detailed discussions of late MidIr linguistic features, see Mac Gearailt, 'Zum Irischen' and 'Some Late Middle Irish Texts'.

Verbal system Ed.

Present indicative

- 3 sg.: *tig* (§3), *commuic* (§3); *gadaid* (§3); *do-beir* (§3); *tēit* (§3); *no-thuairgenn* (§5);
dūscid (§6); *ceilebraid* (§6); *tōcbaid* (§8); *do-beir* (§8); *tēit* (§9); *fācbaid* (§9);
dūnaig (§9); *cotlud* (§9); *fuslaici* (§9); *ēirgid* (§9); *imrid* (§9); *beridh* (§9)
- 3 pl.: *do-thecait* (§9); *do-berait* (§9)

Present subjunctive

- Act. 1 sg.: *fācar* (§8)
- Act. 2 sg.: *tísi* (§9)

Imperative

- 2 sg.: *beir* (§6); *fair* (§7)?; *dūn* (§9); *tarr* (§9)
- 2 pl.: *marbaid* (§8); *tigid* (§8)

Preterite/perfect

- Act. 1 sg. perf: *ro-gellus* (§6)
- Act. 3 sg. pret.: *luidh* (§1), (§2); *luid* (§6); *co fūair* (§2); *faro-fēimid* (§6); *tānic* (§7);
co riacht (§9)
- Act. 3 sg. perf.: *dechaid* (§1); *ro-lá* (§4); *co torchair* (§5); *do-rorchair* (§5); *rāinic* (§8);
ro-fitir (§8)
- Act. 3 pl. pret.: *lotar* (§4); *marbsat* (§9)
- Act. 3 pl. perf.: *ro-maigset* (§6); *do-torc[h]air* (§7); *do-loitsitar* (§7)
- Pass. sg. pret.: *do-curedh* (§2); *[i]-laad* (§2); *clos* (§5)

Future

- Act. 1 sg.: *nī tibur* (§3); *do-bēr* (§3); *nī dingēn* (§7); *nīt muirbeb* (§7); *not-bēr* (§7);
caithfet (§7)
- Act. 3 sg.: *toircēba* (§4); *racha* (§5); *raga* (§8); *nī dingna* (§8)
- Pass. pl.: *not-īcfait[h]er* (§7)

Sec. fut. 2 sg.: *lēm̄t[h]a* (§7)
Sec. fut. 3 sg.: *muirfed* (§6)

Copula

1 sg. pres. ind.: *am* (§7)
2 sg. pres. ind.: *at* (§7)
3 sg. pres. ind.: *is* (§3)
2 sg. pres. subj.: *māgat* (§7)
3 sg. pret./perf.: *ba* (§1); *robo* (§6); *bo* (§8)
3 sg. fut.: *bid* (§4; §8; §9); *bit* (§7)
3 sg. subj. impf.: *no beith* (§6)

Substantive verb

2 sg. pres. ind.: *ataī* (§7)
3 sg. pres. ind.: *diatā* (§1)
3 sg. pret.: *a mbaī* (§9); *co mboī* (§9)
3 pl. pret.: *bātar* (§2)
3 sg. perf.: *roboī* (§8)
3 pl. perf.: *robātar* (§5)
3 sg. fut.: *bāaid* (§4)

3.2 Editorial Method

As opposed to *AACC*, the text of *ACMM* survives only survives in Ed. This immediately rules out certain editorial methods, such as the Lachmannian and ‘codex optimus’ approaches.⁴⁸¹ Instead, this edition of *ACMM* is critical: the reason for defining this edition as critical as opposed to diplomatic lies in the fact that critical judgement has been used to amend the text where deemed necessary. However, I have attempted to keep the level of editorial intervention to a minimum. Word separation, capitalisation and punctuation have been added. When an expansion is problematic, this is discussed in the Textual Notes. In all other respects, the editorial method used here is identical to that of *AACC*, so for further details I refer to the Editorial Method prefacing *AACC*. As with *AACC*, a translation of *ACMM* has been provided that is as faithful to the original Irish text as possible, presented in parallel for the reader’s convenience.

⁴⁸¹ For discussions on these various editorial practices, see Murray, ‘Reviews, Reviewers and Critical Texts’.

3.3 Edition & Translation

[Aided Cheit maic Māgach]

§1. Cid diatā a[i]ded C[h]eit maic Māgach? Nī anse. Luidh Cet fecht ann a cīch nUlad do c[h]uinghī gona duine, inní ba mimic lais .i. Ulaid do goin, ūair nī dechaid as a(a) nōenden⁴⁸² rīam [can] guin Ultaig.

§2. Luid-sium sīar īarum 7 trī noī cinn do Ultaib lais 7 do-curedh īarum Conall Cernach for a lorg co Brēfni C[h]onnacht [i] laad snechta an gemrid do sunrad, co fūair Conall a fāstig hē ac fuine a(a) c[h]otach 7 a ara. Bātar trā na eich⁴⁸³ fon carpat amuich.

§3. ‘Is ē Cet-so,’ ar Conall, ‘7 nī fīu dūin comrac fris ar a doilghi 7 ar a c[h]rōdacht. Is amnus in fer fil [and],’ ar Conall.

‘Fē amai!’ ol in t-ara, ‘nī maith tig tar do bēolu, in pēst fil for dīgail Ulad [can] gabāil tige fair, 7 nī meabal uero comtuitim duit fris, oīr atā dia bēogacht a comuic so.’

‘A athair,’ ar Conall,⁴⁸⁴ ‘nī tibur m’anum do láith gaili fer nĒrenn 7 do-bēr trā comartha forsna eochu.’

Gadaid Conall dūal a muing na n-eoch 7 do-beir an dlochtān a cinn in c[h]arpait, 7 tēit as sair co hUltu.

§4. ‘Fē, a C[h]eit!’ ar an t-ara.

‘Nī fē,’ ar Cet, ‘is mait[h] in t-anocul trā for na heocha. Conall-so,’ ar sē, ‘7 biaid caradrad de 7 bid maith hē.’

⁴⁸² MS: asaa nōen

⁴⁸³ MS: eochu

⁴⁸⁴ MS: the words *ar Conall* are in superscript.

[The Violent Death of Cet son of Mágu]

§1. What caused the violent death of Cet son of Mágu? [That] is not difficult. One time, Cet went into the territory of the Ulaid seeking to wound a man, something which was usual for him—that is, to slay the Ulaid—since he never departed from his fight [without] slaying one of the Ulaid.

§2. Then he went westwards and he had twenty-seven⁴⁸⁵ heads of the Ulaid with him. And Conall Cernach was then sent in pursuit of him to Bréifne of Connacht, where to be precise the winter snow had fallen, until Conall found him⁴⁸⁶ in an empty house cooking his meal with his charioteer. The horses, on the other hand, were yoked to the chariot outside.

§3. ‘This is Cet,’ said Conall, ‘and it is not worth [it] for us to fight against him because of his sternness and his vigour. It is a strong man who is in there,’ said Conall.

‘That’s a pity!’ said the charioteer, ‘what comes out of your mouth is not good, not to take the house from him, the beast that is punishing (the) Ulaid. And there is truly no shame for you to fall (fighting) against him, since what he can do is on account of his vigour.’

‘O father,’ said Conall, ‘I will not give my life to a warrior of the men of Ireland, but I will put a sign on the horses.’

Conall took away a lock from the hair of the horses and put the small wisp on the rear of the chariot, and he went eastwards towards Ulaid.

§4. ‘A pity, Cet!’ said the charioteer.

‘It’s no pity,’ said Cet, ‘it is good that he has spared the horses so. This [was] Conall,’ said he, ‘and an alliance will follow from it and it will be well.’

⁴⁸⁵ Literally ‘thrice nine’.

⁴⁸⁶ i.e. Cet.

‘Fē amae!’ or *in t-ara*, ‘*in fer ro-lá ár Connacht do tabairt mēla fort, 7 nī toircēba t’aimm co bráth can a bás no can a rūacad a fescur.*’

‘Maith ám⁴⁸⁷,’ ar Cet.

Lotar ina diaid co hĀt[h] C[h]eit.

§5. ‘Amin, a Chonaill,’ ar Cet.

‘Cid sin, a C[h]eit?’ ar Conall.

‘Nī racha as aniū, a clóain,’ or Cet.

‘Dōig lem,’ or Conall, ac intógh cuici. 7 *no-thuairgenn cāch dīb a chēili*, co clos fon dīthrub uli a ngnīthech 7 a mbolcfadach 7 gāir na scur 7 [...] [n]a n-āmad ac lāighedh na láth ngaili robātar isin āth, co torchair cechtarde anunn 7 anall. Marb immorro Cet fo c[h]ētōir 7 do-rorchair Conall a nēl.

§6. 7 dūscid Conall asa nēl.

‘Beir lat na h-echu co hUltu,’ or sē, ‘arnā ro-maigset Connachta cētus.’

Faro-fēimid in gilla vero a t[h]ōcbāil-som isin carpat 7 ceilebraid in gilla dō iarum 7 luid dia tig[h].

‘Olc so trā,’ or Conall, ‘aonfer do Chonnachtaib 7 ro-gellus-[s]a ām,’ ar sē, ‘nach muirfed aonfer do Chonnachtaib 7 robo ferr lem inā rīge in domuin nech do Chonnachtaib dom athguin, conā ba for aonfir do Chonnachtaib no beith mo marbad.’

§7. Bēlchū Brēfni trā, is ē tānic ar tús.

‘Cet so,’ or sē. ‘Conall dono sunna,’ ar sē. ‘7 bit maith (an) Ēriu festa,’ or sē, ‘ō do-torc[h]air in dā árc[h]oin so do-loitsitar (an) Ēiriu eturra,’ la tabairt arlaindi a tshligi for Conall.

‘Fair t’irlaind dīm, a athair,’ or sē.

‘At beō,’ ar Bēlchū.

‘Nī buige frit ōn,’ ar Conall, ‘am beō-sa.’

⁴⁸⁷ MS: word in superscript.

‘A pity indeed!’ said the charioteer, ‘that the man who has slaughtered the people of Connacht has put shame on you, and your name will not arise until Doomsday unless he is killed or put to flight by evening.’

‘Well then,’ said Cet.

They went after him to Áth Cet.

§5. ‘Well, Conall,’ said Cet.

‘What’s that, Cet?’ said Conall.

‘You will not escape today, crooked one,’ said Cet.

‘I think it likely,’ said Conall, turning to him. And each of them struck the other, so that their shouting and their panting and the cry of the horses and [...] [the charioteers] of the warriors inciting the warriors who were in the ford was heard throughout all the wilderness, until each of them fell to either side. Cet then died at once, and Conall fell into a daze.

§6. And Conall woke from his daze.

‘Bring the horses with you to the Ulaid,’ he said, ‘so that they do not flee Connacht first.’

The servant was unable to lift him into the chariot however, and the servant bade him farewell then, and went home.

‘This is bad now,’ said Conall, ‘a single man of the Connachta [here], while I have vowed moreover,’ he said, ‘that a single man of the Connachta would not kill [me], and I would prefer over the kingship of the world that someone of the Connachta should wound me again, so that it would not be by a single man of the Connachta that I would have been killed.’

§7. Bélchú of Bréifne, however, it is he who came first.

‘This is Cet,’ he said. ‘Conall [is] here as well,’ he said. ‘And Ireland will be well from this time on,’ he said, ‘since these two war-hounds have fallen who laid waste to Ireland between them,’ while putting the end of his spear on Conall.

‘Beware your spear from me, o father,’ said he.

‘You are alive,’ said Bélchú.

‘That’s not thanks to you,’ said Conall, ‘[that] I am alive.’

‘Fír, a *Conall*,’ ar *Bēlchū*, ‘a[c] cuinci do gona atā form-sa 7 nī dingēn-sa, oir is marb cena tū.’

‘Nī lēmt[h]a cid mo brat do goin,’ ar *Conall*, ‘a caillech trūag.’

‘Nīt muirbeb-so(m) trā, acht atā nī cena,’ ar sē, ‘not-bēr lem dom tig 7 not-īcfait[h]er acum 7 māgat slān immorro cait~~h~~et frit.’

§8. *Īarsin trā tōcbaid for a muin 7 a leth ina diaid, co rāimic a t[h]ech. 7 do-beir leaga cucui gur bo slān.*

‘Bid fír,’ ar *Bēlc[h]ū* fria maccaibh, ‘raga in fer-sa ūaim 7 nī dingna ar les. Marbaid in fer resū dechaid ūain. Tigid *īarum cucui* uili amārach dagaid, co fācar-sa in airecal fosclait~~h~~i ar bar cinn 7 marbaid ina lebaid.’

Ro-fítir fer in imnid 7 an uile mōir .i. *Conall* in mīdūthracht roboī dō.

§9. ‘Dūn in tec[h],’ ar *Conall* fri *Bēlc[h]oin*. Tēit sair 7 fācbaid in tech fuslaic~~h~~i.

‘Mait[h] didiu, a *Bēlchū*,’ ar *Conall*, ‘tarr am lebaid-sa.’

‘Nīt[h]ō,’ or *Bēlchū*.

‘Do cend dīt-sa,’ ar *Conall*, ‘mīna tísi isin lebaid.’

‘Bid ēicin,’ ar *Bēlchū*. Dūnaig didiu *Bēlchū* in tec[h]. *Īar* cotlud do *Bēlchoin*, fuslaic~~h~~i *Conall* an tec[h]. Do-thecait maic *Bēlchon* dochum na imdaid~~h~~i a mbaī a n-athair 7 do-berait a trī sligi trit gur marbsat. 7 ēirgid *Conall* *īarsin* 7 imrid a claidem forra co mboī spreathach a n-incinni imna fraight~~h~~haib, 7 beridh a ceithri cinnu lais sair co riacht a t[h]ech resū roba matin. Conid hī a[i]ded C[h]eit 7 *Bēlchon Brēfni* cona maccaib insin.

‘True, o Conall,’ said Bélchú, ‘you are seeking for me to kill you and I will not do that, since you are dead already.’

‘You would not even dare to wound my cloak,’ said Conall, ‘o miserable old woman.’

‘I will not kill you then, however,’ he said, ‘I will bring you with me to my house and you will be healed by me, and if you be healthy then I will cast at you.’

§8. Thereupon then he lifted [him]⁴⁸⁸ on his back while half of him [was] behind him,⁴⁸⁹ until he reached his house. And he brought doctors to him until he was healthy.

‘It will be true,’ said Bélchú to his sons, ‘that this man will escape from me, and he will not act in our interest. You must kill the man before he escapes from us. Then you must all come to him tomorrow at night, so that I may leave the chamber open for you and you must kill [him] in his bed.’

The man of tribulation and great misfortune, namely Conall, discovered the malevolence that was [meant] for him.

§9. ‘Close the house,’ said Conall to Bélchú. He went to the front and left the house opened.

‘Good then, Bélchú,’ said Conall, ‘come into my bed.’

‘No,’ said Bélchú.

‘Your head [will be] off,’ said Conall, ‘unless you come into the bed.’

‘It will be necessary,’ said Bélchú. Then Bélchú closed the house. After Bélchú fell asleep, Conall opened the house. The sons of Bélchú came to the bedchamber in which their father was and they put their three spears through him, so that they killed [him]. And Conall got up after that and plied his sword on them so that the splattering of their brains was around the walls, and he carried their four heads with him eastwards until he reached his house before it was morning. So that is the violent death of Cet and Bélchú of Bréifne with his sons.

⁴⁸⁸ i.e. Conall

⁴⁸⁹ i.e. Bélchú

3.4 Textual Notes

§1. *a[i]ded*. Like in §10 of *AACC*, this peculiar spelling of the word *aided* appears here again. See the final textual note in section 2.4 for a discussion of this form and its meaning.

§1. *do cuinghi gona duine*. The first verbal noun in this construction derives from the verb *con-dieig* ‘asks, seeks’. The expected lenition after prep. *do* ‘to’ is absent in the MS, which is not uncommon, since lenition is not consistently indicated by the scribe. The second verbal noun *gona* serves as the object of the verbal noun *cuinghi*. It is the gen. sg. of the *i*-stem verbal noun *guin*, of *gonaid* ‘pierces; wounds’, and is most likely to be taken as a fem. form.

§1. *dechaid as a(a) nōenden*. Meyer takes this phrase as *dechaid asa nōendin* in his edition, translating it as ‘went from his childhood’.⁴⁹⁰ This appears to be based on the occurrence of the similar formula *as a naīndin* in *AACC*, which precedes *ACMM* in Ed.⁴⁹¹ However, correct expansion of the abbreviation would give *asaanonen* (see image 27). The double *a* in *asaa* seems to be a scribal error, which is why I have placed the second ‘a’ between brackets. Based on the scribe’s strong tendency to abbreviate words combined with the occurrence of this phrase earlier in the manuscript in a highly similar context, I suggest that the suspension stroke above the *o* likely does not represent an *n*-stroke but has been used to abbreviate multiple letters, in this case ‘-end-’. As I explained in the note on *dechaid as a naīndin* (§1) in *AACC*, I disagree with Meyer’s interpretation of the noun *noīnden* there as ‘childhood’, and take it as ‘(warlike) gathering’ instead.⁴⁹²

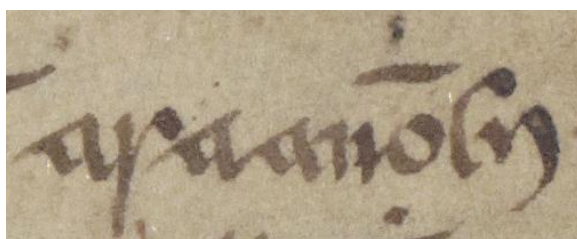


Image 27: Courtesy of ISOS

⁴⁹⁰ *Aided Cheit* (ed. and transl. by Meyer, §1).

⁴⁹¹ *AACC*, §1.

⁴⁹² eDIL s.v. *noīnden* or dil.ie/33275; see also the textual note to §1 *dechaid as a naīndin* in section 2.4.

§1. [*can*] *guin Ultaig*. Like Meyer, I have supplied the prep. *cen* ‘without’, since a negation is required here. This prep. is usually employed in constructions with verbal nouns to function as a negation. I have chosen the later spelling *can*, since this is found later in the text: *can a bás no can a r̄uacad* (§4).

§2. *docuredh [...] for a lorg*. The first word is the pret. pass. of the verb *do-cuirethar* ‘puts; invites’, which I translate here as ‘send’ in combination with *for a lorg* ‘on his track’. The combination of the prep. *for* ‘on’ and the masc. *o*-stem noun *lorg* is listed in eDIL as ‘in pursuit of, following after’,⁴⁹³ I have chosen to translate it in a more literal sense, since Cet leaves an actual track in the snow by which Conall is able to find him.

§2. [*i*] *laad snechta an gemrid do sunrad*. The verbal form *laad* derives from the verb *láid* ‘throws, places’, which eDIL notes rarely occurs in early language as an independent verb.⁴⁹⁴ The past forms of this verb are used as suppletive forms to provide the past tense forms of *fo-ceird* ‘sets, puts’, which is why it is more likely that the word here should be taken as a form of *fo-ceird*. Meyer seems uncertain about this line: he takes *laad* as the beginning of a new sentence in his edition, but puts the clause between brackets in his translation: ‘(for winter-snow had fallen)’.⁴⁹⁵ I propose to insert the prep. *i* ‘in’ before this verb, since the omission of this prep. would account for the dependent form of the verb. Moreover, the addition of this prep. turns the clause *laad snechta an gemrid do sunrad* into a subordinate clause, which agrees with its function as explaining the weather conditions in Bréifne during Conall’s pursuit of Cet. This is further indicated by the use of the later form of the noun *sainred* ‘peculiar property or characteristic’, which is taken as an adverb here, as indicated by the preceding preposition *do*.⁴⁹⁶ This combination is frequently found in ‘a particularising statement following a more general one’. I suggest that it is used here to offer a more specific explanation as to how Conall was able to track Cet, namely due to the tracks he had left in the winter-snow that had fallen on Bréifne in particular.

⁴⁹³ eDIL s.v. 1 *lorg* or dil.ie/30682.

⁴⁹⁴ eDIL s.v. *láid* or dil.ie/29365.

⁴⁹⁵ *Aided Cheit* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §2).

⁴⁹⁶ eDIL s.v. *sainred* or dil.ie/36030.

§2. *a c[h]otach*. In the MS, this phrase is found as *aacotach*. The possessive pronoun *a* could be taken either as sg. or pl., since lenition is often missing and nasalisation of *c* is not shown. I have taken it as 3 sg. masc. *a* and added the appropriate lenition between square brackets. The spelling of the possessive pronoun *a* with a double *a* appears to be a scribal error, similar to the previously discussed *asaa noennin* (§1). It occurs at the end of a line, as can be seen in image 29 below, which raises the possibility that the scribe mistakenly repeated the *a* at the beginning of the next line. The noun *cotach* is the gen. sg. form of the fem. *i*-stem *cuit* ‘portion, share’. This particular form frequently denotes ‘portion of food, meal’,⁴⁹⁷ as I have translated it here.

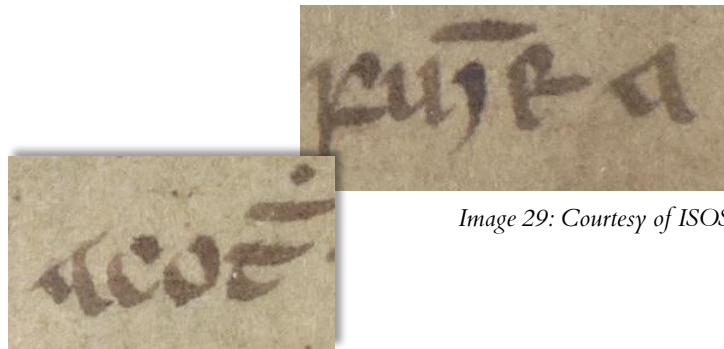


Image 29: Courtesy of ISOS

Image 28: Courtesy of ISOS

§2. *na eich fon carpat*. As discussed in the linguistic analysis, the use of the acc. pl. *eochnu* for nom. pl. *eich* is not attested, since this development is restricted to the syncopting types of the *o*-stems.⁴⁹⁸ As this is likely an error, I have emended *eochnu* to *eich*. The use of the prep. *fo* ‘under, beneath’ signifies that the horses are still yoked to the chariot. eDIL notes that the prep. can be used ‘especially in sense of carrying, supporting’.⁴⁹⁹ Similar examples are listed of the prep. being used to indicate that horses are attached to a chariot, such as in *FB*: *na dá ech filet fón charput*.⁵⁰⁰

§3. *ar a doilghi 7 ar a c[h]rōdacht*. Conall argues that it is not fitting for him to fight with Cet on account of his *doilghi* and his *crōdacht*, which Meyer takes as the terms ‘severity’ and ‘cruelty’.⁵⁰¹ Especially the latter translation conveys a negative image of Cet. I suggest to take the

⁴⁹⁷ eDIL s.v. *cuit* (5) or dil.ie/13717.

⁴⁹⁸ *SnG*, §5.5.

⁴⁹⁹ eDIL s.v. *fo*, *fa*, *fá* or dil.ie/22333.

⁵⁰⁰ *FB*, §45. Henderson’s translation ‘the two horses that are in the chariot’ appears to be faulty, since from the description that follows it becomes clear that it is Loegaire who is in the chariot, being pulled by the two horses.

⁵⁰¹ *Aided Cheit* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §3).

terms as referencing Cet's strength and skills as a warrior.⁵⁰² Turning to other attestations of the words, the noun *doilge* 'trouble, difficulty' is used in both the positive and negative sense. The adjective *doilig*, which is related to the noun *doilge*, gives a clearer sense of its connotations. In the following example from *TBC-LL*, it is used to convey the level of difficulty of performing a feat: *is air is doilgiu leis daragad*.⁵⁰³ When referring to people, the meaning is 'hard, stern, intractable, inexorable', particularly in martial contexts.⁵⁰⁴ In the current context, I then take *doilgi* to refer to the difficulty that Conall would face in fighting Cet and have translated it as 'sternness', referring to Cet's skill in battle.

The noun *crōdacht* initially had negative connotations and meant 'blood-thirstiness, cruelty', but later and more frequently came to denote 'courage, valour'.⁵⁰⁵ The latter positive meaning is found in use in other late MidIr texts, such as *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib: a chrodacht is a cruas*.⁵⁰⁶ In glossaries, the related adjective *cródae* is often found together with the adjectives *béodae* 'living, animate; lively, active, vigorous' and *calma* 'strong; brave, valiant', which supports the idea that *crōdacht* is associated with physical power.⁵⁰⁷ As with *doilgi*, I therefore take *crōdacht* as referring to Cet's vigour in battle, describing his qualities as a powerful and valiant warrior.

§3. *ammus in fer*. Meyer translates this noun phrase as 'savage man', interpreting the adj. *ammus* as a negative word, which need not be the case. According to eDIL, the word *ammus* can also be translated as 'strong, hard', and even as 'keen, clever, crafty', encompassing a range of positive and negative connotations.⁵⁰⁸ As with *doilghi* and *crōdacht*, I argue that the word *ammus* does not portray Cet in a negative way, but refers to Cet's skills as a highly competent warrior. In *Compert Con Chulainn*, the word appears in a similar context, where it is used by a warrior to boast of his fighting skills: *Am amnas ar gail 7 gaisciud*.⁵⁰⁹ In the current context, I have translated *ammus* as 'strong', in accordance with my interpretation of the two nouns above (*doilghi* and *crōdacht*).

⁵⁰² See Part II, section 2.2.1.a for the literary analysis of this passage.

⁵⁰³ *TBC-LL*, l. 3284: 'it was the feat he deemed it hardest to encounter'.

⁵⁰⁴ eDIL s.v. *doilig* (c) or dil.ie/17839.

⁵⁰⁵ eDIL s.v. *crōdacht* or dil.ie/13059.

⁵⁰⁶ *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* (ed. and transl. Todd, ch. LXVIII): 'its valour and its severity'.

⁵⁰⁷ Stokes, 'O'Davoren's Glossary', p. 258 (entry 386); Stokes, 'The Glossary in Egerton 158', p. 146.

⁵⁰⁸ eDIL s.v. *ammus* or dil.ie/3185.

⁵⁰⁹ *Compert Con Chulainn* (ed. van Hamel, §7): 'I am strong in valour and prowess'. Thurneysen translates this as 'Ich bin scharf in Kampf und Streit' (*Setantas Geburt*, p. 61).

§3. *fil [and]*. I have taken up Meyer’s suggestion of inserting the conj. prep. 3 sg. dat. masc./neut. *and* ‘in it/him’ after *fil*, since the relative form of the substantive verb cannot stand in final position in the clause.

§3. *in pēst fil for dīgail Ulad [can] gabāil tige fair*. Meyer translates this passage as ‘not to storm the house in which is the pest that is harrying Ulster’, adding in the negation *cen*.⁵¹⁰ I agree with Meyer that the text appears to be corrupt and also insert the conj. *cen* ‘without’ before the verbal noun, in the MidIr spelling *can*, which functions as a negation of *gabāil*.⁵¹¹ I suggest that the conj. prep. 3 sg. masc. form *fair*, which is a form of the prep. *for*, is used here to express the *dativus incommodi*. The prep. *for* can be used to refer to the person who is adversely affected by an action (eDIL gives as translation ‘in despite of, to the detriment of’).⁵¹² Examples of *for* as *dativus incommodi* in combination with the verbal noun *gabāil* are attested in eDIL and are usually translated as ‘taking against/from X’. Based on this, I translate the clause *[can] gabāil tige fair* as ‘not to take the house from him’, taking it as a subordinate clause, dependent on *nī maith tig tar do bēolu* ‘what comes out of your mouth is not good’. I suggest to take the prep. *fair* as referring to the fronted clause *in pēst fil for dīgail Ulad* ‘the beast that is punishing (the) Ulaid’.

§3. *nī meabal uero comtuitim duit fris*. The *ā*-stem noun *meabal* takes the copula and the prep. *do* to give ‘it is a cause of shame to me’. This construction is found here with *nī* (negation + copula). The object of this clause is the verbal noun *comtuitim*, which derives from the verb *con-tuit* ‘falls together’. The verb consists of the prepositional prefix *com-* and the stem of the verb *do-tuit* ‘falls’. Meyer takes this sentence as ‘and it is no shame for thee to fall in combat together with him’,⁵¹³ translating the prefix *com-* with the adverbial force ‘together, mutually, equally’. By the late twelfth century, the preterite of the verb *do-tuit* had become obscure and its meaning was confused with the verb meaning ‘killed’.⁵¹⁴ Since the adverbial force is often lost, I take it as ‘falls’. The use of *fris* ‘against him’ (i.e. *Cet*) suggests that the charioteer implies that it is not shameful for Conall to be killed by *Cet* during a fight, which is why I have included ‘fighting’ between rounded brackets.

⁵¹⁰ *Aided Cheit* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §3).

⁵¹¹ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, p. 37.

⁵¹² eDIL s.v. 1 *for* (II, m) or dil.ie/23272.

⁵¹³ *Aided Cheit* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §3).

⁵¹⁴ Mac Gearailt, ‘Verbal Particles and Preverbs’, p. 154.

§3. *a connuic so*. Meyer translates this sentence as ‘such is his vigour until now’, noting that the text seems to be corrupt here.⁵¹⁵ He removes the *a* from his edition, assuming it was incorrectly suffixed to the noun *bēogacht*. I take this *a* as the nasalising rel. particle *a* ‘that which, what’, followed by the pres. 3 sg. form of the verb *con-icc* ‘can, is able’. The demonstrative pronoun *so* is stressed or substantival here, standing in the acc. case and functioning as the object of the verb.⁵¹⁶ eDIL lists examples of this usually intransitive verb taking an object, in which case it is often translated as ‘can do’, an extension of its usual meaning ‘can, is able’.⁵¹⁷ A similar translation and combination of the verb *con-icc* and a pronominal object is attested in the following gloss: *aircia salmscribdid conicfed són*.⁵¹⁸ I interpret this sentence as the charioteer telling Conall that Cet is able to kill the people of Ulster because of his strength.

§3. *A athair*. Although Conall refers to his charioteer here as ‘father’, I would argue that this term of address should not be interpreted literally, since later in the text Conall also addresses Bélchú with this term. Rather than interpreting it as evidence of a familial bond, it appears to be a term used to address another man, similar to the use of the term *popa*. Cú Chulainn sometimes refers to his charioteer Láeg as *popa*, cf. ‘*Ocus in carpat serda, a mmo phopa Láig?*’⁵¹⁹ This noun, which derives from the Latin *papa*, literally means ‘father’, but eDIL notes that in the voc. it most often denotes ‘a respectful form of address to an elder or superior, but occasionally familiarly to an inferior’.⁵²⁰ Mac Cana notes that this term is often used to address a foster-father or teacher, and argues that the use of this term is typical for the special and close personal relationship between the warrior and his charioteer.⁵²¹ I suggest that the use of *athair* here should be interpreted in a similar sense.

§3. *do láith gaili*. The masc. *o*-stem noun *láth* ‘warrior’ would be expected here in the dat. sg. form, since it is governed by the preposition *do* ‘to’. Possibly, the word here represents the dat.

⁵¹⁵ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, p. 37.

⁵¹⁶ eDIL s.v. 1 *so* (II, e) or dil.ie/38191.

⁵¹⁷ eDIL s.v. *con-icc* or dil.ie/12189.

⁵¹⁸ *Dictionary of the Old-Irish Glosses* (ed. and transl. Griffith and Stifter, Milan Glosses 14a6): ‘for who is the psalmist who could have done that?’

⁵¹⁹ *TBC-I*, l. 2185: ‘What of the scythed chariot, my friend Láeg?’

⁵²⁰ eDIL s.v. *popa* or dil.ie/34468.

⁵²¹ Mac Cana, ‘*Láided, Gressacht*’, p. 88.

sg. of the original fem. *i*-stem form *láith*.⁵²² It is followed here by the *ā*-stem noun *gal* ‘warlike ardour, fury’, which together form a frequently occurring phrase and are translated as ‘warrior’.⁵²³

§3. *an dlochtān*. This masc. *o*-stem noun derives from the noun *dlocht* (‘bunch, wisp’),⁵²⁴ with the diminutive suffix *-án*.⁵²⁵ I have translated it here as ‘small wisp’, referring to the lock of hair Conall has taken from the horses. The intent of this gesture is not made clear in the text, but it appears to have functioned as some sort of insult, since Cet’s charioteer refers to the act as a disgrace in the following paragraph. This is discussed in further detail in Part II, section 2.2.1.a.

§3. *a cinn*. I take the *a* here as the MidIr spelling for the prep. *i* ‘in(to)’ (see also §1 *a crích*). Together with the noun *cenn* ‘head’ it forms an idiomatic expression that has a wide variety of meanings.⁵²⁶ I have chosen to translate it here as ‘at the rear the chariot’.

§4. *ro-lá ár Connacht*. The first word is the perf. 3 sg. form of the verb *fo-ceird* ‘puts, places’. Prototonic forms of this verb are only found in the future tense and other verbal stems are supplied to express the other tenses. The perf. particle *ro* is used as augment with the verbal root *-la* to form the the verbal stem *ro-lā-*, which is used for the perfect and other *ro*-forms.⁵²⁷ According to eDIL, the combination of the verb *fo-ceird* and *ár* ‘slaughter’ is to be taken as ‘slaughters; overthrows in battle’.⁵²⁸ This construction takes the obj. gen., which in this case is the *ā*-stem noun *Connacht* ‘(inhabitants of) Connacht’.

§4. *do tabairt*. I have translated the construction of prep. *do* + verbal noun actively here: ‘the man [...] has put shame on you’.

§4. *nī toircēba*. In his glossary, Meyer lists this verb under the conjectural verbal form *do-aircbim*, translating it as ‘will not endure’.⁵²⁹ Gwynn disagrees with Meyer’s interpretation, and

⁵²² eDIL s.v. *láith* or dil.ie/29625.

⁵²³ eDIL s.v. *láith* (a) or dil.ie/29625.

⁵²⁴ eDIL s.v. *dlocht* or dil.ie/17047.

⁵²⁵ *GOI*, §271.1.

⁵²⁶ eDIL s.v. 1 *cenn* (43–53) or dil.ie/8622.

⁵²⁷ *EIV*, p. 134; *GOI*, §762.

⁵²⁸ eDIL s.v. *fo-ceird* (I, i) or dil.ie/22405.

⁵²⁹ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, p. 49.

argues on the basis of analysis of similar forms that the correct meaning is ‘comes’.⁵³⁰ He also suggests that the verbal form derives from *do-airicim* (*do-airicc*),⁵³¹ and translates the passage as ‘thy name shall not come to Doomsday,’ i.e. ‘shall not survive’.⁵³² However, this verb does not originally have an *ē*-future. Alternatively, I take this verb as the fut. 3 sg. of the verb *do-furgaib* ‘raises, lifts up’, which is used here intransitively with the meaning ‘arises; appears’.⁵³³ This presumably means that his name will not arise in conversation anymore, meaning that he will be forgotten.

§4. *can a bás no can a rūacad*. The literal translation is ‘without killing him or without putting him to flight by evening’. The later form of the prep. *cen* ‘without’ is followed in both cases by the 3 sg. masc. possessive pronoun and a verbal noun. In combination with *cen*, the verbal nouns have verbal force and are therefore translated as inflected verbs.⁵³⁴ Since these verbal nouns are derived from transitive verbs, the possessive pronoun acts as the obj. gen. of the verbal nouns here.⁵³⁵

§5. *clóain*. This is a later spelling of the masc. *o*-stem noun *cláen*, which has a variety of meanings. When referring to people, it is usually translated as ‘iniquitous, unjust person’.⁵³⁶ In this case it appears to be a form of word play, and taken to refer to Conall’s crooked neck, which is described in the tale *Compert Conaill Chernaig*. Although this tale has not survived independently, *Cóir Anmann* purports to give an account of it.⁵³⁷ In this narrative, Cet crushes Conall’s neck when Conall is still a young boy, since it was prophesied that he would go on to kill many Connachtmen. After this, it is said that Conall carries the epithet *clænbhraighdech* ‘crooked neck’.

§5. *a gníthech*. This word appears to have derived from the noun *gníth* ‘shout(?)’, which according to eDIL derives from the noun *gní* ‘voice’.⁵³⁸ The issue with this theory is that these words are all sporadically attested, *gníthech* only being extant in this text. As for *gníth*, Greene tentatively translates the dat. pl. form *co gníthib* in *SR* as ‘with shouts(?)’.⁵³⁹ Similarly, Gwynn takes

⁵³⁰ Gwynn, ‘Notes’, p. 192.

⁵³¹ eDIL s.v. *do-airicc* or dil.ie/17140.

⁵³² Gwynn, ‘Notes’, p. 192.

⁵³³ eDIL s.v. *do-furgaib* or dil.ie/17714.

⁵³⁴ eDIL s.v. *cen* (II, a) or dil.ie/8581.

⁵³⁵ eDIL s.v. 2 a (II) or dil.ie/3.

⁵³⁶ eDIL s.v. *cláen* (II, e) or dil.ie/9306.

⁵³⁷ *Cóir Anmann* II (ed. Arbuthnot, §264).

⁵³⁸ eDIL s.v. *gníth* or dil.ie/26231.

⁵³⁹ *SR*, l. 8118 (ed. and transl. Green).

the combination *gnúthe gossa* as ‘mighty shouting’, which occurs twice in the Metrical Dindshenchas.⁵⁴⁰ In line with this, I have chosen to translate the word as ‘shouting’.

§5. *gāir na scur*. The second word of this noun phrase, *scur*, is a form of the masc. *o*-stem verbal noun *scor*, which derives from the verb *scuirid* ‘unyokes’. It is most likely a gen. pl. case here. In the current context, I take *scur* as the collective noun for ‘horses’, which is the secondary meaning of this noun.⁵⁴¹

§5. [*n*]a *n-ānrad ac lāighedh na láth ngaili*. As can be seen in image 30 below, the letters preceding the first noun are illegible. I tentatively reconstruct an *n* before the first readable letter *a*, as the right minim still appears to be visible. This would give the gen. pl. article *na*, causing nasalisation of the following gen. pl. masc. *o*-stem noun *ánrad*. eDIL records various meanings of this word. In the current context, I have chosen to take this noun as ‘hero, warrior, champion’⁵⁴² (cf. *condit roib cáemtecht di ánrodaib (= ānrothaib) Ulad*).⁵⁴³

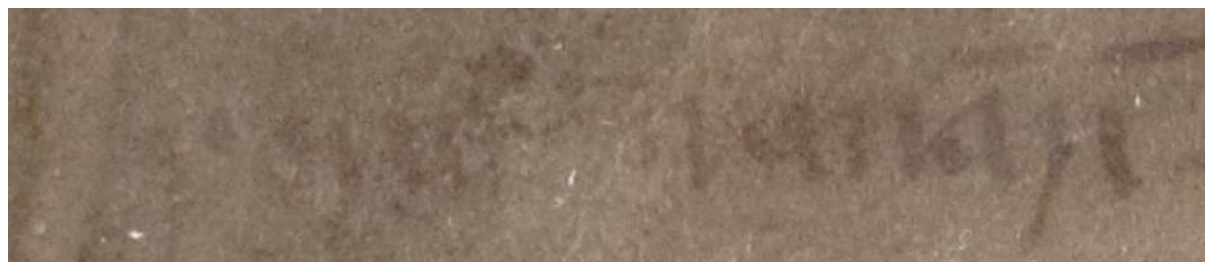


Image 30: Courtesy of ISOS

The word *lāighedh* is the verbal noun of the verb *laídid* ‘exhorts, incites’. I have supplied the reading ‘charioteers’ for the lacuna in my translation, since these would traditionally be the ones inciting (*ac lāighedh*) the warriors during battles, as they have been doing up until this point in the narrative already.⁵⁴⁴

§6. *arnā ro-maigset*. This is the neg. nasalising conj. *ara* ‘that, in order that’, which takes a subj. verbal form.⁵⁴⁵ The form *ara* is reduced to *ar* before the neg. particle. It is followed by the

⁵⁴⁰ Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas* III, pp. 128–32.

⁵⁴¹ eDIL s.v. *scor* (b) or dil.ie/36574.

⁵⁴² eDIL s.v. *ánrad* (c) or dil.ie/3757.

⁵⁴³ *TBC-I*, l. 879: ‘till you be escorted by some of the Ulster warriors’.

⁵⁴⁴ For more on the charioteer as inciter, see Part II, section 2.2.1.b.

⁵⁴⁵ *GOI*, §898.

perf. 3 pl. of *maidid* ‘breaks, bursts’. I have chosen to translate the verb here as ‘flees; rushes’, since it is more likely that the horses would run away and that it was Conall’s priority to make sure they would get back the Ulster safely. The preceding conj. requires a subj. form, whereas we have a perf. form here, as indicated by the perfective particle *ro*.

§6. *faro-fēimid*. This is the pret. 3 sg. of the verb *fo(r)-émid*. The verb *fo(r)-émid* derives from the verb *éimdid* ‘refuses, rejects’, but forms of this verb with an *f* (*féimdid*; *fo(r)-éimid*) more regularly carry the sense of ‘fails’.⁵⁴⁶ Pedersen suggests that the *r* in this verb might occur in pres. forms due to confusion with the preverb *for-*, or—more likely—that it originally would have been the *ro* of possibility.⁵⁴⁷ The form as we have it here appears to support the latter suggestion. The medial *f* is an inorganic or prosthetic *f*, which would have been added as a hiatus-filler between the preverbal particle and this vowel-initial unlenited form.

§6. *isin carpat*. Meyer wrongly transcribes *isin* as *ina* here.⁵⁴⁸

§6. *aonfer*. This compound consists of *aon-*, the late MidIr form of the num. adj. *óen* ‘one, a single’,⁵⁴⁹ followed by the *o*-stem nom. sg. masc. *fer* ‘man’. I disagree with Meyer that some words appear to have been omitted.⁵⁵⁰ Instead, I propose to read the preceding *olc so trā* ‘this is bad’ as referring ahead to *aonfer do Connachtaib* ‘one man of the Connachta’ and have therefore supplied ‘here’ in square brackets.

§6. *muirfed*. This is the sec. *f*-fut. 3 sg. form of the verb *marbaid* ‘kills, slays’. The fut. stem of the verb is *mairb-*, but is found here as the later form *muirb-* since the stem appears as *muir-* before an *f* of inflection. The clause requires the addition of an object, which Meyer supplied by adding the infixed 1 sg. pronoun *-am* after the neg. adv. *nach*, which is used here to introduce a subordinate clause.⁵⁵¹ However, eDIL notes that these infixed forms only occurred in OIr, so it is

⁵⁴⁶ eDIL s.v. *éimdid*, *éimid*, *éim(d)igid* or dil.ie/19805; Hull, ‘Miscellanea Celtica’, pp. 176–7.

⁵⁴⁷ Pedersen, *Vergleichende Grammatik* II, p. 579.

⁵⁴⁸ *Aided Cheit* (ed. Meyer, §6).

⁵⁴⁹ *SnG*, §8.2.

⁵⁵⁰ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, pp. 38–9.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*

very unlikely that this form would have been used.⁵⁵² Since *nach* is used without an infix in MidIr, I have not amended the reading, although the possibility cannot be excluded that the 1 sg. independent pronoun *mé* may have been dropped from the end of the sentence.

§6. *conā ba for aonfir do Connachtaib no beith mo marbad*. Literally translated: ‘so that it would not be on a single man of the Connachta that my killing would have been’. What is meant here is that Conall wishes for another Connachtman to come and wound him before he dies, so that his death would be caused by multiple assailants, rather than by the wounds inflicted by Cet, a single man from Connacht.

§7. *Bēlchū Brēfni trā, is ē tānic ar tús*. This is a nominativus pendens construction, with an independent pronoun followed by a copular main sentence. The form of the copula is non-relative and the fronted element is referred to by a pronoun, in this case *é* ‘he’ (cf. *Cúscraid Mend Macha mac Conchobair, is h-é deisidh for láim a athar*).⁵⁵³

§7. *an Ériu*. Literally translated: ‘the Ireland’. The article *an* is the MidIr form of fem. sg. article *ind*. The article can not be taken as the MidIr spelling of the prep. *i n-* ‘in’, because the noun *Ériu* is a fem. *n*-stem in the nom. case, which cannot follow the prep. *i n-*. The use of an article before the noun *Ériu* is attested, but not in any similar contexts.⁵⁵⁴ eDIL lists two examples of the article preceding the noun *Ériu*: one is in a stanza found in London, British Library, MS Egerton 161, which reads: *Ní hí an Eiresi an Eire bhí anallód ann* ‘This Ireland is not the Ireland that was there long ago’.⁵⁵⁵ In this case, the article is used to refer to the personification of Ireland. The other attestation is found in *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, where we find the line *Cia hairm atā ‘ind Hēriu?’* ‘What place is ‘Ireland?’’.⁵⁵⁶ Here, the article is used because the speaker is unaware that Ireland is a country and refers to it as an object. Since no satisfactory explanation for the use of the article here can be found, I have put both instances between rounded brackets and have left them untranslated.

⁵⁵² eDIL s.v. 4 *nach, nách* or dil.ie/32909.

⁵⁵³ *TBC-I*, ll. 3623–25.

⁵⁵⁴ eDIL s.v. *Ériu* or dil.ie/20288.

⁵⁵⁵ O’Grady, *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts I*, p. 613.

⁵⁵⁶ *Lebor Gabála Érenn II* (ed. and transl. Macalister, §112).

§7. *in dā árc[h]oin*. The compound noun *árchoin* ‘war-hounds’ consists of the nouns *ár* ‘slaughter’ and *cú* ‘dog, hound’.⁵⁵⁷ The article indicates that this is the nom. pl. masc. form, and refers to the two warriors Cet and Conall. McCone has argued that the hound was ‘the symbol of warrior values *par excellence* in early Ireland’, and suggests that instances to warriors being equated with war-hounds are found throughout Medieval Irish literature (cf. *Érig, a árchu Emna*).⁵⁵⁸

§7. *Do-loitsitar*. This is the MidIr *s*-pret. 3 pl. form of the verb *loittid* ‘injures, spoils’. eDIL also states that this verb has the specific meaning ‘devastates, lays waste, destroys’ when the subject concerns land, territory or buildings, as is the case here.⁵⁵⁹

§7. *fair*. Meyer translates this as ‘take away’ and suggests in a note that this literally means ‘take heed’, but does not provide the base word itself.⁵⁶⁰ He probably takes it as *faire*, a later form of the *ā*-stem noun *aire* ‘watching, guarding’.⁵⁶¹ As an interjection, this noun is used with the intention to summon or warn, and is translated as ‘look; beware’, as I have also taken it here. Alternatively, it could be the imperative of the verb *airid* ‘guards, keeps watch over’, with an inorganic *f*.⁵⁶²

§7. *a[c] cuinci*. I suggest adding a *c* to form *ac*, the MidIr form of the prep. *oc* ‘at, against’, which often precedes verbal nouns. The verbal noun *cuingi* is a later form of *cuingid* ‘act of asking’ (see the note on §1 *do cuinghi gona duine*) and derives from the verb *con-dieig* ‘asks, seeks’. This verb often takes a prep. to introduce the person of whom something is requested, which in OIr is usually *co*.⁵⁶³ In this case the prep. *for* is used, which O’Rahilly notes is also employed as the standard prep. with the verb *con-dieig* in both *TBC-I* and *TBC-LL*.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁷ eDIL s.v. *árchú* or dil.ie/4012.

⁵⁵⁸ McCone, ‘*Aided Chelthchair Maic Uthechair*’, pp. 12–3; *TBC-LL*, l. 3386: ‘Arise, o war-hound of Emain (i.e. Cú Chulainn)’.

⁵⁵⁹ eDIL s.v. *loittid* (b) or dil.ie/30592.

⁵⁶⁰ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, p. 39.

⁵⁶¹ eDIL s.v. *faire* or dil.ie/21154.

⁵⁶² I am thankful to Paul Russell for this suggestion.

⁵⁶³ eDIL s.v. *con-dieig* or dil.ie/12067.

⁵⁶⁴ O’Rahilly, ‘Miscellanea’, p. 44.

§7. *lēmth[h]a*. This verbal form is listed in eDIL as the conditional pass. *ē*-fut. of *lamaid* ‘dares, ventures’.⁵⁶⁵ The verb may originally have had a reduplicated fut., but later occurs as an *ē*-fut. I suggest to take it as a 2 sg. conditional fut. here, like Meyer did in his translation (‘thou wouldst not dare’).⁵⁶⁶ I have added the appropriate lenition by putting *h* between brackets here. For an example of this form from the copy of *AACC* in the same MS, cf. *nī lēmtha techt tar do rāthaigecht* ‘no one would have dared to go against your guarantee’.⁵⁶⁷

§7. *Nīt muirbeb-so(m)*. The form in the MS is *nīt muirbebs-*, ending with an *m*-stroke (see image 31 below). The resulting form is the 3 sg. masc./neut. emphasising pronoun *-som*, whereas the 2 sg. form *-sa* would be expected after the 2 sg. infixed pronoun *-t*. This likely represents a mistake on the part of the scribe and I have put round brackets around the *m*. Since there was no distinction between unstressed vowels in final position anymore, *-so* and *-sa* could be used interchangeably. Meyer restores the verbal form *nīt muirbeb* in his edition to *nītmairbfet*,⁵⁶⁸ which is an unnecessary emendation, as the stem *muir-* is a later form of the fut. stem *mairb-*, occurring before the *f* of inflection (see also §6. *muirfed*).

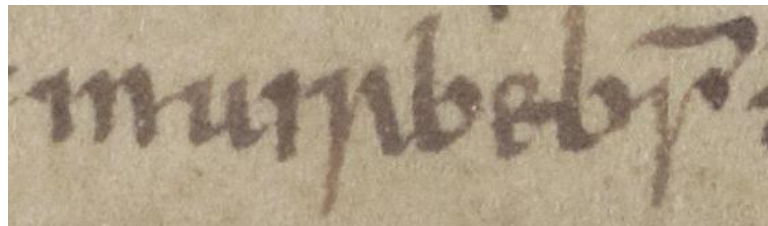


Image 31: Courtesy of ISOS

§7. *not-īcfait[h]er acum*. The verbal form *not-īcfaiter* is the *f*-future pl. pass. conjunct of *íccaid* ‘pays; heals’. I have expanded the abbreviation as the ending *-er*, since the *r* in pass. conjunct is usually broad.⁵⁶⁹ However, the 2 sg. infixed pronoun suggests that the verbal form is to be taken as a sg. As lenition is not always indicated, I suggest to read *th* for the *t* preceding the abbreviation, giving the sg. form *not-īcfaiter*. It is followed by the 1 sg. conj. prep. *acum*, which is the 1 sg. MidIr form of the conj. prep. *oc* ‘at; with’. With passive verbs, this prep. is often used instead of *do* to denote a sense of agency,⁵⁷⁰ and I have translated it as such.

⁵⁶⁵ eDIL s.v. *lamaid* or dil.ie/29517.

⁵⁶⁶ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, p. 39.

⁵⁶⁷ *AACC*, §7.

⁵⁶⁸ *Aided Cheit* (ed. Meyer, §7).

⁵⁶⁹ *SnG*, §12.129.

⁵⁷⁰ eDIL s.v. *oc* (IV, e) or dil.ie/33397.

§7. *māgat*. This is the conditional conj. *má* ‘if’, followed by the suffixed subj. pres. 2 sg. form of the copula.⁵⁷¹ Thurneysen notes that *má* takes the pres. subj. when the condition is future or indefinite as to time, which is why I have chosen to translate this verb as a future.⁵⁷²

§7. *caithfet frit*. This verbal form is the *f*-fut. 1 sg. absolute of *caithid* ‘consumes’. The mark above the *i* in the manuscript might have been caused by ink being transferred from the following page, where a dot decorating an initial is found in a position corresponding to our word (see image 32 below). This stain causes the lenition mark over the *t* to be smudged and gives the impression that there is a mark written above the *i*. Meyer suggests that *caithfet* may have been miswritten for *cathaigfet*,⁵⁷³ which would be the fut. 1 sg. form of the verb *cathaigid* ‘fights, gives battle’. I propose to take it as the fut. 1 sg. of *caithid* with the meaning ‘casts, throws’. When used in this sense, the verb *caithid* often takes the prep. *fri* ‘to, against’, as is the case here. What Bélchú then refers to in making a cast at Conall is his intention to fight him when he is healed. The ending *-et/-at* is the fut. 1 sg. absolute ending, which developed during the MidIr period.⁵⁷⁴



Image 32: Courtesy of ISOS

§8. *ocus a leth ina diaid*. Literally translated: ‘and his half behind him’. Meyer translates this as ‘half dragging behind him’.⁵⁷⁵ The idea is that after Bélchú has lifted the wounded Conall upon his back to bring him to his house, he only carries half of Conall’s body while the other half is

⁵⁷¹ eDIL s.v. 3 *má*, *ma* or dil.ie/31164.

⁵⁷² *GOI*, §902.

⁵⁷³ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, p. 45.

⁵⁷⁴ *EIV*, pp. 174–5; *SnG*, §12.122.

⁵⁷⁵ *Aided Cheit* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §8).

dragging behind him. A similar verbal phrasing is also found in *TBC-I*, when a young Cú Chulainn meets a man carrying his brother on the battle-field: *Co n-acca ara chind in fer 7 leth a chind fair 7 leth fir aile fora muin.*⁵⁷⁶ O’Rahilly has supplied ‘carrying’ in her translation. I have added ‘was’ in my translation, since the copula could easily have been omitted here. I also translate the conjunction *ocus* as ‘while’, since one of the idiomatic uses of *ocus* is to connect two sentences, the second of which is virtually though not formally dependent on the first, as is the case here.⁵⁷⁷ For a discussion on the use of the motif of back-carrying, see Part II, section 2.2.4.

§8. *nī dingna ar les*. This is the fut. 3 sg. form of *do-gní* ‘does, makes’, with the MidIr stem *dingn-*.⁵⁷⁸ Together with the masc. *u*-stem noun *les* ‘relief; advantage’, it is commonly translated as ‘acts in the interests of X, looks after X’.⁵⁷⁹

§8. *resū dechaid*. The second word is a form of the verb *téit* ‘goes’, which is found in the manuscript as *dech-*. The preceding conj. *resū* ‘before’ requires a subj. form of the verb to express a future action. I have therefore expanded this verb as the subj. 3 sg. form of *téit* ‘goes’. This form is the MidIr form, which corresponds to the perf. 3 sg. form *dechaid*.⁵⁸⁰

§8. *fosclaiithi*. Meyer expands the form *foscl-i* as *fosclaiithi*, which is the past participle of the MidIr simple verb *oslaicid* ‘opens’, with an inorganic or prosthetic *f*.⁵⁸¹ However, the *c* in the consonant cluster *-scl-* indicates that metathesis has taken place and the stem *oslaic-* had become *oscail-*, meaning that this is a form of the verb *osclaid* ‘opens’, a later form of the verb *oslaicid*, and the past participle should therefore be *fosclaiithi*.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁶ *TBC-I*, ll. 4932–3: ‘he saw in front of him a man with half a head carrying the half of another man on his back’.

⁵⁷⁷ eDIL s.v. 2 *ocus* (b) or dil.ie/33484.

⁵⁷⁸ *SnG*, §3.14.

⁵⁷⁹ eDIL s.v. 1 *les* or dil.ie/29990; for the use of this idiom, see also Ó Cathasaigh, ‘Rhetoric of *Fingal Rónáin*’, pp. 387–8.

⁵⁸⁰ eDIL s.v. 1 *téit* or dil.ie/40447.

⁵⁸¹ *SnG*, §3.21; *EIV*, pp. 199–200.

⁵⁸² eDIL s.v. *osclaid* or dil.ie/34066; *EIV*, p. 192.

§8. *ar bar cinn*. The combination of the prep. *ar* and the noun *cinn* has many meanings, and I have chosen here to take it here as ‘awaiting, ready for, in anticipation of (someone or something arriving)’.⁵⁸³

§8. *an uilc*. This is the gen. sg. substantive form of the masc. *o*-stem adjective *olc* ‘evil, bad’, which can be taken as ‘a bad man, an evil doer’ or ‘evil, wrong; misfortune’.⁵⁸⁴ Like Meyer, I have chosen to take it as ‘misfortune’, since this agrees with the previous gen. sg. noun *imnid* ‘sorrow, tribulation’.⁵⁸⁵

§9. *sair*. This adv. literally means ‘eastwards’, but eDIL also lists ‘in a forward direction, forwards, to the front’ as a possible meaning, which I have used here to indicate that Bélchú goes towards the front door of the house.⁵⁸⁶

§9. *fuslaicthi*. Like Meyer, I have expanded the form *fusl-i* here as *fuslaicthi*, which is an *io/iā*-stem adjective, derived from the participle of the verb *oslaicid* ‘opens’, with an inorganic or prosthetic *f*.⁵⁸⁷ As an acc. sg., the expected OIr form would have been *fuslaicthe*. Since the vowels in final open unstressed syllables fell together during the MidIr period, this accounts for the spelling of the ending with an *-i*. See also the note on *fosclaithi* (§8), the past participle of the later simple form of this verb.

§9. *mina tísi*. The first word is the MidIr form of the OIr neg. conj. *mani* ‘if not’. It is followed by the pres. subj. 2 sg. absolute of the verb *do-icc* ‘comes’, although the conjunct form *tís* would be expected here. It is likely that the form *-tís-[s]iu* was intended here, which consists of the pres. subj. 2 sg. conjunct of *do-icc* with the suffixed 2 sg. emphasising pronoun *-siu*. The similar combination *go tísiu* (‘as you come’) is attested in *TBC-LL*.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸³ eDIL s.v. 1 *cinn* (29) or dil.ie/8622.

⁵⁸⁴ eDIL s.v. *olc* or dil.ie/33783.

⁵⁸⁵ eDIL s.v. *immed* or dil.ie/27982.

⁵⁸⁶ eDIL s.v. *sair* or dil.ie/36037.

⁵⁸⁷ *SnG*, §3.21; *EIV*, pp. 199–200.

⁵⁸⁸ *TBC-LL*, l. 4737.

§9. *Īar cotlud do Bēlchoin*. Like Meyer, I have chosen to expand *cotl*–as *cotlud*, the dat. sg. of the verbal noun of the verb *con-tuili* ‘sleeps, falls asleep’. The prep. *do* is used here to express the agent of the verbal noun, which is Bēlchú.

§9. *fuslaici Conall an tec[h]*. Meyer suggests reading the final *i* as a proleptic neut. pronoun, referring to *in tec*.⁵⁸⁹ This explanation is doubtful, since proleptic pronouns were mainly used during the ninth century, and had already fallen out of use by the middle of the tenth century.⁵⁹⁰ I have expanded the form *fusl*–*i* here as the pres. 3 sg. conjunct of the verb *oslaicid* ‘opens’. See the note on *fosclaithe* (§8) on the use of the prefixed prosthetic *f* in *osclaid*, the later form of this verb.

§9. *do-thecait*. This is the ind. pres. 3 pl. of the verb *do-icc* ‘comes to, approaches’. In OIr, the verb *do-icc* is transitive and often takes an infixed pronoun as its direct object. In MidIr the verb is usually intransitive, as is the case here, since the direct object in this sentence is preceded by the prep. *dochum* ‘to(wards)’.

§9. *spreathach a n-incinni*. eDIL lists the noun *spreathach* under *sprédach* ‘sparks; fragments’, yet both words are rarely attested.⁵⁹¹ The meaning ‘fragments’ derives from Meyer’s editions of *Aided Lōegaire Būadaig* and the current tale.⁵⁹² The word *spreathach* is followed by 3 pl. possessive pronoun *a n-* and the gen. sg. noun *inchinn* ‘the brain, brains’, although the latter refers to the brains of multiple people, as indicated by the 3 pl. possessive pronoun *far*. The sg. may have been used to refer to the individual brains of the three sons. I have chosen to translate it as plural (cf. *caip far n-incindi* ‘the clots of your brains’).⁵⁹³

§9. *a t[h]ech*. I take the possessive pronoun *a* here as 3 sg. masc. ‘his’, referring to Conall’s house, and have added the appropriate lenitio

⁵⁸⁹ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, p. 45.

⁵⁹⁰ eDIL s.v. *-i* or dil.ie/26893; Strachan, ‘Grammatical Notes’, p. 484.

⁵⁹¹ eDIL s.v. *sprédach* or dil.ie/38682.

⁵⁹² *Aided Lōegaire Būadaig* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §2).

⁵⁹³ *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (ed. and transl. Knott, l. 862).

PART II – CONTEXT & COMMENTARY

1. RELATED MATERIAL

This commentary on *AACC* and *ACMM* will begin by considering how references to the deaths of Ailill mac Máta, Conall Cernach and Cet mac Mágach in other sources, such as poetry and place-name lore, relate to the extant *aideda*. The following section examines this evidence to shed light on the traditions surrounding the deaths of these literary characters.

1.1 *Aided Ailella 7 Conall Chernaig*

1.1.1 *Textual Tradition*

The deaths of Conall and Ailill are mentioned in a number of dateable sources. Some of these have been collected by Smith and discussed in his study of the place-name Ballyconnell and its associations with the death of Conall Cernach, but have not yet been analysed in the context of the textual tradition of the narrative *AACC*.⁵⁹⁴ One of the earliest sources is the ninth-century poem *Innid scél scailter n-airich*, which is ascribed to the royal poet Flannacán mac Cellaich (d. 896).⁵⁹⁵ This poem lists the deaths of Irish heroes from literature and history according to the days of the week. The death of Conall is noted as occurring on a Monday:

lūan i mbíth Morann medrach

*lūan i mbíth Conall Cernach.*⁵⁹⁶

The death of Ailill is also mentioned, taking place on a Tuesday:

⁵⁹⁴ The 'earliest' reference discussed by Smith is a stanza from the poem *Andsu immarbáig ri Laignib* in LL, ascribed to the legendary poet and lawmaker Dubhthach maccu Lugair, who supposedly lived during the fifth century: *Na trí Ruadcind ba di Laignib/láechda in crobang./Marbsat Lugaid ocus Conaire/ocus Conall* (ll. 6435–8) 'The three Red-heads were of Leinster / a valiant cluster / they killed Lugaid, and Conaire / and Conall' (transl. O'Curry, *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials*, p. 483). Smith is inclined to take this stanza as an indication of a different version of Conall's death from the fifth century, in which the three Red-Heads came from Leinster as opposed to Munster. This is impossible, since Dubhthach is a legendary character and the ascription of this poem to him would have been inserted retrospectively. Moreover, the trio that is said to have killed Conall in *AACC* are the three *Ruadcoín* 'Red Wolves', as opposed to the *Ruadcind* 'Red-Heads'. The *Ruadcind* referred to here are part of the tradition surrounding the legendary high king Conaire Mór, whose reign is recounted in the Middle Irish tale *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*. Although absent from this tale, the *Ruadcind* are mentioned in an earlier version of the tale, alluded to in some genealogical texts, regnal lists and the poem *Do Chomramaib Laigen inso sis*. Here, *na trí Ruadhcind do Laignib* refers to the sons of Donn Désa (O'Connor, *Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*, p. 217, n. 95).

⁵⁹⁵ Mulchrone, 'Flannacán mac Cellaich', p. 80.

⁵⁹⁶ *Innid scél scailter n-airich* (ed. and transl. Mulchrone, §10): 'The Monday the merry Morann was slain. The Monday Conall the Victorious was slain'.

dē mairt na cairrell crōebach
*do fhōeth Ailill mac Māgach.*⁵⁹⁷

Of note here is the spelling of Ailill's filiation, which in *AACC* is *mac Māta*, deriving from his mother Máta Muresc.⁵⁹⁸ Mulchrone proposed to emend the first line of this entry to *dē mairt na caille(d) crōebach*, since it was a *crōeb chuill* 'hazel-branch' that betrayed Ailill and led to his death in *AACC*.⁵⁹⁹ If we accept Mulchrone's change, the hazel-branch would be an element associated early on with Ailill's death. However, it is more likely that Mulchrone's emendation is prompted by the fact that in later accounts of Ailill's death such as *AACC* the hazel-branch plays an important role.⁶⁰⁰

The tenth-century poem *Do Chomramaib Laigen inso sis* 'Concerning the Victories of the Leinstermen', ascribed to Flann mac Maelmadóic (d. 979), does not mention the deaths of either Conall or Ailill, although it describes the deaths of other Ulster heroes from the Ed. anthology, such as the killing of Fergus mac Róich by Ailill.⁶⁰¹ As mentioned in Part I, section 1.2, a reference is found in the tenth-century poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain*, ascribed to the poet Cináed úa hArtacáin (d. 975). The deaths of Conall and Ailill are described in a stanza that directly follows a stanza on Bélchú's murder by Conall:

Conall Cernach, croda in t-echt,
is and ro bíth i m-Maig Šlecht,
ic Raith Cruachan, gním do rind,
*dia laim dorochair Ailill.*⁶⁰²

The basic information provided about Ailill's death is identical to that found in the extant death-tale. Further details are found in the glosses on this verse, found in two other copies of this poem in MS Egerton 1782 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 610. The version in MS Laud 610 adds *na tri Ruadcoin Martaine rod-marbsat Conall Cernach* in a gloss after the second line, attesting to the tradition that the three Red-Wolves killed Conall.⁶⁰³ This element is also found in

⁵⁹⁷ *Innid scél scaílter n-airich* (ed. and transl. Mulchrone, §12): 'On Tuesday ... Ailill son of Mágu fell (in battle)' (my emendations).

⁵⁹⁸ While it cannot be excluded that this might be a reference to Cet's brother Ailill, Jaski has examined the fluctuation between King Ailill's patronymics, showing that he is named as both *mac Māgach* and *mac Māta* in different traditions (see Jaski, 'Strange Case'). See also section 2.2.2.b.

⁵⁹⁹ Mulchrone, *Innid scél scaílter n-airich*, p. 90.

⁶⁰⁰ See *AACC*, §7: *Robuī crāeb cuill fri tāob na lānanna for glúasacht*.

⁶⁰¹ 'Do Chomramaib Laigen inso sis' (ed. Meyer, §13).

⁶⁰² 'On the Deaths of Some Irish Heroes' (ed. and transl. Stokes, §20 (LL version)): 'Conall Cernach — cruel the murder — there has he been smitten, in Mag Slécht: at Rathcroghan — deed by a spear — by his hand Ailill had fallen' (my emendations).

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 321: 'the three Red Wolves of Martine, they killed Conall Cernach'.

the version in MS Egerton 1782, which contains the similar gloss *i. na tri Ruadcoin Martine ro marbsat a ndigail Ailealla*, adding that the killing was done in revenge for Ailill.⁶⁰⁴ This MS also contains an additional gloss at the end of the stanza, which reads *i. Conall dano ro inmsma gae tria Ailill ar irail Medba tria ét*.⁶⁰⁵ Judging by the language, these glosses were most likely later additions that drew on *AACC* for this information.⁶⁰⁶ Overall, these glosses can be seen to attest to the widespread familiarity of this version of the tale.⁶⁰⁷

Another source containing references to the deaths of Ailill and Conall are the two extant tale-lists. As previously discussed in Part I, section 1.2, these lists of titles of tales are known as list A, found in LL and in Dublin, Trinity College MS 1336 (H.3.17) and dated to the twelfth century, and list B, which is embedded in the tenth- or eleventh-century tale *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coisse*.⁶⁰⁸ It is notable that the title *Aided Ailella* is absent from both lists. No further references, such as alternative titles, survive from the tale-lists that could potentially refer to Ailill's death. The death of Conall, however, is attested in the *aideda* or *oitte* section in tale-list A as *Aided Chonail*. According to Toner, this list may go back to an older list. In his analysis of the tale-lists, he demonstrates that tale-list A has an alliterative structure, in that it uses a specific and freer form of alliteration to form pairs of titles.⁶⁰⁹ This type of alliteration is also present in the title *Aided Chonail*, linking it to the title that follows:

Aided Conail

Aided Celtchair

Toner demonstrates that the titles of the *aideda* category were part of the original list O, especially when appearing as a pair linked by this type of alliteration.⁶¹⁰ He rightly points out the difficulty in determining the date of this list, since there is no tangible list to work with, but tentatively posits a tenth-century *terminus post quem*.⁶¹¹ This provides additional evidence for the existence of a narrative tradition concerning the death of Conall in the twelfth, and perhaps the tenth century.

⁶⁰⁴ 'On the Deaths of Some Irish Heroes' (ed. Stokes, p. 326): 'that is, the three Red wolves of Martine killed [him] in revenge for Ailill'.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 327: 'that is Conall then thrust his spear through Ailill at Medb's instigation because of her jealousy'.

⁶⁰⁶ Later linguistic features include assimilation of *-nd-* to *-nm-*; spread of the relative 3 sg. pronoun *-d* of class C; loss of the initial *f* (*ar* for *for*).

⁶⁰⁷ It is worth noting that although the verb *indsmáid* 'thrusts' occurs in a different context in the last gloss cited here, it is also used in *AACC*, where it describes Conall riveting spears. As Thomas Clancy suggests, this might be seen to strengthen the idea that the glossator were drawing on *AACC*.

⁶⁰⁸ See p. 6; Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 33–65.

⁶⁰⁹ Toner, 'Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists', pp. 101–4.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

However, it should be kept in mind that while the poem provides us with details that correspond to the extant narrative, the attestation of a title alone means that this could have represented a different version of the tale than that extant.

While the details of Ailill's death as found in these early sources are also present in *AACC*, they mention additional circumstances surrounding Conall's death that are absent from the tale. The poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain* notes that Conall is killed at Mag Slécht, which is a historic plain, now in the Barony of Tullyhaw, County Cavan. This detail is also preserved in references to the death of Conall in the *dindshenchas* traditions. The *dindshenchas* is a collection of topographical tales about the origin of important places in Ireland, comprising a medieval interpretation and construction of the landscape of early medieval Ireland, and is generally dated to the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁶¹² The *dindshenchas* tradition was first divided into three recensions by Thurneysen: *Dindshenchas A*, the metrical version from LL; *Dindshenchas B*, which consists of prose episodes, each ending with a quatrain; and *Dindshenchas C*, a prosimetric version, which is the most widely attested recension.⁶¹³ All three of these recensions contain corresponding versions of the *dindshenchas* of Mag Luirg, which describe the events leading up to Conall's death. Mag Luirg—or the anglicised Moylurg—was the name for the Plains of Boyle, which is part of the present barony of Boyle, County Roscommon, south of the river Boyle.⁶¹⁴ The entry from the earliest version in LL is as follows:

<i>Is eól dam im threbbhas tó</i>	Known to me in my silent dwelling
<i>in senchas súairc, nach sóeb-ró,</i>	is the pleasant tale of no false prosperity
<i>dia n-abar, cuird co caisse,</i>	from which is named — an intricate task —
<i>Mag Luirg cosin lór-maise.</i>	Mag Luirg with its plenty of adornments.

<i>Dia mbói Conall, úath-bla áig,</i>	When Conall, dread centre of strife,
<i>ic ríg Cruachna in chét-gáid</i>	dwelt with the king of Cruachu, chief in danger,
<i>ar brú deróil a derce</i>	as an old man forspent
<i>ina shenóir dímelte,</i>	on the feeble brink of his grave,

⁶¹² Hamon, 'Landscape', p. 31; Ó Concheanainn, 'Three Forms of *Dindshenchas Érenn*', p. 91.

⁶¹³ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 36–46.

⁶¹⁴ Hogan, *Onomasticon*, p. 525.

*Tuc brón hi Crúachain Chera
Conall túachail trén-bera,
mar rothairind túaid 'ca thaig
Ailill mac Rúaid cor-roblaid.*

Conall, cunning with the stout spear,
caused grief in Cera's Cruachu,
when he laid low at his home northward
Ailill mac Ruaid, high in fame.

*Rongab gairbe risin scél,
rotheich, ba hairde étrén,
dar Mag Luirg cen écht mbréithre
co Mag Slécht na sen-Bréifne.*

Fierceness seized him at the tale;
he fled (it was sign of feebleness)
over Mag Luirg, without crime of note,
to Mag Slécht of old Bréifne.

*Fríth a lenmain assa lurg
do shluag dedgair fo donn-chulg,
co torchair leó in brianda bil
ic Áth na Mianna ic Magin.*

The way to follow was known from his track
by the fleet host girt with brown blades;
so the renowned soldier fell by their hands
at Áth na Mianna near Magen.

*Na tri Rúad-choin Martín mir
báidsit balc-bríg in blaid-fhir;
tallsat a chend, cíá búí de,
bí cin Chonrúí maic Dáire.*

The three active Red Wolves of the Martine
quenched the sturdy strength of the famous man:
they took his head from him, whatever came of it,
in revenge for Cú Roí mac Dáire.

*Rucsat leó fo glére a ngell
hi Crích Bérré in mbúan-chend,
co fail tíar fo thalmain tall
in cend cíar robái ar Chonall.*

They bore with them among their choicest pledges
the long-remembered head, into Crích Bérré,
and yonder in the west it lies underground,
the dark head that once was Conall's.

*Is don gním-sin ic cuain Chairn
fofhúair in mag a mór-ainm:
gaire Conaill na cét ceól
dam cen dodaing is dag-éol. Is.*

From this deed wrought by the soldiery of Carn
the plain received its great name:
the Cherishing of Conall, hero of a hundred songs,
is well known to me without difficulty.

<i>Ni raib mo chend, a Chríst cháid,</i>	Let not my head, O pure Christ,
<i>trell fo thríst is fo thiug-báig:</i>	lie anywhile under curse and final contention!
<i>m'anam mo chorp is mo cheól</i>	my soul, my body, and my song
<i>rop sáer ar olc ar aneól. Is.</i>	let them escape evil and oblivion! ⁶¹⁵

The stanzas of this poem tell the story of *AACC*, but also include additional topographical details. Smith believes that the poem derived from the death-tale, based on the ‘poet’s reference to ‘The Cherishing of Conall’.⁶¹⁶ However, no title is assigned to the tale in the manuscripts. In fact, Meyer borrowed the first part of his title, *Goire Conaill Cernaig i Cruachain*, from the *dindshenchas* entries on Mag Luirg, and supplied it as part of the title for his edition of *AACC*.⁶¹⁷ Therefore, there is no evidence to assume that the *dindshenchas* of Mag Luirg was based on *AACC*, rendering Smith’s argument invalid.

Returning to the *dindshenchas* entries on Mag Luirg, the second source is the Rennes prosimetrical *dindshenchas* (Redaction C), which is also a source for Meyer’s title *Goire Conaill*:

Mag Luirg, canas ro ainmniged?

*Ni ansa. Dia mbái Conoll Cernach ica gaire hi Cruachain conid ann rogeogoin Oilill rí[g]
Connacht tria furail Medba, conid aire roteich asin Chruachoin co ndecheid ócbad Connacht
ina diaidh, & co ndechar na tri Ruadh-coin Mairtine for a lurg, cona[d] assin congabsat a lorg
.i. a Mag Luirg co Magh Slecht i mBrefne, coron-ortsat na tri Ruadh-coin do Feroib Fene oc Áth
na Miana oc Maighin, & rofucsat a cend leo co crich Beirre hi Corcalaidhe hi cinaidh chind Conrói
meic Dairi, conad hí sin Conoill i Cruachain et unde Magh Luirg nominatur.⁶¹⁸*

Lastly, there is the entry from the Bodleian prose *dindshenchas* (Redaction B). This source does not contain any references to *Goire Conaill* or Ailill’s death, and only narrates Conall’s death at the hands of the Red Wolves:

⁶¹⁵ ‘*Mag Luirg*’ (ed. and transl. Gwynn, pp. 396–9).

⁶¹⁶ Smith, ‘Death of Conall Cernach’, p. 466.

⁶¹⁷ Meyer, ‘*Goire Conaill Cernaig*’, p. 102.

⁶¹⁸ ‘Prose Tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*’ (ed. and transl. Stokes, pp. 472–3): ‘*Mag Luirg*, whence was it named? That is not difficult. When Conall Cernach was being cherished at Cruachu, he slew, at Medb’s behest, (her husband) Ailill king of Connaught. Wherefore he fled out of Cruachu, and Connaught’s warriors pursued him. The three Red Wolves of Martine started on his track (*lorg*) and took it from Mag Luirg to Mag Slécht in Bréifne. There at Áth na Miana by Maigen the three Red Wolves of the Fir Féne killed him, and then they carried off his head to the district of Béirre in Corca Laígde in retribution for the head of Cú róí son of Dáire (whom Conall’s comrade Cú Chulainn had decapitated). So that is the Cherishing of Conall in Cruachu, and thence Magh Luirg ‘Plain of the Track’ is named.’ The *dúnad* in the penultimate stanza suggests that the final stanza was added to the poem later.

Mag Luirg, can[as] rohainmniged?

*Ni ansa. Na tri Ruadcoin Mairtene is as rogabsat lorg Conaill [Cernaig] maic Aimirgen,
a Muig Luirg co Mag Slecht i mBrefne. O ronm-ortsat rucsat a cenn leo fo dess co crich Corco
Laigi, condas-fil a mBrefni nunc.*

Marbsat na Rua[d]coin i recc

Conall Cernach na cruadhgleacc:

lensat o Maig Luirg ille

co m-Mag Slecht na sidgaile.⁶¹⁹

The events and details concerning the deaths of Ailill and Conall from the three *dindshenchas* entries largely correspond to each other, and also share a significant number of textual elements with the extant tale *AACC*. For comparison, the textual elements contained in the various sources have been set out in the table below (Figure 5), with elements shared found in both *AACC* and the *dindshenchas* entries marked in blue.

As can be seen, the three *dindshenchas* entries include a considerable number of the same topographical details (in bold and underlined): they agree on Conall's fictitious escape route from Crúachan, describing him as fleeing via Mag Luirg to Mag Slécht in Bréifne, where he was killed by the three Red Wolves of Martine. The first two places are situated in Connacht; Crúachan or Rathcroghan being the royal seat of Connacht in modern-day County Roscommon, as is the aforementioned Mag Luirg. As previously mentioned, Mag Slécht is a well-known historic plain, originally part of the medieval kingdom of Bréifne, later East Bréifne or Bréifne O'Reilly (1256 to 1607). Smith posits that these were once present in the original lost versions of the tale.⁶²⁰ I would disagree, as it is more likely that these topographical details were added specifically to the *dindshenchas* entries, since they are primarily focussed on explaining how particular places got their names from events. However, the detail that Conall died at Mag Slécht might be an exception, as it is also present in the tenth-century poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain*. This suggests that there may indeed be a connection between this place and the deaths of Ailill and Conall.

⁶¹⁹ 'Bodleian Dinnshenchas' (ed. and transl. Stokes, p. 495): 'Mag Luirg, whence was it named? That is not difficult. Thence the three Red-wolves of Mairténe followed the track of Conall Cernach, son of Aimergen, from Mag Luirg to Mag Slécht, in Bréifne. When they slew him they took his head southwards to the district of Corco Laígde. The Red-wolves slew in exchange/Conall Cernach of the hard conflicts. They followed [him] from Mag Luirg hither/To Mag Slécht of the great valour.'

⁶²⁰ Smith, 'Death of Conall Cernach', p. 466.

	Sources				
	Fianna	AACC	Din A	Din B	Din C
Conall in old age		X	X		
Conall in Cruachu	X	X	X	X	
Medb's jealousy	X	X		X	
Conall kills Aiill in Cruachu	X	X	X	X	
Aiill killed by spear	X ^{GL}	X	(X)		
Conall's flight across Mag Luirg			X	X	X
Chased by Red Wolves	X ^{GL}	X	X	X	X
Red Wolves of Fir Maige/Féne	X ^{GL}	X		X	
Revenge for Cú Roí		X	X	X	
Conall reaches Mag Slécht	X		X	X	X
Conall dies at Áth na Mianna near Magen			X	X	
Three Wolves take Conall's head away		X	X	X	X
Conall's head is taken to Corca Laígde			X	X	X

Textual elements

X - element present in source

X^{GL} - element present in gloss on source

(X) - element implied

Figure 5: Conall's death: overview of narrative elements

The metrical *dindshenchas* and the Rennes prose *dindshenchas* contain the additional detail that the murder took place near Magen, at a ford called Áth na Míana. Smith argues that Magen means ‘Little Plain’ and refers to a narrow strip of land, bordered on the north by the Slieve Rushen mountain and on the south by the river Graine, on the eastern side of Mag Slécht.⁶²¹ Smith argues that the place Áth na Míana, which he translates as ‘Ford of the Miners’, never existed, as it is only attested in the *dindshenchas*.⁶²² He suggests that the reference to the miners washing ore in the ford in *AACC* was mistaken by the authors of the *dindshenchas* for a place-name. Smith’s interpretation is flawed on linguistic grounds, as the Irish word for miner is *mianaige*.⁶²³ A more appropriate translation would therefore be ‘Ford of the Mine’ or ‘Ford of the Ore’.⁶²⁴ Moreover, it is not possible to establish if the *dindshenchas* entries were based on *AACC* or vice versa. Instead, the significance of this detail lies in the association of Conall’s death at a ford where mining took place. Since both *AACC* and the *dindshenchas* entries share the detail about Conall dying at a ford associated with mining, this suggests these narratives might all have drawn on a common source.

While there are doubts as to the historicity of a few of these places, they are all (supposedly) located either in Connacht or Bréifne. The geographical concentration of these locations indicates that the focus of the *dindshenchas* entries lies in explaining the landscape of northern Connacht and Bréifne, which therefore connects the narrative traditions of the deaths of Ailill and Conall to these regions—more specifically, the death of Ailill to Connacht, as he dies in Crúachan, while Conall’s death in Mag Slécht associates him with Bréifne. While the extant text of *AACC* lacks any geographical detail as to where Conall died, both the *dindshenchas* entries and the tenth-century poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain* mention that Conall was killed at Mag Slécht. This shows that in the earliest extant evidence concerning the tradition of the deaths of Ailill and Conall, Conall’s death was likely associated with the place Mag Slécht. This may have been taken by the composers of the *dindshenchas* tradition and further expanded, including additional geographical details pertaining to the region, but was lost or not included in *AACC*.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

⁶²² Hogan, *Onomasticon*, p. 68; Smith, ‘Death of Conall Cernach’, p. 468.

⁶²³ eDIL s.v. *mianaige* or dil.ie/32138.

⁶²⁴ eDIL s.v. 1 *méin* or dil.ie/31774.

1.1.2 Ballyconnell and Bréifne

The town of Ballyconnell in County Cavan may also carry an association with the death of Conall Cernach and Bréifne in its name. The place Ballyconnell is a town situated on the Woodford River (originally called the river Graine), in the barony of Tullyhaw, County Cavan. The name Ballyconnell is an anglicisation of *Bél Átha Conaill*, meaning ‘The Entrance to the Ford of Conall’, and is first attested in an entry in the Annals of the Four Masters for 1323 AD: *Ruaidhri Mhag Mathghamna mac tighearna Oirgiall, 7 Maol Seaclainn O Segannáin, 7 Mac Maeile Dúin do mharbhadh la Cathal Ó Ruairc i m-Beol Atha Conaill*.⁶²⁵ According to local tradition this is the place where Conall Cernach died, as discussed by Smith.⁶²⁶ Smith approaches the sources as factual evidence, using them to establish whether an historical Conall Cernach actually died at Ballyconnell, and goes as far as to suggest an excavation of Conall’s alleged burial place.⁶²⁷ This is problematic, since the account of Conall’s death is a piece of literature and Conall is a fictional character. I would argue for a different, less literal approach to the sources, and consider the connection between Conall and the place-name Ballyconnell to be part of a local literary tradition.

Although it is not possible to establish with certainty whether Ballyconnell was named after Conall’s Ford, or if the narrative tradition of Conall’s death developed around the place-name Ballyconnell, it is more likely that the place-name derived from the story. The first attestation of the place-name Ballyconnell dates back to the fourteenth century, which is later than most of the aforementioned sources. The name *Bél Átha Conaill* is found anglicised from the seventeenth century onwards, and nineteenth-century anglicised forms include Bellaconnell and Ballyconnell.⁶²⁸ Moreover, the fact that historical places such as Mag Slécht and Mag Luirg are mentioned in the majority of the sources raises the possibility that *Bél Átha Conaill* was created based on this narrative tradition, in order to strengthen the association between the region Bréifne and the death of Conall.

It is evident that the narrative tradition of the death of Conall and the place Ballyconnell are connected, and that they both are linked to the region of Bréifne. As discussed above, the link

⁶²⁵ *Annals of The Kingdom of Ireland III* (ed. and transl. by O’Donovan, pp. 411 and 529): ‘Rory Mac Mahon, son of the Lord of Oriel, Melaghlin O’Seagannain, and Mac Muldoon, were slain by Cathal O’Rourke at Bel-atha-Chonaill’.

⁶²⁶ Joyce, *Origin and History*, p. 160; Hogan, *Onomasticon*, p. 104; Smith, ‘Death of Conall Cernach’.

⁶²⁷ Smith, ‘Death of Conall Cernach’, p. 475.

⁶²⁸ The first attestation of the anglicised spelling dates from the Ulster Plantation in 1609 (Smith, ‘Death of Conall Cernach’, p. 460). See also the entry on Ballyconnell on Logainm: Placenames Database of Ireland (www.logainm.ie/en/3878) for nineteenth-century references.

between Bréifne and the narrative of Conall's death is most explicit in the entries in the *dindshenchas*, which demonstrates that the narrative has ties to the region around Mag Slécht in Bréifne. In that context, one function of the narrative of Conall's death in Mag Slécht as told in *dindshenchas* material would have been to explain the local toponyms, such as Mag Luirg. However, it would likely have had the additional purpose of ingraining the landscape with meaning. Often, the interpretation of features of the landscape in the *dindshenchas* had a literary and political focus.⁶²⁹ The casting of major figures from the Ulster Cycle as the main characters for these *dindshenchas* entries may have been part of a strategy by a local ruler. According to Poppe, the heroes from the Ulster Cycle were perceived as historical figures, as evidenced in the Annals, which records the dates of their birth and death.⁶³⁰ Indeed, their perception as historical characters is confirmed in the genealogies, which can often be traced back to these literary heroes.⁶³¹ A local ruler may have sought to establish his authority through linking his region with these legendary ancestors, thereby connecting it with the wider pseudo-historical traditions of Ireland. Through the *dindshenchas* of Mag Luirg, the region of East Bréifne laid claim to the site where centuries ago, one of the great heroes of Ulster had fallen, likely endeavouring to bolster a leader's claims to the land.

Based on the evidence from both the literary sources and the place-names, it is highly likely that the narrative tradition of *AACC* was conceived in Bréifne, although we cannot exclude that it may have been in existence before being connected to this region. In this context, the provenance of the manuscripts which preserve the extant versions of *AACC* ought to be mentioned. One of the two, H.2.17, most likely comes from the wider region of Sligo/Longford/Galway, an area which roughly comprises Bréifne.⁶³² It would make sense for a tale that was associated with and based in Bréifne to be recorded in a manuscript written in the same area. As for Ed., the provenance of this manuscript cannot be determined with certainty, but it may have been produced in a place called Berraman.⁶³³ Black notes that there are a few places in Ireland with this name, of which most are located in Bréifne.⁶³⁴ While it is tempting to say that Ed. would therefore have been composed in a Berraman in Bréifne, the evidence for this is too thin—we would rely on merely one tale and

⁶²⁹ Hamon, 'Landscape', p. 30.

⁶³⁰ Poppe, 'Reconstructing Medieval Irish Literary Theory', p. 40.

⁶³¹ See for instance Mac Gearailt, '*Cath Ruis na Ríg*', pp. 149–50, who shows that the Laígisi trace back their descent to Conall Cernach, and how this led to the reworking of the version of *CRR* in LL.

⁶³² Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Bréifne Bias', pp. 141–2.

⁶³³ See Part I, section 1.1.

⁶³⁴ Black, *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts*; Hogan, *Onomasticon*, p. 113.

a place-name that is attested more than once across Ireland. However, the connections with Bréifne may lend some more credence to the suggestion that Ed. may have been written in a Berraman in Bréifne, as opposed to elsewhere in Ireland.

1.1.3 Conclusions

The examination of the sources pertaining to the deaths of Ailill and Conall suggests that the narrative tradition of *AACC* might go back to the tenth century, lending support to Clancy's tentative early date for the anthology. While it is not possible to establish to what degree the narrative has undergone changes during transmission, the references to the deaths of Ailill and Conall in other sources share a large amount of detail with *AACC*, which suggests that these all drew on a common source. It has also been argued that the narrative tradition of the death of Conall may either have originated as a local tradition in East Bréifne, or could have been later linked to this area. There is also reasonable evidence to believe that H.2.17—one of the manuscripts of *AACC*—was written in Bréifne, which further strengthens the connection to this region. Of the other manuscript—Ed.—we only know that it was composed in a place called Berraman. However, this examination into the association between Conall's death and the region of Bréifne does raise the possibility that this Berraman may have been located in Bréifne.

1.2 Aided Cheit maic Mágach

1.2.1 Textual Traditions

Very little evidence relating to the transmission of the deaths of Cet and Bélchú and his sons has survived. Firstly, a reference is found in the ninth-century poem *Innid scél scaílte n-airich*, which notes that Cet's death occurred on a Wednesday: *cétain fianna, fecht mbiudach, a rubad Cet mac Mágach*.⁶³⁵ The poem also records the death of Bélchú: *Satharn Bélchon bailc brígaich/a mBréifne recglais báirig*.⁶³⁶ References from other sources are lacking: the tenth-century poem *Do Chomramaib Laigen inso sis* does not mention the death of Cet or of Bélchú. Tale-list A, which contains the *aideda* category and lists almost all the deaths from the anthology in Ed., also lacks the title *Aided Cheit maic Mágach*. Our only other source is the poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain*, but the stanza concerning the death of Cet and Bélchú and his sons differs significantly from the events as described in *ACMM*:

*I fleid Belcon ro lamad
cetguine Cet maicc Magach,
Belchu Breifne cona chlaind
goita do cherddaib Conaill.*⁶³⁷

While in the later death-tale Cet is killed by Conall at a ford, in the poem an attempt was made to kill Cet—presumably by Conall—at a feast hosted by Bélchú. Although Cet is not specifically mentioned as Conall's victim here, this is confirmed in a gloss in another copy of the poem found in a different manuscript (MS Egerton 1782). In this copy, the first two lines of verse 19 are glossed *.i. Conall Cernach ro marb Ceat a cath 7 ic fledh Bélchon ro cocrathad*.⁶³⁸ Furthermore, the fact that the killing was conspired during a feast hosted by Bélchú suggests that Bélchú's role was different from that accorded him in *ACMM*. In *ACMM*, Bélchú finds a wounded Conall and carries him to his house, whereas in the poem it seems that both Conall and Cet were present at a feast hosted by Bélchú. The comparison between the stanza and *ACMM* shows that the narrative has either

⁶³⁵ *Innid scél scaílte n-airich* (ed. and transl. Mulchrone, §15): 'warlike Wednesday—a famous occasion—Cet son of Mágach was slain'.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, §24: 'The Saturday of stout, vigorous Bélchú in checkered-green Bréifne of the games'.

⁶³⁷ 'On the Deaths of Some Irish Heroes' (Stokes, ed. and transl., §19 (LL version)); 'At Bélchú's feast the first slaying of Cet son of Mágach was attempted. Bélchú of Bréifne with his children was killed by Conall's trickery' (transl. adapted from Stokes, p. 309).

⁶³⁸ Stokes, 'On the Deaths of Some Irish Heroes', p. 326: 'that is Conall Cernach killed Cet in a battle and it conspired at the feast of Bélchú'.

undergone significant changes, mostly relating to the role of Bélchú, or that two different versions of Cet's death were in existence.

A source that sheds more light on Bélchú's changing role is the tale-lists. Although there is no mention of a tale by the title of *ACMM* in the tale-lists, two titles are mentioned that refer solely to Bélchú. The first, *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne* ('The Destruction of Bélchú of Bréifne's Hostel'), is found in a group of *togla* 'destructions' in list B,⁶³⁹ while the second, *Orgain Bélchon Bréifne* ('The Slaughter of Bélchú of Bréifne'), is recorded in both lists A and B under the category *airgne* ('destructions').⁶⁴⁰ Mac Cana has argued that the title *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne* in list B is merely a variant of the title *Orgain Bélchon Bréifne*, which appears in the same list. He claims that the compiler of list B built a second group of *togla* ('destructions') around the titles *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* and *Togail Bruidne Da Choca*, and included the title *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne* to pad out this newly created group.⁶⁴¹ More recently, Toner has argued against Mac Cana's interpretation and has shown that list B is a conflation of two originally separate lists, of which traces can still be found within the text of list B itself. He argues that the two groups of *togla* belonged to two distinct lists which were used in the creation of list B (B1 and B^x), and that the double groups were allowed to stand during the conflation of these two into list B.⁶⁴² Thus, the title *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne* was already present in one of the two parent-lists used by the compiler of list B.

It is also possible to trace the parent-list that contained the title *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne*. Toner demonstrates that two different formulae are employed to introduce a category: the long formula *Mad ferr lat na toghla do innisin duit* ('If you prefer I will tell you the destructions') and the abbreviated formula *Madh ferr lat toghla* ('If you prefer (the) destructions').⁶⁴³ He argues that the compiler of list B copied the longer form from parent-list B1, with which list B initially starts. The compiler then switched lists and started copying from parent-list B^x, which lacked an introductory formula, and so he adopted the shorter introduction. The title *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne* is found in the list introduced by the longer formula, which indicates that it belonged to parent-list B1. Toner notes that the longer formula was composed by the author of *Airec Menman Uraird maic*

⁶³⁹ Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 41, 47, 55 and 61.

⁶⁴⁰ Toner, 'Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists', pp. 105–6 and 112.

⁶⁴¹ Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 92–3.

⁶⁴² Toner, 'Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists', pp. 93–4.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 93–4; Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 54 and 57.

Coisse, the tale which incorporates list B. This means that list B1 was included into the tale before list B^x. Since the tale *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coisse* is generally assumed to have been composed in the late tenth century, this would also be the suggested date for list B1, and by extension for the title *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne*.⁶⁴⁴

The title *Orgain Bélchon Bréifne*, which appears in both lists, goes back to a common ancestor designated X by Toner.⁶⁴⁵ This list derives from an original list he calls O, which would likely have contained this title, as the title *Orgain Bélchon Bréifne* displays the type of alliteration that according to him typifies list O.⁶⁴⁶ As mentioned before, dating this original list is difficult, but Toner tentatively suggests a tenth-century *terminus post quem*.⁶⁴⁷ Thus, it is probable that both the titles *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne* and *Orgain Bélchon Bréifne* were transmitted from older lists, which date to the tenth century.

Another title that shows possible connections to *ACMM* is *Argain maic Mágach*, which is attested in both tale-lists.⁶⁴⁸ Although this title closely resembles *ACMM*, there are two key differences: the event-type *Argain* is used instead of *Aided*, and the name *Cheit* is not present. The classifications *argain* and *aided* show a certain degree of overlap. Mac Cana notes that *argain*, which is the later verbal noun of the verb *oirgid* ('kills, ravages') can alternate in meaning between 'murder/slaying' and 'ravaging/plundering'.⁶⁴⁹ Thus, the title *Argain maic Mágach* could be taken either as 'The Slaying of the Son of Mágu' or 'The Plundering of the Son of Mágu'. The first translation would be very close in meaning to *ACMM*. While it cannot be excluded that another tale may have been in existence involving a plundering or ravaging by a son of Mágu, this seems much less likely given the prominence of Cet in the Ulster Cycle tales.

Alternatively, another interpretation may be advanced: Mac Cana points to three titles that are translated differently, because the genitival object of the verbal noun *orgain* is the functional subject instead of the object.⁶⁵⁰ One of these titles is *Argain Meic Da Thó*, which he translates as

⁶⁴⁴ Toner, 'Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists', p. 96; Schoen, 'Orcaín Catrach Mael Milscóthaig', p. 19.

⁶⁴⁵ Toner, 'Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists', pp. 93–5.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁶⁴⁸ Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 47 and 61. Mac Cana transcribes the title as *A. mac Magach*, expanding the abbreviation *m̄c* as *mac*. I have chosen to expand it as the genitive *maic*, since this follows the verbal noun *orgain*.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

‘The Slaughter [instigated] by Mac Da Thó’.⁶⁵¹ This is relevant to the interpretation of the title *Argain maic Magach*, since this title directly follows *Argain Meic Da Thó* in both tale-lists:

Argain Meic Da Thó

Argain *maic* Mágach

As noted above, Toner shows that tale-list A has an alliterative structure, in that it uses a different and freer form of alliteration to form pairs of titles.⁶⁵² This type of alliteration is also at work in this pair, in which both *argain* and *meic/maic* alliterate. Although *Da Thó* and *Mágach* do not alliterate, *maic* does alliterate with *Mágach*. The title *Argain Meic Da Thó* is preceded by the title *Argain Donnán Ego*, with which it also alliterates (i.e. *Argain Donnán Ego/ Argain Meic Da Thó*).⁶⁵³ Toner’s examination of paired and contiguous alliterating titles classifies these two titles as part of the earlier core of list A, which was part of the original list O, therefore dating them to the tenth century.⁶⁵⁴ Given this connection between the two tales, a third interpretation for the title *Argain maic Magach* may be included, in which *maic Mágach* functions as the subject, similar to *Meic Da Thó*. This gives the translation ‘The Slaughter [instigated] by the Son of Mágu’, resulting in three possible interpretations for the title *Argain maic Magach*. However, the genitive tends to be objective with transitive verbs and only subjective with intransitive verbs. It is therefore more likely that the translation ‘The Slaying of the Son of Mágu’ is correct, implying that the son of Mágu is destroyed by someone else.

This leaves the question as to which son of Mágu this title is referring in the first place. According to the first recension of the *Táin*, Mágu had seven sons, named Ailill, Anluan, Mog Corb, Cet, Én, Bascall and Dócha.⁶⁵⁵ Later sources such as *AACC* and the genealogies in the Book of Ballymote replace Bascall with Scannal, while Én is called Finn. However, apart from Cet, these other sons barely make any notable appearances in the literature, and Cet is by far the best-known warrior of the seven sons of Mágu. Although it cannot be excluded that the title refers to one of the other sons, Cet’s presence in many Ulster Cycle tales such as *AC* and *SMMD* makes it highly likely that *mac Mágach* refers to him.⁶⁵⁶ It may even be suggested that his first name was omitted

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵² Toner, ‘Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists’, pp. 101–4.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁶⁵⁵ *TBC-LL*, ll. 2–5.

⁶⁵⁶ Dócha mac Mágach has a minor role in *TBC-II*, where he casts a spear at Fíacha Fíaldána Dimraith but accidentally hits and kills his friend Dubthach Dóel (*TBC-LL*, ll. 2455–61).

from the title because he was the only son of Mágu with whom the general audience would be familiar.

This examination of the tale-lists raises two possibilities: the tale that we now know as *ACMM* might have been known by the titles *Argain maic Mágach*, *Orgain Bélchon Bréifne* or *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne* in an earlier period. Alternatively, there could have been two versions of Cet and Bélchú's deaths in existence, one known by the title *Orgain Bélchon Bréifne* or *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne* with a focus on the role of Bélchú, and *ACMM* or perhaps *Argain maic Mágach*, which has Conall as the main protagonist.⁶⁵⁷ The stanza from *Fianna bátar i nEmain* can be seen as further strengthening these suggestions. In the poem, Bélchú's death occurred at a feast, and a common location for such feasts was at a *bruiden* ('hostel'), which may allude to the title *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne*. It may also be suggested on the basis of this evidence that Bélchú may have once been accorded a different role, as he had the means to host a feast in a hostel. In the literature, feasts are often organised by kings and hospitallers.⁶⁵⁸ In his capacity as *briugu* or 'hospitaller' Bélchú would have had a duty to host a feast, as may be inferred from *Fianna bátar i nEmain*. These feasts were often locations of contention and fights, and would at times serve as the setting for killings. A well-known feast hosted in a *bruiden* that ends in a battle is *SMDD*, where the fight between the Ulaid and the Connachta is provoked by the conflict between Conall and Cet, the same characters who fight at Bélchú's feast.

Bélchú's different role and the likelihood that the confrontation between Cet and Conall may have taken place at Bélchú's guest-house raises the possibility that the tale has undergone considerable changes during its transmission, or that there may have been different narrative traditions of these deaths in existence from an earlier date. This is further strengthened by the only other reference to *ACMM*, which is an entry from the twelfth-century prose *Banshenchas* ('Lore of Women'): *Aifi ingen Bel Chon Brefni, bean aili do Chonall Cearnach*.⁶⁵⁹ Aifi is one of Conall's five wives listed in the *Banshenchas*—apart from their names, nothing is known about any of these

⁶⁵⁷ That a tale could be known by two titles is not uncommon, especially in a culture in which written and oral tradition co-existed. A well-known example of a tale that appears under two headings is *SMMD*, which is also found as *Togail Bruidne Da Thí*. This title appears in the list of *togla*, but is also recorded under the name *Orgain Meic Da Thó* under the heading *airgne* 'plunderings; slaying'.

⁶⁵⁸ Medieval Irish tales such as *SMMD*, *FB* and *Mesca Ulad* feature feasts hosted by kings and guesthouse-keepers. For studies of guesthouse-keepers and feasts in medieval Irish literature, see McCone, 'Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair' and O'Leary, 'Contention at Feasts'.

⁶⁵⁹ *Banshenchas* (ed. Dobbs, p. 174 (RC 47)); *Aife ingen Bel Con Breifne, bean eile do Conall Cearnach* (p. 209 (RC 48)) 'Aife daughter of Bélchú of Bréifne, was another wife of Conall Cearnach'.

women.⁶⁶⁰ The reference to Aifi being both Conall's wife and B elch u's daughter introduces the idea that Conall and B elch u were, in one tradition at least, related through marriage. Although this mention of a marital bond between Conall and B elch u's daughter Aifi is tantalising to say the least, it only raises further questions. At most, it reinforces the association between Conall and B elch u, a connection which could have been prompted by the traditions of B elch u's death by Conall's hand and therefore may represent a secondary attempt at connecting these two characters.

1.2.2 Two Tales in One?

A possibility that ought to be considered is that *ACMM* could be a merger of two tales. The extant tale does not end with Cet's death but rather carries on into what might be considered the second half of the tale, describing the healing of Conall and the deaths of B elch u and his three sons. The final line of *ACMM* confirms that the tale narrates multiple deaths: *Conid h i a[i]ded C[h]eit 7 B elchon Br efni cona maccaib insin.*⁶⁶¹ It may even tentatively be suggested that the extant tale consists of two independent narratives, i.e. *Argain maic M agach* and *Togail Bruidne B elchon Br efne/Orgain B elchon Br efne*, which were merged at some point. Alternatively, it could have formed part of an extended interconnected narrative, similar to the episodic structure of *FB*.

If the current tale is the result of a merger, this would have had to take place very early in the transmission of the narrative, since there is evidence both within the tale itself and from external sources to support the idea that *ACMM* does not consist of two recently-merged tales, but rather has existed as a continuous narrative for a longer period of time. Firstly, there is nothing in the text itself to suggest that we have a case of two separate narratives having been fused. The language throughout the tale is consistent in that it can generally be dated to the late Middle Irish period. The few Old Irish forms in the tale are distributed evenly between the two sections.⁶⁶² On a textual level, the two sections of the tale are intimately linked, as the events and consequences of Cet's death carry over into those that lead to the deaths of B elch u and his sons. As a result of the final battle between Cet and Conall in which Cet dies, Conall lies heavily wounded and is close to death—this is when B elch u finds him and takes him home. There is no break in the flow of the

⁶⁶⁰ The others are Lonceta (Londcaidhe), Niam, Feib and Lendabair. See Dobbs, 'Traditions of Conall Cernach' for a comprehensive list of references to Conall Cernach in Irish literature.

⁶⁶¹ *ACMM*, §9: 'So that is the violent death of Cet and of B elch u of Br efne with his sons'.

⁶⁶² See Part I, section 3.1 (9. Verbs).

narrative that might indicate the existence of a seam between two tales; nor can a change in style be detected after Bélchú makes his appearance.

Evidence in the form of the poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain* shows that the death of Cet and the deaths of Bélchú and his sons were already linked in the late tenth century. If the current tale is the result of two merged tales, such a merger would have taken place before the composition of this poem. Since it has been shown that the three titles *Argain maic Māgach*, *Togail Bruidne Bělchon Bréifne* and *Orgain Bělchon Bréifne* would have belonged either to original list O or parent-list B1, they roughly coincide with the tenth-century date of the poem. This reduces the likelihood that the current tale is a merger of two pre-existing narratives, and makes it more likely that we are dealing with a narrative about multiple deaths from its inception.

1.2.3 Belcoo and Bréifne

A final aspect to consider is the possible association between this tale and the region of Bréifne. It has already established that *AACC* has close ties with Bréifne, and most likely either originated from this region or became associated with it sometime before the tenth century. In the case of *ACMM*, such a provenance is harder to establish, as the place of composition of the only manuscript containing the tale (i.e. Ed.) is unknown.⁶⁶³ However, associations with Bréifne are present in the tale itself, since the region serves as the backdrop for the entire narrative, and one of the main characters, Bélchú, is consistently identified as an inhabitant of Bréifne, being called Bélchú *Bréifni*.

Bélchú's role as a key character in *ACMM* is notable, as this is the only extant tale in which he plays such an important part. Compared to the famous warriors Conall Cernach and Cet mac Mágach, Bélchú is relatively unknown. He is mentioned in three other Ulster Cycle tales: *Cath Airtig*; the second recension of *Táin Bó Flidaise* ('The Cattle-Raid of Flidais'), found in the Glenmasan manuscript;⁶⁶⁴ and *AACC*. His part in these tales is very minor: in *Cath Airtig* it is mentioned that he partakes in a war and is killed; in *Táin Bó Flidaise* he is listed among the attendees of a feast, and in *AACC* he is mentioned as one of Conall Cernach's victims.⁶⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that the first two tales state that Bélchú has seven sons, whereas the two death-tales note that he

⁶⁶³ See Part I, Chapter 1.2.

⁶⁶⁴ MS NLS, Adv. MS 72.2.3; in this tale, Bélchú is described as having seven sons.

⁶⁶⁵ *Cath Airtig* (ed. Best, §10); *Táin bó Flidaise* (ed. Mackinnon, p. 298); *AACC*, §2.

has only three. The name Bélchú is not recorded in any chronicles, and apart from the literary sources discussed above, no mention of Bélchú is found in any historical sources.

The only attestation of the name Bélchú outside of literature is in the form of the place-name Belcoo (*Béal Cú*) found in Bréifne, now County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland.⁶⁶⁶ This place is situated on the border of modern-day Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, between the Counties Fermanagh and Cavan. A few interpretations of this place-name exist: the earliest attestation of the place-name is found in the fourteenth-century Book of Magauran, which notes that the name derives from the Irish *béal* ‘mouth’ and the shortened form *-coo* for *cumhang* or *cunga* ‘narrowing’, referring to the town’s position on a narrow neck of water or river between Upper and Lower Lough MacNeen.⁶⁶⁷ Another etymology is ‘hound-mouth’, consisting of *béal* ‘mouth’ and *cú* ‘hound’. This explanation is recorded in a later local Belcoo folktale, which describes how Saint Patrick kills a hound that ejects fire from its face.⁶⁶⁸ However, considering that the narrative *ACMM* takes place in Bréifne, there might be a connection between the place-name Belcoo and the character Bélchú from this tale.

In the section on the textual tradition of *AACC* (i.e. 1.1.2), it has been argued that this narrative is connected to Bréifne, and that the place-name Ballyconnell became associated with the tradition around the death of Conall. A similar development might have occurred in the case of *ACMM* and Belcoo. While the place-name Ballyconnell claims to be the site where Conall Cernach was killed, the place-name Belcoo could be conceived as the place where Bélchú and his sons met their end. Evidence for such a claim is lacking, since no mention is made of either the place Belcoo or the character Bélchú in other (medieval) sources. While the earliest attested forms of the place-name indicate that the name was likely Béal (Átha) Conga or Béal Cumhang, the final element became *-coo*. Sources such as the later folklore tale indicate that this element was later reinterpreted as *cú*, perhaps even through the influence of *ACMM*. Moreover, the fact that we have a character named Bélchú Bréifne in a narrative that takes place in Bréifne, and the similar place-name Belcoo found in the very same region, (i.e. Bréifne), raises the idea that the two may have become associated at some point.

⁶⁶⁶ I am appreciative to Ruairí Ó hUiginn for bringing this place-name to my attention. For details on the place-name Belcoo, see the relevant entry on Logainm: Placenames Database of Ireland (www.logainm.ie/en/58998) and the Northern Ireland Place-name Project (<http://www.placenamesni.org/resultdetails.php?entry=12956>).

⁶⁶⁷ McKenna, *Book of Magauran*, p. 86.

⁶⁶⁸ MacNeill, *Festival of Lughnasa*, p. 539.

One particular feature that Ballyconnell and Belcoo have in common is their geographical positions in the border areas of Bréifne. Whereas early references to Belcoo are absent in historical sources, references to Ballyconnell show that it has a history of being a flashpoint of conflicts. Both places are situated a few miles from the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, on border passages between the Counties Fermanagh and Cavan. Historically, both places are located between the medieval provinces of Connacht and Ulster, and were the stage of wars between the Bréifne O'Reilly and Bréifne O'Rourke from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries, after which the whole Bréifne region came under English rule.⁶⁶⁹

Although these are historical conflicts, the situation of the wider region of Bréifne in the Ulster Cycle tales is not that dissimilar. In *ACMM*, Bréifne is the site of Cet and Conall's final battle, while in *AACC* it is the stage for Conall's last stand. In the end, the region serves as a final resting place for both Cet and Conall.⁶⁷⁰ The location and role of Bréifne in the Ulster Cycle is of consequence to our understanding of the tales, as it comprises the territory between that of the Ulaid and that of Connacht, the two provinces that are traditionally represented in the Ulster Cycle tales as being constantly at war with each other. Bréifne was essentially caught between these two major factions, and would most likely have served as the site where the two forces would have met in the literature. Comparing this to the historical situation of Bréifne, known from the sources as being a flashpoint of conflict, the depiction of Bréifne in the Ulster Cycle tales as being the stage of battle and conflict may have been inspired by historical circumstances. This indicates how the Ulster Cycle tales may have been responsive to contemporary political developments.

1.2.4 Conclusions

This examination has demonstrated that the tradition surrounding the deaths of Cet and Bélchú would have been in existence in some form as early as the tenth century. However, considerable doubts have been raised as to what degree the version of the tale extant in Ed. would have resembled the earlier version(s) referred to in the tale-lists and *Fianna bátar i nEmain*. While the titles of the other death-tales in the *aideda* anthology have come down to us in a form that is almost identical to the titles as they appear in tale-list A, this is not the case for *ACMM*. Based on the evidence examined here, the titles *Argain maic Mágach*, *Togail Bruidne Bélchon Bréifne* and

⁶⁶⁹ Smith, 'Death of Conall Cernach', p. 461.

⁶⁷⁰ I do not include Ailill's death in *AACC* here, who died in Crúachan in Connacht.

Orgain Bélchon Bréifne may be identified as possible past titles for the extant tale *ACMM*. All three titles can be tentatively dated to the tenth century, belonging either to original list O or parent-list B1. We cannot rule out the possibility that the tale *ACMM* was known by its extant title outside of the tale-lists, or that the tale as we have it is a different version. Moreover, Bélchú's role may have changed during transmission: the poem *Fianna bátar i nEmain* relates that he was hosting a feast and the tale-lists record that he was the owner of a *bruiden* or 'hostel', which suggests that he may have once had the role of *bríugu* or 'hospitaller'.

Returning to Clancy's suggestion that the Ed. anthology had likely already been compiled around the twelfth century, or perhaps even the tenth century, the above exploration of the textual transmission of *ACMM* requires a footnote to be added to this suggestion. While the contents of the other death-tales reflect the events as related in *Fianna bátar i nEmain*, the tale *ACMM* diverges from the stanza in the poem. Although the tale's inclusion in the anthology might not have depended on these specific details, it does show that we cannot assume that the tales were already in existence in their extant forms when they were brought together. The fact that *ACMM* has undergone significant changes during its textual transmission demonstrates that the sources used to date this anthology should be carefully examined before any dating should be attempted.

2. LITERARY COMMENTARY

2.1 Interpretation

2.1.1 Framework

Scholarship focussing specifically on *ACMM* and *AACC* is extremely sparse. When these narratives *are* treated, they mostly figure as part of wider discussions pertaining to elements associated with warrior culture, with certain episodes of the tales being analysed in the context of a thematic study.⁶⁷¹ Much of this research has been undertaken by O'Leary in a number of articles in which he examines different aspects of what he considers to be Irish heroic society.⁶⁷² In his approach, the status of the Ulster Cycle tales as heroic narratives is central to their interpretation, as they were taken to represent an ideal heroic world, inhabited by perfect heroes and flawless kings. While O'Leary's studies into the heroic codes of the society represented in the Ulster Cycle have yielded valuable insights, recent scholarship has challenged the idea that these tales depict an ideal heroic society.⁶⁷³ Clancy criticises O'Leary for displaying a tendency to rationalize the heroes' departure from a perceived warrior code 'within an evolving behavioural system, rather than turning to the question of the rhetoric and purpose of the tales themselves'.⁶⁷⁴ By taking the warrior society as depicted in these tales as an actual representation of early Irish society, O'Leary attempts to reconstruct the heroic codes that underlie this society, rather than first posing fundamental questions about the potential bias and motives of the narrators of the Ulster Cycle tales. According to Clancy, many of the Ulster Cycle tales in fact demonstrate 'a view of the proper and improper functioning of society'.⁶⁷⁵ This view is also shared by Radner, who states that 'behind the immense vitality, humour and imagination of the Ulster stories is a picture of society moving to dysfunction and self-destruction'.⁶⁷⁶ In her opinion, the Ulster Cycle revolves around the gradual breakdown of the relationships that formed the very basis of Irish society and led to the eventual disintegration

⁶⁷¹ See O'Leary, 'Fír Fer', 12; Mac Cana, 'Laided, Gressacht', p. 76.

⁶⁷² These articles include O'Leary, 'Contention at Feasts'; 'Verbal Deceit'; 'Fír Fer'; 'Honour of Women'; 'Honour-Bound'; 'Magnanimous Conduct'; 'Choice and Consequence'.

⁶⁷³ See for instance Aitchison, 'Ulster Cycle'; Radner, 'Fury'; Clancy, 'Court, King and Justice'; 'Die Like a Man?'; Toner, 'Wanton Women'; 'Conflict and Restraint'.

⁶⁷⁴ Clancy, 'Court, King and Justice', pp. 180–1.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁶⁷⁶ Radner, 'Fury', p. 47.

of that society.⁶⁷⁷ Instead of an ideal world inhabited by just kings and heroic warriors, the tales present us with a subverted society in which traditional roles are reversed and ultimately break down.

In order to unearth the underlying ideological significance of the Ulster Cycle, the social and historical contexts in which these tales were written and disseminated need to be examined. Aitchison notes that because of its content and subject matter, it has been assumed that the Ulster Cycle tales were composed and transmitted by the Ulaid and therefore date back to before the mid-sixth century.⁶⁷⁸ However, he notes that the heroes of the Ulster Cycle are often cast in an ambiguous manner, and instead of being depicted as glorious heroes they are often presented in a ridiculous light. Rather than evoking their former glory, the Ulster Cycle tales belittle and mock the Ulaid, indulging their eclipsed power.⁶⁷⁹ According to Aitchison, this raises considerable doubts concerning the Cycle's supposed status as celebrating the heroic past of the Ulaid. He suggests that the composition and transmission for these tales is to be sought elsewhere, and argues that the Ulster Cycle tales were most likely composed after the height of the rule of the Ulaid in the fifth and sixth centuries, after the northern Uí Néill (*Cenél nEógain*) and the Airgialla had pushed the Ulaid back north-east of the river Bann into the present-day counties Down and Antrim.

It should be noted that while Aitchison places the composition of the Ulster Cycle in Uí Néill territory, opinions on this issue differ. Kelleher suggests the *Táin* was originally composed around the ninth century in county Louth, as this is where most of the action of the narrative takes place, and was then brought to Clonmacnoise in the year 835.⁶⁸⁰ Ó hUiginn points out that it is more likely that 'the first stories of the cycle were initially compiled by Ulaid *literati*, and whatever their original political message, if any, may have been, concerned the Ulaid and their affairs'.⁶⁸¹ However, Ó hUiginn agrees with Aitchison that the significance of these tales is likely to have changed over time, and notes that 'once established, this literature became part of the common literary inheritance and was further redacted, transmitted and added to outside of its area of origin'.⁶⁸² Similarly, Radner notes that while 'the original shaping of the Ulster material lay within

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁸ Aitchison, 'Ulster Cycle', p. 109.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁰ Kelleher, '*Táin* and the Annals', p. 122.

⁶⁸¹ Ó hUiginn, 'Background and Development', p. 58.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*

Ulaid control, its subsequent development and preservation did not'.⁶⁸³ Although the original tales were likely conceived by the Ulaid, the Cycle's consequent transmission and preservation took place in monastic scriptoria in Uí Néill territory, such as Clonmacnoise.

Radner argues that the reason for presenting the world of the Ulster Cycle as one of destruction and violence was part of a political strategy created by the Uí Néill. While it may seem as if the essential Ulaid-bias of the Ulster Cycle tales has been retained, Radner believes that they in fact 'teach the Uí Néill lesson'. By depicting the heroes of the Ulster sagas as being part of an inherently flawed pre-Christian society, heroic but ultimately doomed, the Uí Néill found a way to present themselves as the rightful rulers, as a Christian dynasty sanctioned by St. Patrick himself. Similarly, while discussing the ideological function of pagan monuments in a Christian context, Aitchison argues that the Ulster Cycle tales, being literary monuments, attest 'not so much to the superiority of the Ulaid's pagan past over the Christian present, but rather to the vanity and arrogance of past gods, kings and heroes, all of them pagan, with their aspirations of immortality and eternal glory'.⁶⁸⁴

Before moving forward, it is important to note that this reading of the Ulster Cycle is by no means the only way to explain the social and historical contexts in which these narratives were composed and transmitted, nor is it the only interpretation of the ideological significance of the tales.⁶⁸⁵ However, this reading is particularly fitting for *AACC* and *ACMM* because of the unique narrative collection of which these tales are a part. The narratives' manuscript context forms an important aspect that guides our understanding of the tales, and can in fact be seen to support and complement the idea that the universe of the Ulster Cycle tales is inherently flawed, and represents a doomed society moving into dysfunction and destruction.⁶⁸⁶ As has been argued previously, based on their shared theme, the seven tales in Ed. form an anthology of *aideda*, the individual tales of which should be read in the light of one another.⁶⁸⁷ In this context, the position of *AC* at the head of the collection of death-tales merits particular consideration, as it shows that the writer put thought into the ordering of the tales. *AC* opens with the Ulstermen arguing over who is the best

⁶⁸³ Radner, 'Fury', pp. 45-6.

⁶⁸⁴ Aitchison, 'Ulster Cycle', p. 109.

⁶⁸⁵ For a general and concise (but by no means exhaustive) discussion of different approaches to reading the Ulster Cycle, and in particular the *Táin*, see Tristram, 'What is the Purpose?', pp. 11-21. See also Ó hUiginn, 'Background and Development' for a more extensive discussion, in which he agrees with Kelleher on the date and location of the *Táin*.

⁶⁸⁶ For the importance of the compilation of manuscripts as an act of textual interpretation, see Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Literature of Medieval Ireland', p. 35.

⁶⁸⁷ See Part I, section 1.2.

warrior, showing that military achievements and honour are seen as most valued qualities. During a battle, Conchobar steps aside after the women of Connacht have asked to see him because of his beauty. This is when Cet throws a ball fashioned out of brains and lime at Conchobar, which lodges itself in the back of Conchobar's head. On his deathbed, Conchobar hears about the death of Christ and goes into a final frenzy. He reverts to his behaviour as a warrior in an attempt to defend Christ, although the latter is absent and already dead. This causes the brain-ball to explode and we are told that Conchobar ascended to heaven.

As the first tale in the sequence, *AC* links Conchobar, the premier literary king of the Ulster Cycle, to the first moment of the Christian era, the crucifixion of Christ. By doing so, the tales that follow are set to take place in the Christian era and therefore in a Christian context. However, the influence of Christianity extends much further. The conversion of Conchobar forms a turning point in the narrative, since up until that moment the values of the Ulster warriors are portrayed in a negative light. It is through pride and vanity that Conchobar receives the wound that leads to his ultimate downfall. As Imhoff puts it: 'the main part of the prose section [...] is intended to reflect [...] the moral ills of a society which has not yet received enlightenment through the teaching of Christianity'.⁶⁸⁸ It is only when Conchobar uses his martial skills in the service of Christ rather than for personal gain that he is converted and receives salvation upon his death.

It is in this context that not only *AC*, but the whole anthology of death-tales in *Ed.* can be read. The heroes of the other tales, who have not yet received enlightenment, still adhere to the egocentric values of warrior society, centred around the pursuit of personal glory and honour.⁶⁸⁹ This quest leads to the destruction and eventually the breakdown of society as a whole. As Clancy notes, this breakdown is reflected in the collection of deaths as a group: all the main characters of the Ulster Cycle are killed off one-by-one throughout the anthology.⁶⁹⁰ Moreover, in this world of subverted heroism most of the characters die in a manner that is far from heroic and often borders on the absurd, which appears to be intended to ridicule the warriors and their values.⁶⁹¹ In light of this social and literary context, I argue that the *aideda* in this collection should be read as anti-heroic tales in which warrior society is criticised and parodied. This is reinforced by their manuscript

⁶⁸⁸ Imhoff, 'Pre-Christian Characters', p. 91.

⁶⁸⁹ For more on status in Irish society, see Charles-Edwards, 'Honour and Status'. See also O'Leary, '*Fir Fer*', for a sociological approach towards heroic behaviour.

⁶⁹⁰ Clancy, 'Die Like a Man?', p. 79.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

context, which has established that these narratives form a thematic cycle.⁶⁹² The tales can be seen to serve as a social commentary on warrior society and to condemn its egocentric values.

2.1.2 Ordering of the Death-Tale Anthology

In order to analyse *AACC* and *ACMM* as part of a larger narrative anthology, it is essential that the collection itself is examined first. If the collocation of the seven death-tales in *Ed.* is considered a conscious action on the part of the compiler, then the order in which the tales have been arranged might also be subject to certain compilatory principles. As has been established already, the tales are not chronologically ordered (see Figure 1 below), nor does the order show any correspondences with other sources that list the death-tales of these Ulster Cycle heroes, such as *Fianna bátar i nEmain*, the tale-lists or similar sources. However, the author need not necessarily have borrowed the order of the tales from an external source. Instead, I argue that there may be a connection between the status and power of the characters in the Ulster Cycle tales and the position of the stories within the anthology. The order of the tales within this group may be hierarchal, reflecting the power possessed by the literary characters, as envisioned by the compiler.

First gathering (pp. 1-12)	
<i>Aided Chonchobair</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Conchobar’
<i>Aided Ailella ocus Conall Chernaig</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Ailill and Conall Cernach’
<i>Aided Fergusa maic Róich</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Fergus mac Róich’
<i>Aided Meidbe</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Medb’
<i>Aided Cheit maic Mágach</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Cet mac Mágach’
<i>Aided Lógairi Búadaig</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Lógairi Búadach’
<i>Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair</i>	‘The Death-Tale of Celtchair mac Uthechar’

Figure 1: Death-tale anthology in *Ed.*

The first character in the anthology whose death is recounted is that of Conchobar, king of Ulster. As has been discussed above, the position of this tale at the head of the anthology was most likely meant to establish a Christian framework for the entire collection. However, Conchobar is also presented as the prime literary king of Ulster throughout the Ulster Cycle. As king of Ulster, Conchobar occupies the highest rank in society, and it is this position of power that

⁶⁹² See Part I, section 1.2.

may have formed another reason for the compiler to place his death-tale first in the collection. It also shows a preference for Ulster over Connacht, as the tale that follows concerns the death of Ailill.

AC is followed by *AACC*, the dual death-tale of Ailill, king of Connacht, and Conall Cernach, one of Ulster's most powerful warriors. The first death to occur in this tale is that of Ailill, king of the Connachta in the Ulster Cycle tales. Like Conchobar, Ailill is the highest-ranking individual in his territory, the region of Connacht. This high status may have been the compiler's motivation for placing *AACC* after *AC*. However, the objection may be raised that this death-tale also includes the death of Conall, one of Ulster's most prominent warriors. We cannot exclude that *AACC* was chosen by the compiler as the second tale in the collection because it recounts the death of an important Ulster warrior. In that case, it could be taken as an indication that the compiler favoured Ulster characters over Connachta power figures. However, the death of a former Ulster king in the next tale reinforces the idea that power and status lay at the basis of this order.

In the context of prime warriors, it is important to note Cú Chulainn's role in the anthology. Despite being depicted as the main Ulster warrior in many Ulster Cycle tales, most notably the *Táin*, Cú Chulainn is virtually absent from this collection. He plays a very minor part in the beginning of *AC*, where he is depicted as partaking in a competition with Lóegaire Buadach and Conall Cernach.⁶⁹³ He features in one short episode in *Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair*, playing chess with Conchobar, but then disappears once more.⁶⁹⁴ In the absence of Cú Chulainn, Conall may be regarded as Ulster's principal warrior in the *aideda* anthology.⁶⁹⁵

The next tale in the collection is *Aided Fergusa maic Róich*. Although Fergus maic Róich is no longer a king, when the *bachlach* enters the feasting hall in *FB* to challenge the warriors to chop off his head, it is mentioned that Fergus is equal in rank to Conchobar: "*Facbaim Conchobur fri láim,*" *ol se, "dáig a rige, ocus fácbaim Fergus mac Róig, dáig a cotéhta [...]*".⁶⁹⁶ In *SMMD*, the only men that

⁶⁹³ 'Aided Chonchobair' (ed. Kobel, p. 219); *Death-Tales* (ed. Meyer, p. 4).

⁶⁹⁴ *Death-Tales* (ed. Meyer, p. 24).

⁶⁹⁵ Of note here is that Conall was depicted as the prime Ulster warrior in tales such as *SMMD*. It may be suggested that these tales formed a part of a different tradition that favoured Conall Cernach. Later tales such as the LL-version of *CRR* also cast Conall as Ulster's principal warrior, where he replaces Cú Chulainn as champion. Mac Gearailt demonstrates that Conall's elevation here is due to his status as ancestor of the Loígis, in whose territory the scribe wrote his version of *CRR* (Mac Gearailt, 'Cath Ruis na Ríg', p. 149). His prominence in LL is further explored by Schlüter, who argues that LL deliberately promotes the heroic past of Conall Cernach as he is the ancestor figure of the Loígis (*History or Fable?*, pp. 96–113). Perhaps a regional bias was at play in Ed. too, although this cannot be established as the provenance of the manuscript is uncertain.

⁶⁹⁶ *FB*, §94: "Conchobar I put aside," he quoth, "for sake of his sovranity, and Fergus mac Róich also on account of his like privilege [...]"

do not participate in the contest of the pig are Conchobar, Ailill and Fergus. Charles-Edwards argues that the goal of this verbal contest is not just winning the pig or *curadmír* ‘hero’s portion’, but to take on the role of the absent *rannaire*, a court official responsible for impartially dividing the portions amongst the members of the court according to rank and status.⁶⁹⁷ He notes that Conchobar, Ailill and Fergus do not compete in this contest because ‘such royalty and the office of *rannaire* could not be combined’.⁶⁹⁸ The exclusion of Fergus from the contest implies that he was considered royalty just as much as Ailill and Conchobar. The fact that he no longer presides over a territory accounts for his death-tale coming after that of two kings currently in power.

The fourth tale in the collection is *Aided Meidbe*. Although Medb is a queen and is depicted as wielding power in the Ulster Cycle tales, she is also female, and it is likely that she is therefore secondary to the kings in terms of power, even to a former king such as Fergus.⁶⁹⁹ The nature of kingship in medieval Ireland is patriarchal, and even though Ailill gained his reign over Connacht through his marriage to Medb, this still relegates her to a status secondary to that of the kings.⁷⁰⁰ Her affiliation with Connacht suggests that her power and status are the compiler’s leading motivation for her inclusion here, as a Connacht queen takes precedence over an Ulster warrior such as Lóegaire Búadach, whose death-tale comes sixth in the collection.

The fifth death-tale is *ACMM*, featuring the death of Cet mac Mágach and Bélchú and his sons. Cet is the second of the chief warriors to appear in the collection after Conall. The positioning of Cet’s death-tale here also sits comfortably within the hierarchy of power: Cet is the most powerful warrior after Cú Chulainn and Conall Cernach. Since Cú Chulainn’s death is not included in this anthology, and Conall’s death has been recounted already, Cet’s death-tale naturally follows. In tales such as *AC* and *SMMD* he is depicted as the foremost Connacht champion. In the latter tale, Cet is defeated by Conall, but proves during the boasting competition that he outranks all other Ulster and Connacht warriors in terms of prowess, including Lóegaire and Celtchar, whose death-tales come sixth and seventh.⁷⁰¹ Since Bélchú is relatively unknown, his

⁶⁹⁷ Charles-Edwards, ‘Historical Context’, pp. 5-6.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁹⁹ It is not known what type of power Irish queens would have wielded historically in medieval Ireland, due to a lack of information from the sources (Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, pp. 83-4 and 188; see also Edel, ‘Early Irish Queens’).

⁷⁰⁰ The widespread belief is that women are legally inferior to men, since a woman is assigned half her husband’s honour-price in medieval Irish law (Bitel, *Land of Women*, pp. 20-2; Ó Corráin, ‘Early Medieval Law’, pp. 7-8). However, Oxenham makes the astute observation that the honour-price of a queen would be higher than that of a lower-class man, as she is the wife of a high-status man (*Perceptions of Femininity*, pp. 48-9).

⁷⁰¹ *SMMD*, §9 and §13.

position of power is obscure and it is therefore not possible to determine how this relates to the order. Moreover, his death may have been included purely because it is tied to Cet's death-tale.

That leaves Lóegaire Búadach and Celtchar mac Uthechair: an Ulster hero and a Munster warrior. Lóegaire is often depicted in the Ulster Cycle tales as part of a trio of prime Ulster warriors, such as in *AC* and *FB*. In the latter tale, he is one of the three warriors that participates in the challenges and always finishes last behind Conall and Cú Chulainn. Celtchar appears to be a more senior warrior, who is generally closely associated with Conchobar.⁷⁰² Since both warriors play minor parts in other Ulster Cycle tales, it is difficult to compare their status and power. Perhaps preference has been given here to an Ulster warrior over a Munster warrior.

This examination has demonstrated that the underlying ordering principle of the *aideda* anthology may have been based on the power and status of the character whose death was related. There may also seem to be a slight regional preference, as king Conchobar takes precedence over king Ailill, and the Ulster warrior Lóegaire comes before the Munster warrior Celtchar. However, the main motive for the arrangement of the tales appears to have been the hierarchy of power as depicted in the narrative universe of the Ulster Cycle. It has previously been contended that the compilation of the anthology can be interpreted as a consciously compiled generic and cyclic grouping.⁷⁰³ The underlying ordering principle discussed here reveals another level of engagement, as the arrangement of the tales itself represents a form of literary interpretation, drawing on the power relationships as depicted in the wider sphere of the Ulster Cycle narratives.

⁷⁰² Dobbs, *Side-Lights*, p. 31.

⁷⁰³ See Part I, section 1.2.

2.2 Themes and Motifs

As Radner argues, early Irish society as depicted in the Ulster Cycle tales is one of dysfunction and self-destruction, caused by the tragic breakdown of the relationships upon which this society was founded.⁷⁰⁴ Indeed, when *ACMM* and *AACC* are examined, we can see how these relationships fail to function as they should. The traditional social bonds between men and women, host and guest, hero and charioteer, lord and client are subverted, leading to social chaos and disorder. The following sections explore how these fraught relationships are depicted in *ACMM* and *AACC*, and analyse their more than often disastrous consequences.

2.2.1 Heroes and Charioteers

The first relationship that is examined is that of the hero and his charioteer. In medieval Irish literature, the charioteer is traditionally depicted as accompanying the hero everywhere he goes, navigating his way and assisting the hero on his exploits.⁷⁰⁵ These adventures often lead them to the site of some sort of conflict, where the charioteer is the hero's sole companion. The charioteer also supports the hero during combat, spurring him on before and during the encounter. He frequently acts as the hero's advisor, offering guidance or advocating caution where necessary. Evidently the relationship between the two is portrayed as being founded upon deep trust, as the hero relies upon his charioteer to navigate their way through any dangerous situation that may arise, while the charioteer depends upon the hero's martial abilities, so that he may ward off dangers and defeat their enemies.

Mac Cana has noted that this dependence of the hero upon his charioteer highlights the 'very special social and personal relationship which joined the two in the context of traditional ideology'.⁷⁰⁶ Jones agrees, and adds that 'the charioteer is more than a mere companion' and that he is 'inseparable from the warrior's subjectivity and agency'.⁷⁰⁷ This close relationship and the central role of the charioteer is most evident in *FB*, when the three warriors Cú Chulainn, Conall Cernach and Lóegaire Búadach are about to set off to Cú Roí maic Dáire.⁷⁰⁸ As the heroes boast

⁷⁰⁴ Radner, 'Fury', p. 47.

⁷⁰⁵ See Nagy, *Conversing with Angels*, pp. 216–28 for an in-depth examination of the charioteer in Medieval Irish literature and his role as foil to the hero.

⁷⁰⁶ Mac Cana, 'Laíded, Gressacht', p. 88.

⁷⁰⁷ Jones, 'Two by Two', p. 22.

⁷⁰⁸ *FB*, §§34–36.

about the speed and nimbleness of their chariots, the charioteers are in effect directly representing the skills and strengths of their warriors. Jones notes that ideally, the charioteer and the warrior form a bounded unit, interior to the martial heroic act—a team which is in direct opposition ‘to the scission of the relationship between (enemy) fighters’.⁷⁰⁹ This close social bond between charioteer and hero, and the obverse relationship between inimical warriors, can also be observed in *ACMM*. The following discussion examines the dynamics and interactions between these characters by focussing on two themes in particular—honour and incitement—by providing close readings of the tale and drawing on related Ulster Cycle texts for comparison.

2.2.1.a Honour

Central to the literary depiction of medieval Irish warrior culture is the idea that heroes can gain honour through combat. Warrior society is depicted in these texts as an elite social system which is rooted in the oppositional values of honour and shame, at the heart of which lies a preoccupation with the accumulation of glory through physical combat. The notion of fame is an integral part of the literary theme of martial heroism, and Ford has noted that in early Irish literature, ‘it was understood that fame was the lynchpin of heroic culture’.⁷¹⁰ The quest for honour also plays an essential part in *ACMM*, and motivates both Conall and Cet’s decisions. In these processes, they are both assisted by their charioteers: much of the first half of *ACMM* consists of dialogues between the heroes and their charioteers. Central to their discussions is the accumulation and loss of honour. However, the reactions of the two warriors differ greatly. By reading these sections within the context of anti-heroism and subversion of warrior society, I suggest that a different light may be cast on the motivations and actions of the warriors.

The first episode examined is the discussion between Conall and his charioteer when they arrive at the house in which Cet is staying:

‘Is ē Cet-so,’ ar Conall, ‘7 nī fīu dūin comrac fris ar a doilghi 7 ar a c[h]rōdacht. Is amnus in fer fil [and],’ ar Conall.

‘Fē amai!’ ol in t-ara, ‘nī maith tig tar do bēolu, in pēst fil for dīgail Ulad [can] gabāil tige fair, 7 nī meabal uero comtuitim duit fris, oīr atā dia bēogacht a connuic so.’

⁷⁰⁹ Jones, ‘Two by Two’, pp. 21–2.

⁷¹⁰ Ford, ‘Idea of Everlasting Fame’, p. 258.

‘A athair,’ ar Conall, ‘nī tibur m’anum do láith gaili fer nĒrenn 7 do-bēr trā comartha forsna eochu.’⁷¹¹

Central to this commentary is the word *fīu* (‘worthy’) in reference to Conall’s perception of Cet. As one of the most celebrated warriors of Ulster, it would have been expected of Conall to take this opportunity to kill the warrior who has been harassing Ulster. However, Conall is not swayed by his charioteer, and argues that it is not *fīu* for him to engage in battle with Cet. His reasons for this are Cet’s *doilghi* and *crōdacht*, which Meyer translated as ‘severity’ and ‘cruelty’. They convey the sense that Conall refuses to fight Cet because he regards the latter as a cruel and savage warrior. However, as has been discussed in the textual notes to *ACMM*, these terms need not necessarily be perceived as negative.⁷¹² Instead, I take *doilghi* as ‘sternness’ and *crōdacht* as ‘vigour’, referring to Cet’s skill in battle. It may be suggested that Conall’s unwillingness to fight Cet is because the latter is actually a very powerful and valiant warrior. Similarly, Meyer translates *amnus in fer* as ‘savage the man’, taking the adjective *amnus* in a negative sense. I interpret *amnus* as describing Cet’s positive attributes as an exceptional warrior, translating it as ‘strong’, in accordance with my interpretation of *doilghi* and *crōdacht* as positively describing Cet as a powerful and courageous warrior.

This re-evaluation alters the reading of the passage, as it becomes clear that Conall refuses to fight Cet on account of his sternness and his courage, and not because Cet is a cruel warrior. Conall’s mention of Cet’s *doilghi* and *crōdacht* can be taken as an acknowledgement of the latter’s remarkable martial feats, and may perhaps even convey a certain degree of respect for the other warrior. This idea is further strengthened by the next lines, in which Conall’s charioteer attempts to sway Conall. The charioteer acknowledges that Cet is a warrior strong enough to potentially kill Conall, as he argues that it would not be shameful (*nī meabal*) for Conall to die by Cet’s hand. In response, Conall says that he will not be killed by a warrior of the men of Ireland, thereby admitting that he recognises that Cet has the power to kill him, which can be seen as an admission on Conall’s part to Cet’s superior strength as a warrior. If Conall’s refusal to battle with Cet is on account of the latter’s strength, Conall may even be accused of cowardice. This plays into the idea

⁷¹¹ *ACMM*, §3: “This is Cet,’ said Conall, ‘and it is not worth [it] for us to fight against him because of his sternness and his vigour. He is a strong man,’ said Conall. ‘That’s a pity!’ said the charioteer, ‘what comes out of your mouth is not good, not to take the house from him, the beast that is punishing (the) Ulaid. And there is truly no shame for you to fall because of him, since that what he can do is on account of his vigour.’ ‘O father,’ said Conall, ‘I will not give my life to a warrior of the men of Ireland, but I will put a sign on the horses’”.

⁷¹² See Part I, section 3.4.

of anti-heroism, as it would be expected of Conall, a great Ulster warrior, to engage in combat with the enemy Connachtmen, no matter the risks involved, in order to defend and enhance his personal honour. Thus, Conall's refusal to attack Cet can be taken as an example of how the image of the belligerent warrior is turned upside down.

At this point, it is important to discuss *SMMD*, the other narrative in which Cet and Conall are cast in main roles and come into conflict with each other. At a feast hosted by the Leinster king Mac Dathó, Cet defends his position as prime warrior and right to receive the *curadmír* 'champion's portion' of the meal. A series of verbal exchanges ensue in which Cet bests every warrior present, until Conall arrives, having just beheaded Cet's brother Anluan, and Cet is forced to acknowledge the Ulster warrior's martial superiority. It is likely that (some of) the audience would have been familiar with *SMMD*, and would have read the passage in *ACMM* in the context of the relationship between Cet and Conall as set out in *SMMD*, where Conall is the superior warrior and their enmity leads to a battle between the Ulaid and Connachtra. It can be suggested that *ACMM* builds on the idea of these existing hostilities between the two warriors.

While *SMMD* has often been interpreted as a parody of heroic society,⁷¹³ it would appear that the relationship between Cet and Conall as depicted in *ACMM* may be a deliberate inversion of that of the two warriors in *SMMD*, as the belligerence and animosity displayed by both champions in this text have been replaced in *ACMM* by restraint and avoidance of conflict. In this context, Conall's unwillingness may alternatively be interpreted as a more sensible decision, especially since the eventual battle leaves him near death. Despite appeals to Conall's honour made by his charioteer, the Ulster warrior refuses to attack Cet. As argued by Toner, the authors of the Ulster Cycle tales advocated restraint of violence and the avoidance of unnecessary conflict.⁷¹⁴ Instead of trying to act as a hero by engaging in battle with a potentially stronger warrior, Conall recognises his own limitations and seeks to avoid needless violence. Unheroic or not, what emerges from a close reading of this passage and examination of the terms *doilghi* and *crōdacht* is that Conall's opinion of Cet may not have been as negative or straightforward as originally taken by Meyer.

This discussion between Conall and his charioteer is followed by a similar conversation between Cet and his charioteer:

⁷¹³ Chadwick, 'Scéla Muicce Meic Dathó', pp. 81–93; Ó Corráin, 'Irish Origin Legends', p. 86; Kelleher, 'Humor in the Ulster Saga', p. 45; Gantz, *Early Irish Myths*, p. 180; Kelly, 'Táin as Literature', p. 71.

⁷¹⁴ I am thankful to Gregory Toner for providing me with his article 'Conflict and Restraint' prior to publication.

‘Fē, a C[h]eit!’ ar an t-ara.

‘Nī fē,’ ar Cet, ‘is mait[h] in t-anocul trā for na heocha. Conall-so,’ ar sē, ‘7 biaid caradrad de 7 bid maith hē.’

‘Fē amae!’ ar in t-ara, ‘in fer ro-lá ár Connacht do tabairt mēla fort, 7 nī toircēba t’ainm co bráth can a bás no can a rūacad a fescur.’

‘Maith ám,’ ar Cet. Lotar ina diaid co hÁt[h] C[h]eit.⁷¹⁵

Although most of this passage follows the same pattern as the preceding episode, the structure diverges at the end. Whereas Conall is not swayed by his charioteer, Cet is more receptive to his charioteer’s admonitions. Crucial to the charioteer’s argument is the prospect of injury to Cet’s honour and reputation should he refuse to fight. Initially, Cet does not wish to battle with Conall as he takes the latter’s gesture to spare the horses as a sign of peace. However, Cet changes his mind when his charioteer suggests that Conall is putting *mēla* (‘shame’) on Cet. The charioteer argues that this means that Cet’s reputation will not live on after his death, and he will not receive the everlasting fame for which he strives. Parallel to the plea made by Conall’s charioteer, Cet’s charioteer also brings up the slaughter of the men of Connaught, which is directly linked to his personal honour, and how it will suffer if he lets Conall walk away without consequence. Evidently, Cet is guided by the prospect of his honour being damaged. It may even be suggested that he has a chance to put a stop to the cycle of killing in which both warriors have been engaged up until now, but instead chooses honour over peace in his decision to fight Cet and avenge the deaths of his fellow Connachtmen.

Thus, it can be argued that this section of the tale has a dual structure. This is evident when the two episodes above are read in conjunction with one another: both warriors have a discussion with their charioteers whether or not to attack their enemy, and both charioteers try to incite the warriors to attack their adversaries. The parallel reactions of the charioteers are juxtaposed, which is reinforced by their use of the identical exclamation *fē amae!* (‘a pity!’). I suggest that by echoing these verbal signals, the author wished the audience to identify these two episodes as mirroring each other. By placing the warriors in parallel situations, their different reactions are deliberately contrasted and emphasised. Conall’s refusal to engage in battle juxtaposes Cet’s decision to fight.

⁷¹⁵ *ACMM*, §4: “A pity, Cet!’ said the charioteer. ‘It’s no pity,’ said Cet, ‘it is good that he has spared the horses so. This [was] Conall,’ said he, ‘and an alliance will follow from it and it will be well.’ ‘A pity indeed!’ said the charioteer, ‘that the man who has slaughtered the people of Connacht has put shame on you, and your name will never be mentioned until Doomsday unless he is killed or put to flight by evening.’ ‘Well then,’ said Cet. They went after him to Áth Cet’.

When the motivations are examined in the context of the literary depiction of the doomed warrior society in the Ulster Cycle, this further illustrates how the heroic ethos is criticised. There is a play between the charioteer and the warrior, as the charioteer pushes the warrior towards a confrontation and the warrior refuses to engage. A keenness for battle is to be expected of the warriors, but instead the preamble to the fight presents the heroes quibbling about what the proper course of action would be. Thus, these parallel episodes subvert their roles as warriors who supposedly would be eager to engage in battle, and comment on the values of warrior society by playing with their different approaches to honour.

Moving on, at the end of the discussion between Conall and his charioteer, there is a peculiar passage in which Conall takes hair from the horses:

*‘A athair,’ ar Conall, ‘nī tibur m’anum do láith gaili fer nĒrenn 7 do-bēr trā comartha forsna eochu.’
Gadaid Conall dūal a muing na n-eoch 7 do-beir an dlochtán a cinn in carpaid, 7 tēit as sair co
hUltu.⁷¹⁶*

The equivocality of this passage is the centrepiece of the near-conflict between Cet and Conall, and serves as a narrative pivot: it not only postpones the ultimate confrontation, but also brings the two characters to the verge of establishing peace. This would most likely not be expected by the audience, who are awaiting some form of killing, as the narrative opener of the tale has set up the prospect of Cet’s violent death. The key element in this episode is the *dlochtán*, a word that is rarely attested.⁷¹⁷ In his edition of *ACMM*, Meyer takes this word as *an-dlochtan*.⁷¹⁸ He provides no explanation for this interpretation, but apparently analyses the first syllable of the word as the Middle Irish form of the definite article *an*. He also adds lengthening to the final vowel, thereby turning the ending *-an* into the diminutive suffix *-án*, which is attached to the noun *dlocht* (‘bunch, wisp’) and gives us the word *dlochtán*.⁷¹⁹ This noun is only attested in two other sources. In the late Middle Irish tale *Macgnímartha Find* ‘The Boyhood Deeds of Finn’ it is found in direct relation with the noun *crem* (‘dog’s leek, wild garlick leek’),⁷²⁰ referring to a small bunch of wild garlic for cooking.⁷²¹ In the Middle Irish metrical tract known as *Mittelirische Verslehren* III, the diminutive

⁷¹⁶ *ACMM*, §3: “O father,’ said Conall, ‘I will not give my life to a warrior of the men of Ireland, but I will put a sign on the horses.’ Conall took away a lock from the hair of the horses and put the small wisp on the end of the chariot, and he went eastwards towards Ulaid’.

⁷¹⁷ eDIL s.v. 1 *dlochtán* or dil.ie/17050; Meyer, *Death-Tales*, p. 48.

⁷¹⁸ Meyer, *Death-Tales*, p. 48.

⁷¹⁹ eDIL s.v. *dlocht* or dil.ie/17047.

⁷²⁰ eDIL s.v. *crem* or dil.ie/12849.

⁷²¹ Meyer, ‘*Macgnímartha Find*’, p. 202.

form *dlochtán* is found twice, once in combination with *crem* again, but the meaning is unclear.⁷²² In the other instance McLaughlin takes it as ‘little wisp’, but is also uncertain as to what it refers.⁷²³ Based on this, I translate the word as ‘small wisp’, and take it to refer to the lock of hair Conall took from the horses.

The intent of this gesture is not explained in the narrative. It might be suggested that the ambiguity of its meaning is deliberate and is reflected in the different ways in which Cet and his charioteer interpret it. Conall might have intended to insult and warn Cet of his presence: he was able to come close enough to the horses to inflict serious harm, but instead left merely a *dlochtán* on the chariot.⁷²⁴ In Cet’s mind, Conall’s gesture was an expression of alliance as he abstained from doing serious harm to the horses. Since Cet’s charioteer is quick to oppose this idea, the fact that Cet does not interpret the gesture as an offense might even be taken as an attempt to ridicule *him*, as he needs his charioteer to point out the meaning behind the wisp.

Another possibility is that the gesture is parodying an episode from the Book of Samuel, which served as a popular model for kingship ideology in medieval Europe, including Ireland.⁷²⁵ In 1 Samuel 24, David and his followers are hiding from Saul in the caves of Engedi, when the latter enters the cave to relieve himself. David is urged by his followers to kill Saul, but ends up only cutting off a piece of the king’s cloak. While the wisp-passage is not a direct parallel, the backgrounds of both scenes are roughly analogous—Conall is urged by his charioteer to kill Cet, but refuses and merely leaves the wisp—which may suggest that this passage in *ACMM* contains a conscious echo of 1 Samuel 24.⁷²⁶ Carey has traced a similar, albeit more complex scriptural allusion to Psalm 136 in *Mesca Ulad*, and suggests that an audience would have recognised it as a Christian ‘signature’ in the text, ‘establishing narrative distance and suggesting an ironic reading’.⁷²⁷ The correspondence between *ACMM* and 1 Samuel 24 may also have been intended ironically. When David confronts Saul with the cloth from the latter’s cloak, a gesture intended to show his innocence and faith, Saul cries ‘For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?’

⁷²² Thurneysen, ‘Mittelirische Verslehren’, pp. 80 and 82; McLaughlin, ‘Critical Edition’, p. 233.

⁷²³ McLaughlin, ‘Critical Edition’, p. 215.

⁷²⁴ Doing physical harm to another man’s horse was seen as a great insult in medieval literature. In *Branwen ferch Llŷr*, when Efnisien mutilates Matholowch’s horses, the only thing that can compensate Matholowch for this grave offence is a magic cauldron that can restore the dead to life (*Branwen Uerch Lŷr* (ed. by Thomson, p. 3)). For examples from European and Scandinavian literature, see Miller “‘Tails’ of Masculinity”, pp. 970–6.

⁷²⁵ Boyle, ‘Biblical Kings’, pp. 174–81.

⁷²⁶ I am grateful to Eleanor Smith for bringing this passage to my attention.

⁷²⁷ Carey, ‘Vernacular Irish Learning’, pp. 43–4.

Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day’, and refrains from killing David.⁷²⁸ Conversely, while Cet initially takes the wisp as sign of peace, he is swayed by his charioteer’s threat of losing honour, which causes him to hunt down Conall to fight him, resulting in a battle that costs him his life.⁷²⁹

The equivocality of the gesture involving the wisp ties into the parodic nature of the episode as a whole, and plays on the antagonistic relationship between Cet and Conall as depicted in *SMMD*. The placement of the wisp on the chariot could be an offering of peace *or* an offence. In this narrative strategy, the author plays with the audience’s expectations to subvert possible expectations about heroic conduct and emphasises the indecisiveness of the warriors. Rather than being paragons of action and combat, the heroes are preoccupied with internal squabbling about the pursuit of personal glory. In subverting the roles of the warriors and the audience expectations, the author thus provides a social commentary on the egocentric values of warrior society as depicted in the Ulster Cycle.

The charioteer-warrior duo is always depicted as searching for ways to increase their honour. In this case, however, the charioteer’s counsel, which promotes the quest for glory and fame, fails the warrior, as can be seen in Cet’s case. What lies at the heart of this advice is the concept of honour—honour which Conall decides not to pursue, and which Cet seeks through blindly trusting his charioteer. By rejecting his charioteer’s advice, Conall in effect breaks with this literary tradition and splits up the martial unit, which is depicted as the cornerstone of warrior society. By presenting the martial unit of charioteer and warrior and their reciprocal relationship as failing, it is in fact warrior society as a whole that is deemed dysfunctional and condemned in *ACMM*.

2.2.1.b Incitement in *ACMM*

Another recurring theme in *ACMM* is that of verbal incitement employed by the charioteer to motivate the hero in situations of conflict. Although verbal exhortation might seem too common to be understood as a motif or theme, Mac Cana has argued that in medieval Irish literature, its use as an instrument to incite a warrior ‘to raise the level of his performance several

⁷²⁸ I Sam. XXIV.18–19.

⁷²⁹ As suggested by Paul Russell, this passage from the Book of Samuel might be alluded to again in §7, when Conall tells Bélchú ‘*Ní lémt[h]a cid mo brat do goin*’ (‘You would not even dare to wound my cloak’), a comment that effectively locks in the biblical parallel.

notches by being ridiculed by someone close to him’ constitutes a traditional verbal procedure, and therefore warrants further examination.⁷³⁰ Mac Cana’s study forms a helpful starting point for this analysis. He distinguishes between two types of incitement: *laídid* and *gressacht*. The verb *laídid* (‘exhorts, incites’) derives from the noun *laíd* (‘poem, lay’) and was probably positive in meaning.⁷³¹ Mac Cana suggests that the verb may have been generated from when a lay was sung to urge someone into action. On the other hand, there is *gressacht*, the verbal noun of *gressaid* (‘incites, urges, stimulates, provokes’).⁷³² This verb derives from the noun *gress* ‘attack; attack on one’s honour, insult’.⁷³³ Mac Cana proposes to take *gressaid* as the obverse of *laídid*, as the latter offers stimulation by exhortation or praise, while the former provides exhortations by blame or shame. Mac Cana recognises three appropriate exponents of *gressacht*: characters such as Bricriu, or ambivalent and marginal figures within heroic society; women who are related to the warrior who is being incited ‘by bonds of love, loyalty or kinship’; and the hero’s charioteer, who is also the most frequent exponent of incitement—this is not surprising, as the charioteer is nearly always present at the place of conflict, being the hero’s closest companion.⁷³⁴

The exchanges between the hero and his charioteer in the first half of *ACMM* often contain some form of incitement. Mac Cana notes that the terms *laídid* and *gressacht* ‘are not always clearly distinguished and both may come into play in the same text. [...] [In *ACMM*] the charioteers of both Cet and Conall urge on their own somewhat reluctant heroes in terms which (particularly in the case of Cet) belong to *gressacht*, but once the actual fight begins the word used for the backing of the charioteers is *laíded*’.⁷³⁵ I contend that although incitement is not always marked by the terms *laídid* or *gressacht* in the text, the use of *laídid* during the fight is expected and contextually appropriate. When the warriors are being incited by their charioteers to engage in battle, their reluctance calls for *gressacht*, to remind them of the shame that will be brought upon them if they fail to act. When the heroes actually engage in battle, they are acting according to the expectations of a warrior and are therefore deserving of *laídid*.

Further examination is required to understand the nature of the two other instances of incitement. The first instance occurs when Conall and his charioteer find Cet and his charioteer in

⁷³⁰ MacCana, ‘*Laided, Gressacht*’, p. 74.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75; eDIL s.v. *laídid* or dil.ie/29375.

⁷³² eDIL s.v. *gressaid* or dil.ie/26622.

⁷³³ eDIL s.v. 2 *gres(s)* or dil.ie/26612.

⁷³⁴ Mac Cana, ‘*Laided, Gressacht*’, p. 86–8.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76, n. 19.

an abandoned house, and Conall's charioteer urges Conall to attack Cet. Although neither *laídid* nor *gressacht* is used here, the charioteer's words evidently fall within the range of incitement. Initially, the charioteer condemns Conall's decision not to take this opportunity to avenge the Ulsterman. This would qualify as *gressacht*, as the charioteer places blame on Conall for failing to do what is expected of him, namely to attack Cet. Mac Cana also regards this as an instance of *gressacht*, but notes that it is less strong than the incitement used by Cet's charioteer, which will be examined later. This is likely because of the second half of the charioteer's speech, which lacks any provocation by insult or ridicule. The charioteer even explicitly mentions that there is a lack of shame if Conall were to die because of Cet's doing. This part of the charioteer's argument likely appeals to Conall's honour, as being killed by Cet in battle would constitute an honourable death for Conall. Therefore, the second part of this exhortation does not qualify as *gressacht*, and may even border on *laídid*.

It appears that such a mixed construction, consisting of both negative and positive incitement, is not unique. A similar example can be found in *TBC-I*, where Medb urges Lóch to fight Cú Chulainn when Lóch is refusing:

Gabais dano Medb for gressacht Lóich andaide.

'Mór in cutbiud dait,' for sí, 'in fer ro marb do bráthair do bit hoc díthugud ar slóig cen techt do chomrac fris, ar is derb lind ní déma siriti bras birda na letheti út fri bruth 7 feirg niad do let[h]etisiu, 7 dano is óenmummi forcetail conrotacht dán dúin.⁷³⁶

Mac Cana cites this passage as an instance of *gressacht*, as this term is used in the text. However, in the second part of the Medb's speech, she expresses her trust in Lóch and his ability to defeat Cú Chulainn. This constitutes a form of praise and should therefore—according to Mac Cana's own classifications—be categorised as *laídid*.

The two passages from *ACMM* and *TBC-I* share a similar structure: the inciter starts off by provoking the warrior by placing blame or shame on him, followed by a more positive type of incitement, in which his confidence is restored and renewed, either by praising his abilities (*TBC-I*) or by offering him a chance at glory by dying an honourable death (*ACMM*). From these

⁷³⁶ *TBC-I*, ll. 1969-74: 'So Medb began to **incite** Lóch. 'It is a great shame for you,' said she, 'that the man who killed your brother should be destroying our army and that you do not do battle with him. For we are sure that a sharp, boastful lad like yonder fellow will not stand out against the rage and fury of such as you, and anyway it was the same fostermother and teacher who taught you both the arts of war'.

examples, it appears that the use of *gressacht* and *laídid* is not mutually exclusive, but that the two types can be used consecutively, perhaps to further increase the force of the incitement.

Returning to *ACMM*, the second instance of incitement is used by Cet's charioteer after Cet has declared that there will be peace between him and Conall. The mention of *mēla* ('shame') inflicted by the enemy and the threat of eternal dishonour by the charioteer firmly places this incitement within the sphere of *gressacht*. This is followed by the only instance in the text where the incitement is marked by one of Mac Cana's terms:

*7 no-thuairgenn cāch dīb a chēili, co clos fon dīthrub uli a ngnūthech 7 a mbolecfadach 7 gāir na scur 7 [...] [n]a n-ānrad ac lāighedh na láth ngaili robātar isin āth, co torchair cechtarde anunn 7 anall.*⁷³⁷

Although there is a lacuna in the text where we expect to find the exponent(s) of incitement, we can assume that these would have been the charioteers, as they have fulfilled the roles of inciters throughout this narrative. The use of *laídid* here is as expected: the warriors are acting according to expectations, fighting their enemies and defending their honour, which is deserving of praise.

I would suggest that another instance of incitement can be found in the text, although it does not strictly comply with Mac Cana's definitions. When Bělchú finds the severely wounded Conall, the latter insults him as follows: '*Nī lēmt[h]a cid mo brat do goin,*' ar Conall, '*a caillech trūag.*'⁷³⁸ Bělchú initially shows no interest in martial matters, planning to leave Conall to die from his wounds. But after Conall's insult, Bělchú changes his course of action and decides to engage in battle with Conall after all, albeit at a later time. It may be suggested that by offending Bělchú's honour and taunting him, Conall is using a form of *gressacht* to provoke Bělchú and spur him into action. By implying that Bělchú does not have the strength or courage to wound him, Conall not only mocks Bělchú, but also attacks his honour. Conall then further provokes Bělchú by calling him a *caillech trūag* ('miserable old woman'). If we take Conall's words as a form of incitement, this would then constitute a form of *gressacht*.

Arguably, the subversive narrative strategy that has been employed by the author throughout the tale also applies to his use of verbal incitement. Of note is that as a warrior, Conall does not fit into any of Mac Cana's categories of exponents of incitement. Conall is supposed to

⁷³⁷ *ACMM*, §5: 'And each of them struck the other, so that throughout all the wilderness their shouting and their panting and the cry of the horses and [...] [the charioteers] of the warriors **inciting** the warriors who were in the ford was heard, until each of them fell to either side'.

⁷³⁸ *ACCM*, §7: 'You would not even dare to wound my cloak,' said Conall, 'o miserable hag'.

be on the receiving end of incitement, but becomes the unexpected exponent of *gressacht*. Interestingly, while Conall calls Bélchú a *caillech trūag*, it is in fact Conall himself who is weak as a *caillech trūag*. By overturning the role of the warrior as the recipient of exhortation before battle, and presenting him as the wounded exponent of incitement after a battle, it might be suggested that the author sought to subvert and ridicule the image of the mighty warrior. The idea of subversion can be pursued even further. Through provoking Bélchú, Conall has him execute his final wish unknowingly: to be killed by more than a single opponent. Incitement is often depicted in the literature as being used to motivate a warrior to go into battle so that he may defend the honour of himself and his people, gaining glory by killing his opponents. In this tale, however, Conall, the warrior, is using incitement as an instrument in an effort to bring about his *own* death, subverting the conventional use of verbal exhortation as a tool to spur the warrior on to kill his enemies.

Returning to the roles of the exponent and recipient of exhortation, we have seen that the warrior is turned from recipient into exponent. If this constitutes a subversion of the conventional roles of inciter and incited, this begs the question if Bélchú can be placed in one of Mac Cana's categories. From what we know about Bélchú from this tale, it is unclear what his role is. As has been noted earlier, the other three Ulster Cycle tales in which Bélchú plays a role provide little or no further information about him.⁷³⁹ Based on the earlier suggestion that he may have once been accorded the role of hospitaller, Bélchú could be understood as an ambivalent and marginal figure, fitting in to Mac Cana's first category. In medieval Irish literature, the hospitaller is often perceived as a liminal figure, and his residence—the *bruiden* ('hostel')—is associated with the Otherworld.⁷⁴⁰ This would then represent a role reversal between warrior and marginal figure. However, nowhere in the extant tale is it actually stated that Bélchú is a hospitaller, nor is it certain he was once accorded this role.⁷⁴¹ Thus, this interpretation must remain speculative.

Throughout *AACC*, the charioteers use verbal incitement to provoke their heroes to fight, employing both positive incitement in the form of praise and its negative counterpart insult. While Mac Cana's categories of *laídid* and *gressacht* have proven to be helpful, this examination has shown

⁷³⁹ i.e. *Cath Airtig*, the second recension of *Táin Bó Flidais* and *AACC*. See section 1.2.1.

⁷⁴⁰ For the role of the hospitaller in another death-tale from this collection, see McCone, '*Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair*', pp. 1–30.

⁷⁴¹ We may note that the use of the denouncing appellative *caillech trūag* 'miserable old woman' in Conall's insult may perhaps be seen as a parodic nod to the conventional use of incitement, as women are often exponents of exhortation (see Mac Cana, '*Laíded, Gressacht*', p. 86–8).

that the distinctions between these types are not always clear-cut, and can be used in conjunction to increase the force of the exhortation. Moreover, the traditional use of incitement, meant to motivate warriors to fight their enemies and defend their kin, is subverted in *ACMM*. In his speech to Bélchú, the warrior Conall employs *gressacht* to realise his own death in a twisted attempt to fulfill his final promise of being killed by more than one assailant—a promise that is ultimately guided by the prospect of eternal glory. Through this subversion of incitement, the author mocks warrior society by exposing the flaws of the heroic ethos.

2.2.2 Men and Women

While the cast of *ACMM* is all male, *AACC* features one of the most famous literary couples of the Ulster Cycle: King Ailill and Queen Medb of Connacht. The portrayal of this royal couple and the nature of their relationship as depicted in the Ulster Cycle tales has been the topic of many scholarly discussions, the general consensus being that Medb and Ailill are not well-matched.⁷⁴² There are but few happily married couples in the Ulster Cycle, and as Radner notes ‘relations between the sexes in the Ulster tales are often disastrous’.⁷⁴³ Concerning the depiction of the royal couple in the *Táin*, she states that ‘uncontrolled by her husband Ailill, Medb’s wayward desires dominate and doom the cattle-raid’, and she cites Fergus’ comment that if the herd follows ‘the rump of a misguided woman’ the herd is usually led astray and destroyed.⁷⁴⁴ Similarly, Kelly argues that because Medb usurped a man’s function, the expedition was doomed from the start.⁷⁴⁵ This depiction of Medb in the *Táin* has often been taken to serve as an example of what happens when women attempt to exercise power: they are bound to fail, sending a clear message about permissible behaviour to the females in the audience. Ní Bhrolcháin shares this view, contending that these tales were intended to teach women that ‘their position in society’s structure was fixed and [...] independent action would not be tolerated’.⁷⁴⁶ In her opinion, Medb’s character in the *Táin* was deliberately rewritten to highlight her ineffectiveness as a leader of battle and the inappropriateness of following a woman.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴² See for example Edel, ‘Caught between History and Myth?’; Ó Cathasaigh, ‘Ailill and Medb’, pp. 46–53. As noted by Edel, modern reception of the *Táin* considers Ailill as being virtually eclipsed by his wife (*Inside the Táin*, pp. 231–2).

⁷⁴³ Radner, ‘Fury’, p. 48.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; Ní Bhrolcháin, ‘*Re Tóin Mná*’, p. 116.

⁷⁴⁵ Kelly, ‘*Táin* as Literature’, p. 79.

⁷⁴⁶ Ní Bhrolcháin, ‘*Re Tóin Mná*’, pp. 116–17.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Alternatively, scholars such as Sessle and Poppe see Medb's negative depiction in the *Táin* as 'a direct result of the failures of the men that she interacts with'.⁷⁴⁸ Sessle argues that Medb's character and actions are explicable within the context of her own gender. She believes that Medb's interactions with failed kings (i.e. Ailill and Fergus) lead to her negative portrayal, and that 'the lack of an appropriate mate transforms Medb into a form of the anti-goddess'.⁷⁴⁹ While Poppe does not necessarily agree with this interpretation of Medb as a (former) sovereignty goddess, he considers Sessle's re-evaluation of the gender configuration in the *Táin* as instructive: due to Ailill's failure as a king, Medb is able to appropriate and consequentially misuse his role.⁷⁵⁰ When it comes to the royal Connacht couple, Radner expresses a similar view: 'Ailill is weak, and Medb is patently unfitted to lead the army or to govern'.⁷⁵¹ In her opinion, this unsuited pairing causes the breakdown of royal control, which in turn is the root of much of the chaos and social disorder in the Ulster Cycle. Within this interpretational framework, the couple's relationship as presented in *AACC* will be discussed, exploring the dynamics of this royal couple's failed marriage.

2.2.2.a *Ailill and Medb's Marriage*

Ailill's claim to the kingship of Connacht deserves further consideration, as this is particularly important for establishing the principles on which Ailill and Medb's marriage is founded. While different literary traditions exist concerning Ailill's lineage, *AACC* dedicates a section to his genealogy, specifying Ailill's eligibility to the kingship of Connacht. The first two paragraphs of *AACC* mainly constitute introductions to Conall and Ailill. The first description, that of Conall, concludes with a list of people that he has killed, ending with Ailill. This is followed—in a slightly disjointed fashion—by a description of Ailill's ancestry:

*7 is ē ro-marb Ailill mac Māta Muirsci do Chonnachtaib, oir ba hí a māthair-som Māta Muresc,
7 mac sōn immorro Rosa Rūaid do Laignib. 7 do c[h]osnum rīge Laigni do-cuaid-sim sīar, 7 ro-
gab-som rīge Connacht fo dēigh thīar 7 sloinned in maic a tīr a māthar tucad fa[i]r-sim tīar.⁷⁵²*

⁷⁴⁸ Sessle, 'Misogyny and Medb', p. 137; Poppe, 'Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó Revisited', pp. 5–7.

⁷⁴⁹ Sessle, 'Misogyny and Medb', p. 136.

⁷⁵⁰ Poppe, 'Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó Revisited', p. 6.

⁷⁵¹ Radner, 'Fury', p. 48.

⁷⁵² *AACC*, §2: 'And it is he who killed Ailill son of Māta Muresc of the Connachta, since Māta Muresc was his mother (i.e. Ailill's mother), and in addition he (i.e. Ailill) was a son of Ross Ruaid of the Leinstermen. And he went westwards to defend the kingship of Leinster, and he took the kingship of Connacht on her account and the matronymic name of the son was given to him in the west in the land of his mother'.

Both Ailill's maternal and paternal lineage are expounded upon: Ailill's last name *mac Máta* ('son of Máta') is a matronymic, deriving from his mother, Máta Muirisce, who belonged to the Connachta. The epithet Muirisce refers to Mag Muirisce on the north coast of Connacht, which Ó Cróinín identifies as the territory around the estuary of the river Moy, east of Tirawley, in the district called Muireasc Sam.⁷⁵³ Through his mother, Ailill is able to claim the kingship of Connacht and given the matronymic *mac Máta*, while his paternal line connects him to the Laigin, as his father was king Ross Rúad of the Leinstermen.

The notion of Ailill being the son of Ross Rúad and Máta Muirisc is also alluded to in *TBC-LL*, in the introductory section commonly referred to as the Pillow-Talk.⁷⁵⁴ In this episode, Medb and Ailill argue about who is the dominant party in their marriage, comparing their wealth. While their possessions appear to be equal in every respect, Ailill has a bull that Medb lacks. She sends messengers to borrow the bull Donn Cúailnge from the Ulsterman Dáire mac Fiachna, who agrees to this in return for a handsome reward. However, Fiachna discovers that the bull would have been taken from him by force had he not agreed, and refuses to relinquish it. When Medb learns about this, she vows to take the bull from Ulster, which is given as the motivation for the cattle-raid of Cúailnge. The Pillow-Talk is considered to be a later creation, as it is absent from *TBC-I*, and some of the material it contains is also found in other Ulster Cycle narratives.⁷⁵⁵ While Thurneysen attributed the composition of this introduction to the redactor of *TBC-LL*, O'Rahilly argued 'that someone [...] wove all these strands of tradition together and invented a contention between Medb and her husband to explain why she coveted the Donn Cúailnge'.⁷⁵⁶

The Pillow-Talk is particularly relevant for this discussion, as it centres around an argument between Ailill and Medb about their marriage, seeking to establish which partner is the beneficiary of the union. Medb argues that she received the kingdom of Connacht from her father, the high-king Eochaid mac Feidlech, and chose Ailill as her husband because *nírsat neóit, nírsat étaid, nírsat déaith*.⁷⁵⁷ Medb asserts that Ailill is *fer a tincur mná* ('a man dependent on a woman's marriage-input'), and that their marriage was *lánamnas fir for bantichur* ('a union of a man on woman-property'),⁷⁵⁸ establishing that she is the dominant party in their marriage and that Ailill is

⁷⁵³ Jaski, 'Strange Case', p. 442; Ó Cróinín, *New History of Ireland I*, p. 229.

⁷⁵⁴ *TBC-LL*, ll. 1–276.

⁷⁵⁵ Ó Cathasaigh, 'Ailill and Medb', p. 46; O'Rahilly, *TBC-LL*, p. 273.

⁷⁵⁶ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 241; O'Rahilly, *TBC-LL*, p. 273.

⁷⁵⁷ *TBC-LL*, ll. 38–9: 'you are not niggardly, you are not jealous, you are not inactive'.

⁷⁵⁸ Edel, *Inside the Táin*, p. 213; Ó Cathasaigh, 'Ailill and Medb', p. 47.

dependent upon her status and wealth. Ailill retorts by saying he had never heard of a woman ruling a province before, and had come to Connacht to marry Medb and claim the kingship through his mother Máta Muirisc.⁷⁵⁹ This claim of eligibility to the kingship of Connacht is of note, since it goes back to the Leinster genealogies in LL, found in an older stratum dated to the tenth century by Charles-Edwards.⁷⁶⁰

Máta Muirisc ainm a máthar do Feraib Ool nÉcmacht; do suidib do-gairder Connachta indiu 7 ro-ngabsat-side hi rríge forthu ara máthre .i. do-luid Medb ingen Echach Feidlich hí co Feraib Ool nÉcmacht impi hi crích Lagen co mbertsatar Ailill leo do rígo forthu ar ba díb a máthair 7 dano ná fríth ét ná omun inna chridiu 7rl. 7 do dénam óentad eter in dá cóiced do grás 7 do chocud fri cúiced Conchobuir conid Ailill iarum do-acht Táin Bó Cúailnge cona tríchair cét Galeán.⁷⁶¹

Not only is the passage from the Leinster genealogies much older than the Pillow-talk episode, it differs from the extant recensions of the *Táin* on the role of the Gáilióin in the cattle-raid, where there is no mention Ailill's special bond with them, and therefore constitutes a different tradition.⁷⁶² As Ó Cathasaigh notes, the notion that Ailill was accepted as king of Connacht through his mother Máta's lineage forms another one of O'Rahilly's strands of tradition.⁷⁶³ Since the idea that Ailill laid claim to the Connacht kingship through his mother is also present in *AACC*, this shows that the author of the latter text drew on this particular tradition. While *AACC* lacks any mention of Medb inheriting Connacht from her father, based on the textual strand it shares with the Pillow-Talk and Leinster genealogies, it may be inferred that Medb was also regarded as the heir to Connacht in *AACC*.

While Radner claims that the breakdown of royal control can be traced back to Ailill and Medb being unsuitable partners, I agree with Ó Cathasaigh that although their marriage was far from ideal, from a legal perspective it appears to have been an equal one.⁷⁶⁴ Instead, the breakdown

⁷⁵⁹ *TBC-LL*, ll. 49–50.

⁷⁶⁰ Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 118–21.

⁷⁶¹ *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* I (ed. O'Brien, pp. 22–3): 'Máta Muirisc was the name of his mother (who was) of the Fir Ool nÉcmacht; they are called Connachta today. And they accepted him as king over them on account of his maternal kin. That is to say, Medb—she was the daughter of Echu Feidlech—went with the Fir Ool nÉcmacht accompanying her and they took Ailill with them to be king over them, for his mother was one of them and moreover jealousy or fear had not been found in his heart etc., and in order to effect an alliance between the two provinces for ever and to wage war on Conchobar's province. And it was Ailill afterwards who executed the Cattle-Raid of Cooley with his division of Galeán' (transl. Ó Cathasaigh, 'Ailill and Medb', p. 51).

⁷⁶² Ó Cathasaigh, 'Ailill and Medb', p. 51; Edel, *Inside the Táin*, p. 212n; see also Carney, 'Early Irish Literature', pp. 120–1, for a discussion of the role of the Gáilióin.

⁷⁶³ Ó Cathasaigh, 'Ailill and Medb', p. 51.

⁷⁶⁴ Radner, 'Fury', p. 48; Ó Cathasaigh, 'Ailill and Medb', p. 52.

of royal power can be traced back to a different source. Ó Cathasaigh remarks that in the Pillow-Talk, both Ailill and Medb make the mistake of overestimating the position of women in early Ireland, as ‘a woman would not actually inherit a province, and a man would not become a king because of his mother’s rights’.⁷⁶⁵ While Medb was given the province by her father, she did not inherit sovereignty over the region.⁷⁶⁶ Instead, her claim is territorial: she is what is known in Irish law as a *banchomarba* (‘female heir’), and can only become queen when she marries a king.⁷⁶⁷ In the end, she needs Ailill as much as he needs her. The concept of giving a man the kingship of his maternal kin is also of importance here, as this constitutes a break from the traditional male line of inheritance. According to Ó Corráin, such an ‘upset of the patriarchal order of society leads to conflict, even calamity’,⁷⁶⁸ and Ó Cathasaigh points to the disastrous consequences of inheriting kingship through the maternal line in the reign of Bress, as depicted in *Cath Maige Tuired* ‘The Second Battle of Mag Tuired’.⁷⁶⁹ Based on this, I suggest that the cause of the collapse of the royal control of Connacht in the Ulster Cycle can be traced back to this break in the traditional patriarchal line of inheritance. It might even be taken as an explanation for the frictions between Ailill and Medb: both partners consider themselves to be the dominant partner, when in fact their marriage is founded on equal, albeit flawed, grounds.

2.2.2.b Ailill’s Genealogy in H2.17

It has been demonstrated in the previous section that the lines discussing Ailill’s pedigree in *AACC* belong to a narrative tradition shared with *TBC-LL* and the Leinster genealogies. The H.2.17 copy of the tale contains additional information about Ailill’s descent:

is ē dīdiu ro-marb Ailill Crūachan maic Māda Muirse do Chonnachtaib, ar rob ī a māthair

Māda. Trī maic Sroibcind maic Rosa Rūaidh do Laignibh dia ndebrad:

Trī maic Rosa Ruaidh

in rīgh roinnset in tir tōlaibh:

fri Ailill Crūachan, Finn a hAlmain,

⁷⁶⁵ Ó Cathasaigh, ‘Ailill and Medb’, p. 52. A notable exception is Conchobar, who gains the kingship of Ulster through his mother’s trickery. His reign, however, is fraught with problems and injustice, which fits the interpretation proposed here. See also Clancy, ‘Court, King and Justice’, pp. 176 for more on Conchobar’s role as king in the Ulster Cycle tales.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁷ Thurneysen, ‘Ir. *Eneclann*’, p. 209; Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 76, 104–5; Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, pp. 415–17.

⁷⁶⁸ Ó Corráin, ‘Early Medieval Law’, p. 38.

⁷⁶⁹ Ó Cathasaigh, ‘Ailill and Medb’, p. 52.

Coirbri sund a Temair Breg.

*Et do c[h]osnum rīge Laighne do-coid-sim sīar, 7 sloinnedh maic a tīr a mā[t]har do-radad fair-
sium, 7 do-gab-som rīge Connacht tīar co trēn.⁷⁷⁰*

This section contains two pieces of additional information about Ailill's ancestry: his father is Srobcend, son of Ross Rúad, and his two brothers are called Finn and Coirpre. This verse shows close textual parallels with a verse from the ninth-century Leinster poem *A Chóicid Choín Chairpri Crúaid*:

*Caín tri macca Rūaid ind rīg,
gabsa[i]t tīr do ruibnib fer,
Find i n-Aillinn, Oilill Crūaich,
Coirpre tūaid i Temair Breg.⁷⁷¹*

O Daly notes that this poem must have been very well known in early Ireland, as quatrains of it are cited in a number of medieval Irish texts.⁷⁷² This specific quatrain also appears in the twelfth-century text *CRR*, and similar quatrains have been traced elsewhere by Meyer.⁷⁷³ The names of Ailill's brothers are also attested in the following Leinster genealogical tract from Rawl. B502, which corresponds to the previously discussed tract from LL, describing Ailill's parentage:

Trī meic iarum la Rus Ruad nō a cethir ut alii dicunt .i. Cathbad druī aite Conchobuir meic Nessa in cethramad; Find Fili 7 Ailill mac Māta 7 Cairpre Nia Fer. Ailill dano mac Rossa qui et mac Māta .i. Māta Muirisc ainm a māthar do Feraib Ool nĒcmacht; do suidib do-gairder Connachta indiu 7 ro-ngabsat-side hi rrīge forthu ara māthre [...]⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷⁰ *AACC*, §2: 'It is he who then killed Ailill of Crúachain son of Māta Muirsece of the Connachta, since Māta was his mother. Three sons of Srobcenn sons of Ross Rúaid of the Leinstermen of whom is said: The three sons of Ross Rúad, of the king who divided the land in large portions: between Ailill Crúachan, Finn in Almain, Coirpre here in Temar of Brega. And he went back to protect the kingship of Leinster, and from the land of his mother the son's family name was given to him, and he firmly took the kingship of Connacht in the west'.

⁷⁷¹ *A Chóicid Choín Chairpri Crúaid* (ed. O Daly, §9): 'The three sons of Rúad the king are fair; they seized land by men's spears (i.e. they gained sword-land), Find in Alend, Oilill in Crúachan, Coirpre in the north in Temair of Brega' (my emendations). O Daly takes *caín* as the imperative, which is not possible. I take it as the adjective *caín* 'fair', referring to the three sons. Alternatively, it could be taken as an adverb with *gabaid*, in the sense of *caín-gabsat* 'well they seized', which requires no emendation of *gabsat*.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁷⁷³ *Cath Ruis na Ríg* (ed. Hogan, §57); Meyer, *Hail Brigit*, pp. 8–9. These quatrains all contain *i n-Aillinn/i n-Alind*, a form of *Ailenn*, which was the royal seat of the Leinster kings, now known as Knockawlin (Ó Riain, Ó Murchadha and Murray, *Historical Dictionary of Gaelic Placenames*, p. 31; Hogan, *Onomasticum*, p. 19; O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History*, p. 281). The form found in *AACC* is a *hAlmain*, which is a form of *Alma* 'hill of Allen', also known as Finn Mac Cumail's residence. It seems that these two places have been confused here (Ó Riain, Ó Murchadha and Murray, *Historical Dictionary of Gaelic Placenames*, p. 55).

⁷⁷⁴ *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* I (ed. O'Brien, pp. 22–3): 'Three sons then had Rus Rúad, or four as others say, that is Cathbad the druid, foster-father of Conchobar son of Nessa was the fourth; Finn Fili and Ailill son of Māta and Cairpre

This tract states that Ailill was one of three (or four) sons of Ross Rúad, king of the Leinstermen, and that his mother was Máta Muirisce of the Fir Ol nÉcmacht, the latter being an older name for the Connachta. While this is consistent with the verse from H.2.17, the stanza in *AACC* adds that Ailill and his brothers are the sons of Srobcend, who is the son of Ross Rúad.

The name Srobcend can be traced back to a different version of Ailill's lineage, where he is the son of the male Máta. This pedigree is found in the tale *Cath Bóinde* ('The Battle of the Boyne'), where Srobcend is the second husband of Éile, daughter of the legendary high king Eochaid Feidlech and sister to Queen Medb: *Eili, ingen Echach, bean Fheargaili mic Magach [...] Ba bean hi, indiaid Fheargail, do Shraibgind mhac Niuil do Ernaib, co ruc mac do .i. Mata mac Sraibgind, athair Aililla mic Mata.*⁷⁷⁵ Here, Máta is the son of Srobcend, instead of Ailill's mother. Jaski shows that the genealogical tract of the Éraind from LL, the Book Ballymote and the Book of Lecan also shares this filiation: *Feidlimthe mac Ailella mac Madach (Matach) mac Sroibgene.*⁷⁷⁶ While the tract in LL has *mac Ailella Mate*, both the Book of Ballymote and the Book of Lecan concur with *Cath Bóinde* in having a male Máta as Ailill's father. Moreover, all three versions of the Éraind genealogical tract concur with *Cath Bóinde* against the Leinster genealogical tracts from LL and Rawl. B 502, replacing Ross Rúad as Ailill's father with Máta or Srobcend.

It seems that the author of *AACC* was aware of the different traditions that existed around Ailill's ancestry. Perhaps he attempted to reconcile these in his text by having Máta Muirisc as Ailill's mother, while also including Srobcend as his father and Ross Rúad as his grandfather. Alternatively, one of the two fathers could originally have been added as a gloss, which was later copied into the main text. These efforts at synchronising the different traditions concerning Ailill's lineage are significant, as they provide a clue regarding textual networks in medieval Ireland. The author of the H.2.17 copy of *AACC* or its exemplar will have been aware of the tradition that Srobcend was Ailill's father or grandfather, possibly through sources such as *Cath Bóinde* and/or the genealogical material. The integration of this strand of tradition, as well as the incorporation

Nia Fer. Ailill (was) also son of Ross and a son of Máta, that is Máta Muirisc (is) the name of his mother of the Fir Ól nÉcmacht: from them they are named the Connachta today and they took him in kingship over them because of his maternal kin'.

⁷⁷⁵ *Cath Boinde* (ed. and transl. O'Neill, pp. 174–7): 'Eile, daughter of Eochy, wife of Fergal mac Magach [...] after Fergal she was wife to Sraibgend mac Niuil of the Erna, and she bore him a son, Mata the son of Sraibgend, the father of Ailill mac Mata'.

⁷⁷⁶ Jaski, 'Strange Case', p. 449; *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* I (ed. O'Brien, p. 376): 'Feidlimthe, son of Ailill, son of Máta, son of Srobcend'.

of the verse from the Leinster poem, demonstrates that the author drew upon a variety of sources, assimilating elements from different traditions in the process of compiling this narrative.

2.2.2.c Incitement in AACC

The verbal procedure of incitement, which has been examined in the context of *ACMM*, is also used in *AACC*. Since in *AACC* the incitement is employed by a woman to spur on a man—Queen Medb uses it to motivate the Ulster warrior Conall Cernach—its use and effects should be discussed within the context of relationships between the sexes. During Conall’s stay at Crúachan, Medb discovers that Ailill is unfaithful to her in having an affair with an unnamed woman in the courtyard. Medb addresses Conall, who is riveting a spear nearby, as follows: ‘*Maith, a Chonail,*’ *ar Medb, ‘Conall Cernach t’ainm-si cusaniu. Conall clāen trūag t’ainm festa. An tan rob-som Cernach-som, nī lēmtha techt tar do rāthaigecht.*⁷⁷⁷ While it is not explicitly marked as *gressacht*, it unmistakably belongs to this category, as Medb uses insulting language to incite Conall.

Medb’s provocative speech incorporates a clever form of etymological wordplay on Conall’s name: she warns him that he will no longer be known as Conall Cernach (i.e. the Victorious), but as Conall *clāen trūag* (‘crooked wretched one’). While Conall’s epithet *Cernach* is often taken as ‘victorious’, it can also be taken to mean ‘angular’, and is therefore not free from ambiguity.⁷⁷⁸ In this case, Medb analyses the epithet *cernach* as *clāen trūag*: the first part, *cern*, is taken as *clāen* ‘crooked, angular’, while the last part *-ach* is equated with *trūag* ‘wretched, miserable’. By contrasting the translation ‘victorious’ with *clāen trūag* ‘crooked wretched one’, Medb makes a deliberate play on the ambiguity of the epithet. Moreover, her words imply that Conall’s positive and heroic epithet would be lost and replaced by a negative and dishonorable one. While the adjective *clāen* might refer to Conall’s crooked neck, as is described in *Cóir Anmann*, the Middle Irish treatise on personal names, it could incorporate a further layer of meaning.⁷⁷⁹ eDIL notes that in a moral sense, *clāen* can carry the sense ‘iniquitous, perverse, unjust, biased’,⁷⁸⁰ which suggests

⁷⁷⁷ *AACC*, §7: “Well, Conall,’ said Medb, ‘Conall the Victorious [has been] your name until today. Conall the crooked wretch [will be] your name from this time on. When [it] was Cernach [Victorious], no one would have dared to go against your guarantee”.

⁷⁷⁸ See *Cóir Anmann* I (ed. Arbuthnot, p. 87) and *Cóir Anmann* II (ed. Arbuthnot, pp. 68–70) for these explanations of the epithet *Cernach*, as well as Sayers, ‘Portraits of the Ulster Hero Conall’, for an interpretation of *cernach* as a physical deformity. See also the textual note on this line in Part I, section 2.4.

⁷⁷⁹ *Cóir Anmann* II (ed. Arbuthnot, pp. 68–70).

⁷⁸⁰ eDIL s.v. *clāen* (d) or dil.ie/9306.

that Medb calls Conall untrustworthy and unjust of character.⁷⁸¹ Evidently, Medb is exhorting Conall by threatening him with the prospect of losing his personal honour, using a canny play on one of his most personal attributes: his name.

Although the pattern of a woman inciting a warrior adheres to Mac Cana's structural analysis, the context in which incitement is used here can be considered subversive. Firstly, Medb's relationship with Conall is different from that of the females noted by MacCana, who are related to the warrior they incite through bonds of love, loyalty or kinship. In this case, Conall's position as a guest in Medb's household and him being her former enemy renders the nature of their relationship rather more dubious. They are connected through a host-guest relationship, and therefore have certain obligations towards each other. As is argued in section 2.2.3.a below, the traditional custom of hospitality that would dictate that Medb and Ailill receive Conall freely into their household is turned into a business transaction, with Conall promising wealth in return for care and nourishment. While this creates a bond between them which perhaps borders on loyalty, their ties are nowhere near as strong as those of kinship or love, or the fealty of a warrior to his king (or queen).

Moreover, it is revealed later in the tale that Medb had taken Conall as a guest into her household to act as a sort of protector, intended to serve as a way of prohibiting Ailill from cheating on her. The latter part of Medb's incitement refers to this agreement: '*nī lēmtha techt tar do rāthaigecht. Anīū is focus duit in sārugud ūt*'.⁷⁸² While the role and function of the term *rāthaigecht* are explored in more detail in the section 2.2.3.a below, its use needs to be considered in this context too, as it forms an essential part of Medb's incitement.⁷⁸³ In legal texts, the use of a *ráth* ('paying surety') was essential for the enforcement of contracts, since a state-administered system of justice was lacking in medieval Ireland.⁷⁸⁴ Kelly notes that to act as a *ráth*, a person takes on a very serious responsibility, and when the *ráth* evades the obligations which he has undertaken to perform, he suffers the loss of his honour-price.⁷⁸⁵ By implying that Conall has let the affair between Ailill and the woman happen despite of their agreement, Medb further undermines Conall's honour, as she

⁷⁸¹ This sense is not found in H.2.17, which contains the variant reading *Conall grān[n]a clam trūath tū bud esta* 'you will be Conall the horrible leprous wretch from this time on'.

⁷⁸² *AACC*, §7: "[...] no one would have dared to go against your guarantee. Today that violation is close to you".

⁷⁸³ As suggested by Paul Russell, it would be interesting to compare and contrast *rāthaigecht* with the term *sārugud* in the next sentence, especially in legal contexts.

⁷⁸⁴ Kelly, *Guide*, p. 167.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

suggests that his *rāthaiqecht* ('guarantee') is being violated, insinuating that his guarantee holds little value anymore. In her use of incitement, Medb not only threatens Conall with the prospect of being dishonourable and not living up to his name, but she also implies that he has failed to hold up his part of their agreement, increasing the force of her provocation and discrediting his status.

Crucial to this analysis is how Medb uses incitement as a way to accomplish her goal and circumvent blame for her husband's death, as the killing was not executed by her hand, but Conall's. In the conversation that ensues after Conall has mortally wounded Ailill, the blame is clearly laid on Conall:

'Cīa dorōine?' ar cāch.

'Conall dorōine,' ar Ailill.

'Amai, nī fīr ōm,' ar Conall.

'Is fīr,' or Medb.

*'Mās fīr dono,' ar sē, 'atā dīgal Fergus[a] ann.'*⁷⁸⁶

Conall's initial denial of guilt could be taken as an attempt to evade the consequences of his actions. Alternatively, Conall might not consider himself to be fully responsible for Ailill's mortal wounding, as he had been tricked into spearing him by Medb, making her the true culprit. As soon as Conall cries out *nī fīr ōm*, Medb immediately repudiates, echoing the word *fīr*, and thereby washes her hands of guilt. Conall seems to realise that he alone is to be held accountable for Ailill's murder. However, his last words to Medb might imply that he has not fully accepted that the blame is truly his. Instead of agreeing with her, in his final reply he prefaces the adjective *fīr* with the conjunction *mās* ('if'), perhaps intended to add a note of doubt as to the full extent his culpability.

Alternatively, Conall may not have been aware that Ailill was his target. Medb concludes her speech by saying *Aniū is focus duit in sārugud ūt*.⁷⁸⁷ It is unclear whether or not Conall was aware of the affair taking place before Medb had pointed it out to him. The case is more clear-cut in H.2.17, where she says *Iss follus duit in sārugud ūt* ('that violation is evident to you'). The use of the adjective *follus* ('evident') where Ed. has *focus* ('close') suggests that in H.2.17 the meeting between Ailill and the woman is being presented as having been visible to Conall, giving rise to the notion that he chose to ignore what was happening. His reply seems to confirm this: *'Baī dīgal*

⁷⁸⁶ AACC, §8: "Who has done [it]?" said everyone. 'Conall has done [it],' said Ailill. 'Indeed, it is not true at all,' said Conall. 'It is true,' said Medb. 'If it is true then,' he said, 'it is in revenge for Fergus'.

⁷⁸⁷ AACC, §7: "Today that violation is close to you".

*Fergusa ann ām!ʹ ar sē.*⁷⁸⁸ As killing Ailill would precipitate revenge for Fergus, who had been killed by the actions of the Connacht king, this implies that Conall was aware that he would be murdering Ailill. Arguably, Conall’s obligation to Medb meant that he could not refuse her, since that would not only result in the loss of his honour-price, but could also lead to Medb casting him out of Crúachan.

This use of incitement by Medb can be understood as being subversive, as it is employed by a wife to plot her husband’s death. In earlier sources, a wife and husband are presented as working together as a unit—Oxenham notes that the *Hibernensis* and Adomnán’s *Vita sancti Columbae* dictate that within marriage, a woman owed her husband a conjugal debt: this was reciprocal, as her husband owed her the same.⁷⁸⁹ While some medieval Irish texts imply that polygamy was allowed and even justify the practice by using parallels from the Old Testament, this idea has recently been challenged by Breatnach, who argues that the existence of polygamy in medieval Ireland cannot be proven.⁷⁹⁰ While it could be argued that Ailill should not have been cheating on Medb and therefore deserved to be punished, exacting revenge through murder seems rather extreme. It should also be remembered that Medb herself is certainly not blameless in this respect, as we are informed earlier in the text that the queen was of a similarly unfaithful nature as her husband: *trícha fer cach lá do c[h]lāemc[h]lōdh dī nō tagall Fergus aonfecht.*⁷⁹¹ This is also attested in another tale in the Ed. anthology, *Aided Fergusa maic Róich*, which relates how Ailill caught Medb having an affair with Fergus. In response, Ailill tricked Lugaid into killing Fergus, but he did not attempt to kill Medb. Both partners are guilty of adultery and are therefore equally at fault here. Medb, however, decides to act upon her feelings of jealousy by having her husband killed rather than his mistress.

The relationship between wife and husband, another relationship that is integral to society as depicted in the literature, fails to function here as it should, as both partners turn against each other, culminating in the wife instigating her husband’s death. By using incitement to manipulate Conall into attacking Ailill, Medb not only avoids blame, but also indirectly causes Conall’s death, as the Connachta seek revenge for their king’s death by killing Conall. Moreover, the impetus that causes her to provoke Conall is Ailill’s adultery, which is inherently connected to their fractured

⁷⁸⁸ *AACC*, §7: “Indeed, there was revenge for Fergus in this!’ he said’.

⁷⁸⁹ Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, p. 89.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64; Breatnach, ‘Meaning of *cétmuinter*’, pp. 22–6.

⁷⁹¹ *AACC*, §6: ‘each day thirty men [are] alternated by her or [she has] one visit from Fergus’.

marriage. Thus, Medb's incitement sets off a chain of tragic events that lead to death and destruction.⁷⁹²

2.2.3 Host and Guest

Hospitality played a key role in medieval Ireland, where custom and law dictated that all householders were to provide food and shelter to every law-abiding person.⁷⁹³ The custom of hospitality formed an obligation that was fundamental and indispensable to the functioning of medieval Irish society, and central to its legal, ethical, economic, religious and political value systems.⁷⁹⁴ Hospitality was also a popular theme in medieval Irish literature, and Kelly notes that 'much stress is placed on the duty of hospitality in the laws, wisdom-texts and sagas'.⁷⁹⁵ Literary tales such as *FB* and *SMMD* revolve around communal feasts in guest-houses, presided over by a *bríugu* ('guesthouse-keeper'). As O'Leary demonstrates, these feasts are depicted as forming a cornerstone of heroic society, presenting prime opportunities for warriors to enhance their status and honour through boasting competitions.⁷⁹⁶ In contrast, Radner argues that in the Ulster Cycle these feasts become calculated occasions of strife and danger because of duplicit hosts. In her opinion, the tale *Mesca Ulad* depicts 'a contest in hospitality [that] leads the Ulstermen into a feast which is the cover for a treacherous murder plot'.⁷⁹⁷ The concept of hospitality is overturned as host and guest turn antagonistic towards each other. While there are no feasts in *ACMM* or *AACC*, instances of hospitality occur in both tales: in *ACMM*, Conall is a guest in Bélchú's house, after the latter has carried him home from the battle at Áth Cet. In *AACC*, Conall in his old age seeks out hospitality himself by turning to Medb and Ailill, his former enemies. The following section will

⁷⁹² In his Proppian analysis of the structure of the Ulster death-tales from tale-list A, Melia argues that when the union between a man and woman is motivated by personal need, it causes death ('Composition of the Ulster Death-Tales, pp. 50–1). While it could be argued that Ailill's illicit affair leads to death, this structuralist approach to the text tends to be reductive and ignores textual elements such as Ailill and Medb's unhappy marriage. Moreover, the two basic narrative plots Melia outlines for the death-tales are not applicable to *ACMM*, and therefore call into question their usefulness for the analysis of the *aideda* anthology.

⁷⁹³ Kelly, *Guide*, p. 139.

⁷⁹⁴ O'Sullivan, *Hospitality*, p. 15. O'Sullivan argues that 'evidence from the literary and historical sources for medieval Ireland suggests that the practice of hospitality functioned as an Irish *system of total services*', a term pioneered by Mauss. A *system of total services* is based on the contractual obligation to give, to receive and to reciprocate, which in medieval Ireland is expressed through the regulated customs of guesing, feasting and gift-giving.

⁷⁹⁵ Kelly, *Guide*, p. 139

⁷⁹⁶ O'Leary, 'Contention at Feasts', pp. 115–27.

⁷⁹⁷ Radner, 'Fury', pp. 48–9.

explore how the relationships between host and guest are presented in these narratives, and seeks to demonstrate how the literary concept of hospitality is used and abused by both parties.

2.2.3.a Conall's Goire at Crúachan

In *AACC*, Conall is a guest of Medb and Ailill, staying with them in Crúachan. The events leading up to Conall's stay or *goire* with the Connachta are significant, as they shed light upon the nature of the host-guest relationship between the two parties as depicted in this literary tale. At the beginning of *AACC*, a weakened and old Conall is in search of a household where he would be welcomed and provided with *goire* ('care') and *bethugud* ('maintenance, feeding'). He decides to seek out Ailill and Medb:

*'Ailill 7 Medb ām,' ar sé, 'is iat-sin lānemain dia ticfa mo lesugud-sa. Acht is mōr mo f[h]altanus friu cena, 7 cid mōr chena, bid ēigin dam dol ann,' ar sē.*⁷⁹⁸

This seems like an odd choice, considering the long-standing enmity between the Ulaid and the Connachta—something that Conall is depicted as being very much aware of himself—but he is presented as having no alternative. This indicates that at the time at which this tale takes place in the narrative universe of the Ulster Cycle, we have neared the end of its timeline. Conall is one of the few remaining Ulster heroes who has survived the events of the *Táin* and its subsequent conflicts. With almost all of the kings and warriors dead by this point, Conall is forced to seek shelter in enemy territory. Arguably, it is the quest for glory and honour, central to the Ulster Cycle warrior society, that has brought him into this situation. With killing enemies on the battlefield being one of the prime means through which warriors could increase their honour, the consequences of the inherent violence of warrior society have become visible: nearly all its participants have been slaughtered. For Conall, this means a lonely existence in his old age, leaving him with no choice but to ask his enemies for help. This may be taken as a comment on the part of the writer, showing how this warrior society was ultimately doomed.

The conversation between Conall and the royal Connacht pair upon Conall's arrival is crucial to this analysis, as it establishes the nature of their relationship:

7 luid isin ráith áit a mbaí Ailill 7 Medb, 7 feraid Ailill fáilti fris.

⁷⁹⁸ *AACC*, §3: 'Ailill and Medb indeed,' he said, 'they are the married couple who will take care of me. But my enmity towards them is great already, but even though it is already great, I have to go there,' he said'.

*'Is mochen duit,' ar Medb, 'a Chon(n)aill, acht cena it mōr t'faltana in let[h] a tānga[i]s.'*⁷⁹⁹

While Ailill welcomes Conall, Medb is quick to point out that they are by no means on friendly terms. However, the Ulster warrior manages to persuade her to provide him shelter:

'Maith do dēnum forom,' ol sē. 'Isam laec[h] maith. Is alma dontī do-nī maith form.'

*'Rot-fīa ām fāilti,' ar Medb.*⁸⁰⁰

While Meyer was unable to read the text fully because of damage to Ed. and therefore did not translate these lines, my reading has been supplied by H.2.17, of which Meyer was unaware. Conall's reply is of vital importance, as it reveals why Medb allows Conall to join their household, and warrants a close analysis.⁸⁰¹

Conall first remarks *maith do dēnum form*, which can be literally translated as 'your behaviour towards/treatment of me is good'. This comment can either be taken as a genuine display of appreciation for the fact that Medb and Ailill are welcoming him despite their past animosity. Alternatively, it could be a sarcastic remark, referring to Medb's ambivalent welcome. Next, Conall adds *Isam laec[h] maith* ('I am a good warrior'), a statement which seems intended to convince them of his usefulness to them. That this comment was not lost upon Medb becomes apparent later in the narrative, when she uses Conall's martial skills to trick him into killing her husband Ailill. Finally, Conall adds that *is alma dontī do-nī maith form* ('there will be flocks for the one who behaves well towards me'). In essence, what Conall is offering is a trade: if Ailill and Medb will give Conall care and maintenance, wealth will come to the royal Connacht couple. Medb promptly responds *Rot-fīa ām fāilti* ('You will certainly be welcome'). This reply, which contains the emphasising particle *ām* used with asseverative sense, shows that Conall has been successful in persuading her to welcome him into her home.

In his bid to convince Medb and Ailill to take him into their household, Conall uses a simple but clever form of wordplay on the adjective *maith*: first, he applies it to the royal Connacht pair, presumably in praise of them, although a cynical undertone might be present. Conall then refers to himself as *maith* in his self-description as a good warrior, likely in an attempt to offer them

⁷⁹⁹ AACC, §4: 'And he went into the fort where Ailill and Medb were, and Ailill welcomed him. 'You are welcome,' said Medb, 'o Conall, however your hostility towards the side to which you have come to is great'.

⁸⁰⁰ AACC, §4: "Good is your behaviour towards me," said Conall, "I am a good warrior. There will be flocks for the one who behaves well towards me." "You will certainly be welcome," said Medb'.

⁸⁰¹ While it should be kept in mind that the reading in Ed. may have been slightly different from what H.2.17 gives here, the rest of the wording of the passages in both MSS is very close, which suggests that a similar reading would be expected for the lacunae in Ed.

his martial services. His last use of *maith* applies to both of the parties involved, as Conall promises riches in return to those who treat him well. The triple repetition of *maith* in his speech reveals a subtle strategy on Conall's part to reinforce his own usefulness to Medb and Ailill, and results into him bargaining his way into the household of the royal Connacht couple.

In the discussion between Conall and Medb, the concept of hospitality can be seen to be subverted. In early medieval Ireland, generosity and hospitality were closely connected to honour.⁸⁰² These qualities were especially imperative to royalty, as they reflected their righteousness and therefore fitness to rule.⁸⁰³ Royal hospitality plays an important role in a number of Middle Irish narratives, where failure to show hospitality is consistently presented as leading to the downfall of a king.⁸⁰⁴ While the practice of hospitality itself underwent changes across the Irish Middle Ages, O'Sullivan notes that in the late medieval period, 'a nobleman's honour and status were still inextricably linked to displays of hospitality',⁸⁰⁵ underlining the continuing importance of hospitality in medieval Irish society. In *AACC*, however, the royal couple do not provide free hospitality to Conall, as would be expected of members of the nobility—instead, Conall has to negotiate his way into Crúachan. Moreover, the grounds upon which Medb accepts Conall into her household subvert the inherent liberality of hospitality, as it is the prospect of increased profits and martial services that motivates her invitation to Conall. However, it should also not be forgotten that Conall has killed many of the Connachta in battle. In this light, Medb's reluctance to extend hospitality to Conall might be expected. In turn, the very prospect of taking one's enemy as a guest into one's household could be taken to be subversive, and might even constitute a comment on the practice of medieval hospitality as a whole, exposing the flaws of this custom.

After Medb has agreed to take Conall into her household, Conall orders a house to be built for him. While it is not uncommon for hosts to construct accommodation for guests, in this case it seems Conall has ulterior motives for wanting a house of his own. Possibly, he still holds a degree of mistrust for his hosts. The additional requirements of the house having to be *fo leit[h]* ('apart') and *co-mōr for mūr na rātha* ('high on the wall of the rampart') reinforce this idea: it provides a level of privacy that staying in the main *ráth* would not give, while its position on the top of the wall

⁸⁰² See wisdom texts such as the seventh-century tract *Audacht Morainn* and the ninth-century gnomic text *Tecosca Cormaic*.

⁸⁰³ O'Sullivan, *Hospitality*, pp. 67–8.

⁸⁰⁴ Among others, O'Sullivan discusses *Cath Maige Tuired*, *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* and *TBC-LL* (*Ibid.*, pp. 68–72).

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

provides a strategic vantage point. At the end of this paragraph, we see that these specifications indeed serve a purpose, as they provided the perfect set-up for Conall to plunder Crúachan at night:

Do-ní-sium tohailt fo mūr na rātha, 7 do-nīd-sium a dāithin gac[h] n-oidc[h]i a Connachtaib, 7 ticedh ria matin dia t[h]ig.⁸⁰⁶

Despite receiving from the Connachta *muc 7 ad 7 fuigell Meidbe 7 Ailella 7 dā [b]a[i]rdin déc 7 molt 7 in cori anbruiithi*,⁸⁰⁷ Conall's hunger appears to be insatiable, causing him to raid Connacht at night. While the mention of his hosts' scraps as part of his meal could be taken as an insult and therefore a possible justification for raiding the province, other components of the meal such as the meat indicate that the food was of a high standard. As O'Sullivan notes, a guest's right to meats such as ram, pig and cow was based on their status, and were reserved for high-ranking individuals.⁸⁰⁸ In fact, Conall is the one undermining the royal couple's hospitality: after receiving a meal befitting his status, he secretly raids Connacht at night, stealing food from his hosts' subjects.

As has been suggested above, the relationship between Conall and Medb does not appear to be that of a traditional guest and host, where the noble host freely provides hospitality, but instead takes the form of a mutually beneficial agreement. The unusual nature of their relationship appears to be confirmed in the next section of the tale, which recounts Ailill's infidelity:

Do-comraiced-som fria mnāib aili dia cind sī, 7 ba hét lé-sium anní-sin, gur ro-gab sī Conall Cernach ina tegais for Ailill, nā der[n]ad aní-sin tar a cet.⁸⁰⁹

Although the reading in H.2.17 is slightly different, it agrees with Ed. in that it gives the reason why Medb decided to host Conall: *gor ra-gab sī Conall Cernach ar aig(id)acht fri Alella*.⁸¹⁰ It appears that beside Conall's promise of wealth, Medb saw an opportunity in hosting a skilfull warrior: she could use Conall to prevent Ailill from committing adultery. This idea is reinforced by Medb's use of the term *rāthaigeht* ('guarantee') when she is instigating Conall to kill Ailill. While this instance of incitement has already been discussed in detail in section 2.2.2.c, the significance of the term *rāthaigeht* has to be reiterated here, as it sheds further light on Medb's relationship with Conall. In

⁸⁰⁶ AACC, §4: 'He dug under the rampart of the fort, and he obtained his fill every night from the Connachta, and before morning he came (back) to his house'.

⁸⁰⁷ AACC, §4: 'a pig and a cow and Medb and Ailill's leftovers and twelve loaves of bread and a ram and the cauldron of broth'.

⁸⁰⁸ O'Sullivan, *Hospitality*, pp. 222–33.

⁸⁰⁹ AACC, §6: 'He [Ailill] used to meet with other women in disregard to her (i.e. Medb), and she was jealous [of] that, so that she took Conall Cernach into her household over Ailill, that he would not do that against her will'.

⁸¹⁰ AACC, §6: 'so that she took Conall Cernach as a guest against Ailill'.

the medieval Irish legal system, a *ráth* ('paying surety') was used in the enforcement of contracts.⁸¹¹ The *ráth* guaranteed with his own property that the person for whom he was standing as surety would fulfill his side of the agreement.⁸¹² While caution should be exercised when interpreting legal terminology in a literary tale, the legal nature of the term *rāthaigecht* is doubtless important.⁸¹³ In the current context, the use of this term implies that Medb had come to some sort of agreement with Ailill and Conall, the latter presumably acting as a surety to prevent Ailill from cheating on Medb. While we can only speculate about the precise nature of this agreement, the use of the term *rāthaigecht* underlines the idea that the nature of the relationship between Medb and Conall is not that of a traditional host and guest, but constituted a mutual agreement based on payment and protection.

Finally, as noted by Clancy, the ultimate subversion of hospitality is arguably Conall killing his host Ailill.⁸¹⁴ Despite being tricked into this and Medb being the true instigator, Conall is directly responsible for the murder, and his act constitutes the gravest possible infringement on hospitality possible. Ailill's words to Conall on his deathbed are significant here: '*Olc duit a ndernais, a Chonaill,*' ar Ailill, '*olc do dēnum frim-sa. Not-ber ēm as do m'inchaib, resū ba marb-so(m).*'⁸¹⁵ The implication of Ailill's speech is that what Conall has done, namely fatally wounding him, was unlawful behaviour on Conall's part. These phrases are in contrast with the promises that Conall made to the royal couple of Connacht when he first arrived: '*Maith do dēnum forom,*' ol sē. '*Isam laec[h] maith. Is alma dontī do-nī maith form.*'⁸¹⁶ The threefold use of the adj. *maith* 'good', pertaining to Conall's promises of the wealth that he would bring to Ailill and Medb, stands in opposition to the reality, which instead brought *olc* 'evil', mentioned twice by Ailill as he lies dying.⁸¹⁷ While the

⁸¹¹ Kelly, *Guide*, p. 167.

⁸¹² Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 153.

⁸¹³ In the legal sources, a *ráth* cannot be of lower status than the person for whom he stands surety, as the *ráth* would not have sufficient funds to meet his obligation in the event of a default (Kelly, *Guide*, p. 169; Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, pp. 152–3). It seems unlikely that Conall would have been an appropriate *ráth* to Ailill, the latter being a king. While this could be taken as an example of the disastrous consequences of having an unsuitable *ráth*, it is important not to overemphasise the legal implications of the term *ráth*, as the contract and its conditions are not specified in the text. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that these sources refer to the seventh- and eighth-century situation, while *AACC* is dated to the twelfth century, and therefore the concept of *ráth* will most likely have undergone changes.

⁸¹⁴ Clancy, 'Die Like a Man?', p. 80.

⁸¹⁵ *AACC*, §8: "What you have done was bad, o Conall," said Ailill, 'namely doing evil towards me. Escape then under my guarantee, before I die'.

⁸¹⁶ *AACC*, §4: "Good is your behaviour towards me," said Conall, 'I am a good warrior. There will be flocks for the one who behaves well towards me'.

⁸¹⁷ This wordplay is lacking in H.2.17, which has the variant reading *nārb' ead tarmart-sa do dēnum fort-sa* ('that was not what I intended to do to you'), lacking the word *olc*. This statement from Ailill seems to imply that while the king had not intended to do evil to Conall, he is left without a choice now that Conall inflicted a mortal wound on him.

inversion of *maith* seems incomplete as the third *olc* is lacking, this could be symbolised in Ailill's death. Instead of receiving riches and protection, Conall's stay brought Ailill death and destruction.

This analysis has shown that hospitality is used and abused repeatedly in this text, and that hospitality-infringement is ubiquitous: Medb and Ailill host their former enemy Conall, who proceeds to raid their residence at night, and his stay culminates in him killing his host Ailill, forming the ultimate infringement of hospitality. While this may be understood as a warning against allowing one's enemy into one's household, extending hospitality to a (former) rival could also be a positive act, demonstrating good will and generosity. However, because the alliance between Medb and Conall is founded upon a business transaction, the liberal and generous nature of hospitality is subverted. The treatment of hospitality in *AACC* ties into the view that the anthology of *aideda* depicts a society in which the most basic and traditional values are degenerating and dysfunctional.

2.2.3.b Conall's Healing by Bélchú

Another inversion of the relationship between host and guest is that of Conall and Bélchú in *ACMM*. After Bélchú finds the gravely wounded Conall, he decides not to kill him, but to heal the warrior and fight him after he has recovered. Bélchú takes Conall onto his back and drags him back to his house,⁸¹⁸ where he has the warrior healed. In early medieval Irish society, the practice of taking a person into one's home to help them recover was known as *fológ n-othrusa* ('sick-maintenance').⁸¹⁹ The practice is discussed in the eighth-century legal tract *Bretha Crólige*, which discusses *othrus* from the perspective of the perpetrator or his kin. The tract notes that after an illegal injury, the victim is nursed by his own kin for nine days.⁸²⁰ If the injured person is still in need of care after this, he is brought to the house of a third party, likely a kinsman of the culprit.⁸²¹ The texts and commentaries of *Bretha Crólige* show that the direct provision for sick-maintenance was already in decline in the eighth century, and that this obligation was eventually commuted into a fixed payment.⁸²²

⁸¹⁸ See 2.2.4 'Friend and/or Foe' for a discussion of the motif of back-carrying.

⁸¹⁹ Binchy, 'Sick-Maintenance', p. 78–9.

⁸²⁰ Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 79 and 129.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁸²² *Ibid.*, p. 134; McLeod, 'Crólige mBáis', pp. 34–5.

While Conall's stay at Bélchú's house is not formally defined as sick-maintenance, there might be a play on this practice here. Instead of taking an injured person in to nurse them back to health, Bélchú's motivation to heal Conall is to kill him in battle, so that he can gain honour from defeating the warrior. This not only subverts the practice of sick-maintenance, but also ties into the principal values of warrior society, since Bélchú is guided in his decision by the prospect of defending his honour. In addition, Bélchú himself manipulates the concept of hospitality. Clancy notes that by nursing Conall back to health in his house, Bélchú places Conall under the legal obligations a guest has towards his host, which prohibits Conall from harming his host and ensures Bélchú's future victory.⁸²³

However, as Conall regains his health, Bélchú realises that his plan might fail, and arranges for his sons to kill Conall in his sleep. However, Conall discovers the plot and forces Bélchú to swap beds. Bélchú agrees, but closes the door to stop his sons from coming in, assuming he will have prevented them from accidentally killing the wrong person. But as soon as Bélchú falls asleep, Conall reopens the door and Bélchú's sons come in. As instructed, they enter the bedchamber and unknowingly stab their own father to death. As Clancy points out, Conall manages to evade the problem of hospitality by using a surrogate pair of hands to have his host killed.⁸²⁴ The fact that these hands belong to his sons adds to the tragedy of the situation. There is little time for them to realise what has happened, though, as straight after the unintended murder of their father, Conall gets up and kills the three sons.

Again, the traditional relationship between host and guest in this text is upended, and the practice of hospitality is exploited by the host for personal gain. Evidently, the cause of the destruction and death is the dysfunctional relationship between host and guest. However, the relationship as depicted here is born out of warrior society, as it is the prospect of defending his martial honour that motivates Bélchú to take Conall with him in the first place. Perhaps Bélchú's trajectory can be understood as cautionary example, demonstrating the disastrous consequences of what happens when one meddles with martial matters. From the moment that Bélchú decides to partake in warrior society, engaging in the quest for glory, he unwittingly embarks on a downward spiral that leads not only to his death, but also ends in the murder of his sons.

⁸²³ Clancy, 'Die Like a Man?', p. 80.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*

2.2.4 Friend and/or Foe

The final aspect to be considered in this literary analysis is the concept of friendship. While this overlaps with previously discussed relationships, such as those between heroes and charioteers, this section explores the wider bonds of friendship, such as the bond between kinsmen and the fealty of warriors to their lords. These relationships are characterised by loyalty, compassion and sacrifice. This discussion will examine how these values are expressed through the literary motif of back-carrying in *ACMM*. In this tale, Conall lies wounded on the battlefield after his fight with Cet, when Bélchú finds him and takes Conall onto his back, carrying the warrior to his house. In order to understand the depiction of this motif in *ACMM*, its portrayal in *AC* needs to be considered, as it precedes *ACMM* in the *aideda* anthology in Ed. and therefore guides the interpretation of this motif in *ACMM*.

In order to gain an understanding of the meanings and functions of back-carrying in medieval Irish literature, the history of this motif and its earliest depictions ought to be examined first. Back-carrying appears throughout medieval European literature, where the act of carrying often takes place across a body of water. One of the most well-known examples is found in the legend of St. Christopher, which supposedly dates back to the third century.⁸²⁵ This legend relates how St. Christopher, initially called Reprobis, converts to Christianity. Instead of fasting or praying, he takes on the task of carrying people across a raging river in the service of God. One night, he carries a small child across the stream, but during the crossing the child grows extremely heavy. When they reach the other side of the river, the child reveals himself to be Christ.

This account inspired instances of back-carrying in later hagiographical literature, including that of medieval Ireland. Most notably, the legendary material concerning the Irish saint Moling appears to have drawn on the figure of St. Christopher, as has been discussed by Frykenberg.⁸²⁶ He notes that a similar back-carrying episode is found in the twelfth-century Irish Life of Moling, in which the saint agrees to carry a hideous leper on his back across a stream, which proves to be a challenging task.⁸²⁷ When his passenger disappears, Moling deduces that it was in fact Christ he had carried, who had come to test his charity, and is ultimately rewarded with a boon

⁸²⁵ Mersman, *Catholic Encyclopedia* III, Online Edition. For the most popular and influential version, the thirteenth-century hagiographical collection known as *The Golden Legend*, see Graesse, *Jacobi de Voragine Legenda Aurea*, p. 432. For this motif, see Aarne-Thompson-Uther Folk-Motif Index no. 768 (St. Christopher and the Christ child); Aarne-Thompson Folk-Motif Index no. Q25.

⁸²⁶ Frykenberg, 'St. Moling', pp. 83–103.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

from God. Frykenberg argues that this is likely to be an attenuated instance of the Christopher legend and that this episode, as well as parallel verses in the so-called twelfth-century *Anecdota* poems about Moling, attest to 'the saint's reputation for transporting and caring for itinerants'.⁸²⁸

Another early instance of this motif involving Moling is found in an Old Irish anecdote in LL.⁸²⁹ This short tale recounts how Moling met a boy and told him never to leave a monk in danger. When the boy is later chased by a group of ambushers, he encounters a leper at a ford, who asks to be carried across the water. Remembering Moling's words, the boy takes the leper on his back and begins crossing the ford, but is killed midway across by a spear thrown by the ambushers. The leper, however, turns out to be Christ in disguise and saves the boy by sending him to heaven. As in the legend of St. Christopher, we have a disguised messenger from God being carried across a body of water, who reveals himself to be Christ.

One significant aspect shared by these narratives is the concept of personal sacrifice in the name of God. St. Christopher submits himself to God by taking on the burden of carrying people across a dangerous river. When carrying the Christ-child, he exposes himself to extreme risk, but perseveres and fulfils his Christian duty. Similarly, Moling struggles but perseveres in carrying the disguised Christ, while the boy in Moling's tale sacrifices his life by carrying a leper across the stream. In these tales, back-carrying constitutes a concise expression of multiple Christian virtues, among which are care for the meek, compassion and selflessness.

2.2.4.a Ulster Cycle

Having examined these instances of back-carrying, it is important to consider the motif's representation in the Ulster Cycle. In these tales, back-carrying mostly occurs on the battlefield, and is therefore inevitably more martial in character. The association with the concept of sacrifice is also present: a warrior pausing to carry a fellow wounded man from the battlefield is slowed down tremendously, forming an easy target for the enemy and very much at risk of being killed. However, the notion of vulnerability in battle takes prominence over perils such as a dangerous environment or disease as found in the hagiographical examples. Furthermore, the loyalty found in these texts is not to Christ or God, but to a secular lord or master, as is typical of the heroic world of medieval Irish literature.

⁸²⁸ *Birth and Life of St Moling* (ed. by Stokes, §§38–9); Frykenberg, 'St. Moling', p. 89.

⁸²⁹ Hull, 'Two Anecdotes', pp. 90–9. I am grateful to Dr Sarah Waidler for providing me with this reference.

The martial and secular configuration of this motif is most evident in the *Táin*. Two instances of back-carrying can be found in *TBC-I*, in one of the boyhood deeds of Cú Chulainn. In the episode known as *Cath Eógain meic Derthacht fri Conchobar* ('The Fight between Eógan mac Durthacht and Conchobar'), a young Cú Chulainn ventures out onto the battlefield to search for Conchobar, who has not yet returned, where he encounters a man carrying his wounded brother on his back.⁸³⁰

Co n-acca ara chind in fer 7 leth a chind fair 7 leth fir aile fora muin.

'Congna lem, a Chú Chulaind,' ol sé. 'Rom bíth 7 tucus leth mo bráthar ar mo muin. Beir síst lim.'
'Ní bér,' or sé.

*La sodain focheirt in n-aire dó. Focheird-som de. Immasínithar dóib. Doscartar Cú Chulaind.
Co cuala ní, in mboidb dinib collaib.*

'Olc damnae laích fil and fo chossaib aurddrag!'

*La sodain fónérig Cú Chulaind 7 benaid a chend de cosind luirg áne 7 gabaid immáin líathráite
ríam dar in mag.*⁸³¹

Initially, this act of carrying seems to resonate with the hagiographical examples discussed previously: the mysterious man is clearly suffering through carrying his wounded brother, sacrificing his health and safety. The man's first approach may have been intended to stir sympathy, using the image of back-carrying and its connotations to invoke feelings of compassion. But as soon as he throws his brother towards Cú Chulainn, it becomes clear that this is not a warrior sacrificing his life for his brother: instead, he uses his brother's body as a weapon against Cú Chulainn. This instance of back-carrying subverts the associated values of sacrifice and compassion, perhaps in an attempt to emphasise the dangers of the battlefield, and to create an opposition with the more positive instances of back-carrying that follow:

'In fail mo phopa Conchobar isind ármaig se?'

Frisgair-side dó. Téit chuci conid n-acca issin chlu, 7 ro bóí ind úir imbi do cach leth día díchlith.

'Cid día tánac isin n-ármag,' ol Conchobar, 'co n-deochais úathbás and?'

⁸³⁰ See Part I, section 3.4, for the textual note to §8 for the verbal correspondences between this section and *ACMM*.

⁸³¹ *TBC-I*, ll. 492–502: 'He saw in front of him a man with half a head carrying the half of another man on his back. 'Help me, Cú Chulainn!' said he. 'I have been wounded and I have brought half of my brother on my back. Take a turn with me in carrying him.' 'I will not,' said he. Whereupon the other threw the burden he was carrying to him, but Cú Chulainn cast it off. They wrestled then and Cú Chulainn was thrown. He heard the war-goddess crying from among the corpses. 'Poor stuff to make a warrior is he who is overthrown by phantoms!' Whereupon Cú Chulainn rose to his feet, and, striking off his opponent's head with his hurley, he began to drive the head like a ball before him across the plain'.

*Tanócaib asin chluad la sodain. Ní thurcébad sesser linni di thrénfearib Ulad ní bad chalma.*⁸³²

Cú Chulainn's effort to lift Conchobar out of the ditch could be understood as an act of back-carrying in itself. While the boy shows extraordinary strength in this action, his decision to step onto the battlefield is presented as an extremely dangerous move on his part, since he runs the risk of being killed by the enemy. His perilous position and the extent of his loyalty are further highlighted when we consider that Cú Chulainn is only a boy at the time that he steps into the battle-field—something which Conchobar decries when he sees the boy.

After Cú Chulainn's heroic efforts, they set off back home. On their way they come across the severely wounded Cúscraid:

'Tíagam díar tig,' or Conchobar.

*Condecat fri Cúscraid mac Conchobair. Bátár dano tromgona fair-side. Dobeir Cú Chulaind foramuin. Dollotár iarom a tríur co h-Emain Macha.*⁸³³

Cú Chulainn's act of carrying Cúscraid is a choice, and can be understood as an expression of loyalty, representing a positive aspect of the warrior ethos. He displays selflessness and compassion, since the risks of this act can easily outweigh any personal benefits.

This episode plays with the motif of back-carrying by presenting it at its negative and positive extremes. On the one hand we have a boy carrying a king away to safety, while on the other a man uses his wounded brother as a weapon. While Cú Chulainn is willing to sacrifice his life for his kinsmen, the mysterious man sacrifices his own brother. The selflessness and loyalty implicit in Cú Chulainn's act of carrying is placed in sharp relief by this parallel back-carrying instance, and demonstrates the antithetical ways in which the concept of sacrifice can be represented through this motif. Moreover, Cú Chulainn's act of carrying is connected to the idea of sacrifice, a value that is also present in the instances of back-carrying from the aforementioned Christian texts, albeit in a different configuration. Just as St. Christopher had to prove himself to be a worthy Christian through the act of back-carrying, so does Cú Chulainn have to prove himself to be of the calibre of a fighting warrior.

⁸³² *TBC-I*, ll. 503–9: "Is my master Conchobar on this battle-field?" Conchobar answered him. Cú Chulainn went towards him and saw him in the ditch with the earth around him on all sides hiding him. 'Why have you come to the battle-field' said Conchobar, 'where you may die of fright?' He lifted Conchobar out of the ditch then. Six of our strong men in Ulster could not have lifted him out more courageously'. Clancy points out that the depiction of Conchobar as a disgraced figure on the battlefield calls into question not just Conchobar's kingship, but also his noble status ('Court, King and Justice', pp. 174–5).

⁸³³ *TBC-I*, ll. 520–3: "Let us go to our house," said Conchobar. They met Cúscraid mac Conchobair. He too bore severe wounds, Cú Chulainn carried him on his back. The three of them went on to Emain Macha'.

2.2.4b *Aided Chonchobair & The Edinburgh Compilation*

Having discussed the different configurations of the motif of back-carrying in both secular and Christian medieval Irish literature, we can now turn to the *aideda* anthology in Ed. *AC* is examined first, as the depiction of the motif in this narrative would have guided the reader in interpreting the back-carrying in *ACMM*. In *AC*, the motif occurs after king Conchobar is lured away from the battlefield by Cet mac Mágach, who uses this distraction to launch a ball fashioned from brains into the back of Conchobar's head. As he lies wounded on the battlefield, calling out for help, his attendant Cenn Berraide comes to his aid:

'Mo brith-se ass!' ar Conchobur. 'Dobér ríge nUlad do neoch nombéra connici mo thech.'

'Notbēr-sa,' ar Cend Berraide, ar a gilla fadéin. Dobeir-side lomain imme 7 nombeir for a muin co Arddachad Slēbe Fuáit. Maidid a chride isin gillu. Conid de sin atá 'ríge Cinn Berraide for Ultaib' .i. in rí for a muin let hind laí.⁸³⁴

Before this motif can be analysed, it is crucial to examine the position of this episode in the four versions of *AC*, as it has been relocated in some of these. When the different versions are compared, it is revealed that this back-carrying episode only appears in version A of the tale, which is contained in LL, RIA MS C i 2 (N), NLS Adv. 72.1.40 (E₁) and NLS Adv. 72.1.5 (E₂).⁸³⁵ In LL and N, Conchobar is carried home from the battlefield by Cenn Berraide after Cet has launched the brain-ball into the king's head. After seven years, Conchobar hears the news of Christ's death, which causes the brain-ball to explode. Before he dies as a result of this injury, Conchobar utters the *rosc* poem *Ba haprainm*, in which he demonstrates his humility and willingness to sacrifice himself for the Lord.⁸³⁶ In contrast, in the Edinburgh manuscripts (E₁ and E₂), the *rosc* poem has been omitted, and when Conchobar hears about the death of Christ he goes into a final frenzy, reverting to his behaviour as a warrior in an attempt to defend the already-dead Christ (see Figure 6).

⁸³⁴ *'Aided Chonchobair'* (ed. and transl. Kobel, pp. 304-11): 'This is the last [thing] Conchobar said. 'Let me be carried out of this!', said Conchobar. 'I shall give the kingship of Ulster to anyone who will carry me as far as my house.' 'I will carry thee,' said Cenn Berraide, his own attendant. He puts a cord around him, and carries him upon his back to Ardachad of the Fewes. The attendant's heart broke within him. Hence is the saying 'Cenn Berraide's kingship over Ulster', to wit, the king upon his back for (only) half the day'.

⁸³⁵ Imhoff, 'Different Versions', p. 54. For a stemma and detailed linguistic analysis of the relations between the different manuscripts of version A, see also Kobel, *'Aided Chonchobair'*, pp. 37-54.

⁸³⁶ Kobel, *'Aided Chonchobair'*, p. 143. For an analysis of the poem *Ba aprainm* in relation to the tale, see Corthals, *'Retoiric in Aided Chonchobair'*, pp. 41-59. For recent work on *AC*, see Imhoff, 'Pre-Christian Characters' and 'Different Versions', pp. 43-99.

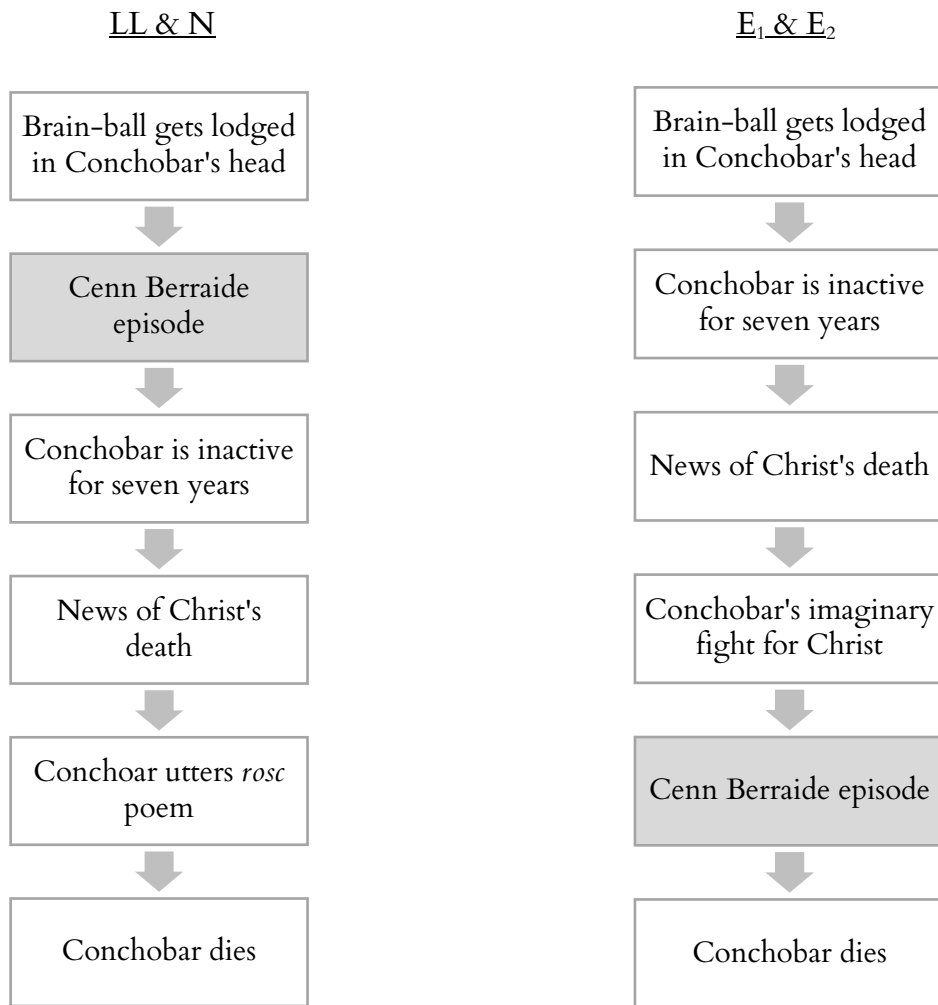


Figure 6: Narrative structure of versions of AC

This causes the brain-ball to explode and Conchobar dies, after which the back-carrying episode follows:

Lasin feirg-sin ro-ling incinn Miscegra asa cinn co tainic a incind fein fair gurbo marb de 7 conid aire sin aderait cach: 'is nemedac[h] Conchobar trit an durtacht doroine Conchobar.'

Is é in deighinach trá adubairt Conchobar: 'Gidbé nom-béra-sa cin tairisium fum conuici mo tech,' ar sé. '[...] béraind ríge nUlad dó.' 'No-bér-sa,' ar Cend Beirriti. Do-beru-sum(?) lám uime 7 berith co Arddachad Slēbe Fuáit for a muin. Moidhe i croide isin gillu. Conid é atá ríge Ceinn Beirriti for Ultaib .i. in rí fora muin leath in laí.⁸³⁷

⁸³⁷ Transcription based on Edinburgh MS Adv. 72.1.40, with readings provided from Edinburgh MS Adv. 72.1.5 to fill the lacunae: 'Through that fury the brain of Mescegra sprang out of his head so that his own brains came upon him, so that he died of it. And hence all say: 'A dweller in Heaven is Conchobar for the wish which he has uttered.' This is the last [thing] Conchobar said: 'Whomsoever will carry me without resting as far as my house,' he said, '[...] I will give the kingship of Ulster to him.' 'I will carry [you],' said Cenn Berraide. He puts an arm around him and carries him to

Firstly, the issue of original order should be addressed. Based on the narrative discontinuity in the Edinburgh versions, it can be deduced that the order of the events in LL is original and has been emended in the Edinburgh versions. The transposition of the Cenn Berraide episode in the Edinburgh versions to a later point in the narrative creates a seam in the text: first we are told that Conchobar dies after attacking the trees, then follows the Cenn Berraide episode, where the king is heavily wounded yet alive. The words *gurbo marb de* ('so that he died of it'), which have been left to stand in the Edinburgh versions at the end of Conchobar's battle for Christ, constitute this seam. The presence of this seam in the Edinburgh versions shows that the redactor(s) of this version moved the episode from its medial position in LL and N.

While Kobel notes that this seam implies that the Edinburgh redactor(s) does not appear to have been too concerned about disrupting the textual unity of the tale, the copying in of this arguably short phrase could easily have been overlooked.⁸³⁸ Whatever may have been the cause, the compiler shows his active engagement with the material by emending the first sentence of the Cenn Berraide episode in order to connect it to the previous passage: the phrase '*Mo brith-se ass! ol Conchobar*' ('Let me be carried out of this!' said Conchobar'), which originally introduces the Cenn Berraide episode in LL and N, is replaced with the innovatory phrase *Is é in deighinach trá adubairt Conchobar* ('The last [thing] Conchobar said was').⁸³⁹ So, the presence of the seam in the Edinburgh versions shows that the redactor(s) of this version moved the episode from its medial position in LL and N, while the emendation of its initial phrase represents a conscious attempt to integrate the episode in the narrative.

Imhoff comments that the transposition of this episode in the Edinburgh versions after Conchobar's frenzy and death limits its effectiveness as a step along the way to Conchobar's conversion and gradual loss of power as presented in LL.⁸⁴⁰ She argues that the version of AC in LL and N forms a thematically coherent narrative about Conchobar's conversion. After Conchobar has been hit with the brain-ball, he is forced to enter a seven-year period of inactivity and abstinence. Clancy contends that this 'period of purgation', which is described in the Penitential of Cummin as an act of humility, should be considered penance for his sin of vanity.⁸⁴¹ Imhoff

Ardachad of the Few on his back. The attendant's heart broke within him. Hence is the saying 'Cenn Berraide's kingship over Ulster', that is, the king on his back for half a day'.

⁸³⁸ Kobel, '*Aided Chonchobair*', p. 143.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁸⁴⁰ Imhoff, 'Different Versions', p. 95.

⁸⁴¹ Clancy, '*Lethal Weapon*', p. 101.

adds that this marks the beginning of Conchobar's conversion. She suggests that the Cenn Berraide episode in LL and N can be seen as another step in this journey, as Conchobar gradually loses his royal authority and power, until he finally surrenders himself to Christ. Moreover, it shows his weakness as a king, as he 'is willing to cede his own royal authority to whoever is willing to assist him'.⁸⁴² Conversely, Kobel contends that there is also a focus on redemption in the conclusion of the Edinburgh versions, but that it is different from that of the other versions.⁸⁴³ She argues that its Christianised political ethic reflects a concern with the concept of 'patronage to the poor and good relations with the Church'.⁸⁴⁴ According to Kobel, the omission of the *rosc* poem *Ba aprainn* and the relocation of the act of back-carrying were meant to emphasise Conchobar's repentant nature. This sentiment is 'expressed through his generosity to those poorer than him', as he offers and transfers the kingship of Ulster on his servant.⁸⁴⁵

Both scholars make valid points, but I believe that the episode in the Edinburgh manuscripts has been relocated to present the act of back-carrying in a positive or even ideal Christian light. Contrary to what Imhoff suggests, I contend that the back-carrying in the Edinburgh versions also constitutes an effective step in Conchobar's conversion. The act of sacrificing his kingship symbolises the last phase of this journey, as he is willing to relinquish his greatest source of pride. As for Kobel's contention that Conchobar's sacrifice of the kingship is aimed at highlighting patronage to the poor, it is important to consider Cenn Berraide's motivations for taking the king on his back. Clancy raises an important point in this respect when he suggests that the promise of the kingship of Ulster undermines the servant's motivations, and that Cenn Berraide's actions are 'a foolish show of strength to aid his lord which gains him, for half a day, a kingship'.⁸⁴⁶ Whereas Conchobar sacrifices his most prized possession on his way to become a Christian, Cenn Berraide seeks to increase his worldly status, and is willing to give up his life in the process. This antithesis is expressed in the ensuing act of back-carrying: Cenn Berraide, driven by pre-Christian ideas of earthly wealth and prestige, bears up the newly-Christian ex-king Conchobar, but breaks underneath him.

⁸⁴² Imhoff, 'Different Versions', pp. 93–5.

⁸⁴³ Kobel, '*Aided Chonchobair*', p. 143.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁶ Clancy, '*Lethal Weapon*', p. 101.

Secondly, I argue that the addition of a final imaginary battle in the name of the Lord in the Edinburgh versions is crucial to the interpretation of the *aideda* anthology as depicting a self-destructive warrior society. Conchobar's last act as a warrior is placed in a Christian context, as he uses his martial skills in the service of Christ, demonstrating his loyalty according to his warrior's creed.⁸⁴⁷ This effort symbolises his transition from a pre-Christian warrior-king into a defender of Christ, and constitutes a vital step in his journey to salvation. Importantly, this heroic effort in the name of Christ presents a contrast with the prideful belligerence of the other warriors in the *aideda* anthology.

Based on these considerations, the effect of the transposition of the Cenn Berraide episode to after Conchobar's final imaginary battle for Christ can now be appreciated fully. By placing the Cenn Berraide episode towards the very end of the narrative, the back-carrying follows on directly from the imaginary battle between Conchobar and the trees in defence of Christ. This can be understood as a positive warrior act in defence of Christ, leading to Conchobar's salvation before death. By closely connecting the back-carrying to the king's 'Christianised' martial act, the Edinburgh redactor(s) seem to have linked this motif with the Christian ethos with which Conchobar is imbued in the tale. Finally, while the carrying by Cenn Berraide constitutes the final phase of Conchobar's conversion, the sacrifice and loyalty inherent in the act are subverted by the servant's selfish motivations. In this final act of back-carrying, Christian and pre-Christian ideals intersect, as worldly ambition and honour are quite literally subjected to and crushed by the new Christian ideal.

2.2.4.c Back-Carrying in *ACMM*

Having explored the use of back-carrying in *AC*, we can now turn to *ACMM*. The first reference to back-carrying in *ACMM* concerns a failed attempt, which occurs after Conall is left wounded after his fight with Cet. He asks his charioteer to take the horses back to Ulster:

'Beir lat na h-echu co hUltu,' or sē, 'arnā ro-maigset Connachta cētus.'

Faro-fēimid in gilla vero a t[h]ōcbāil-som isin carpat 7 ceilebraid in gilla dō iarum 7 luid dia t[h]ig.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁸⁴⁸ *AACC*, §6: "Bring the horses with you to the Ulaid,' he said, 'so that they do not flee Connacht first.' The servant was unable to lift him into the chariot however, and the servant bade him farewell then, and went home'.

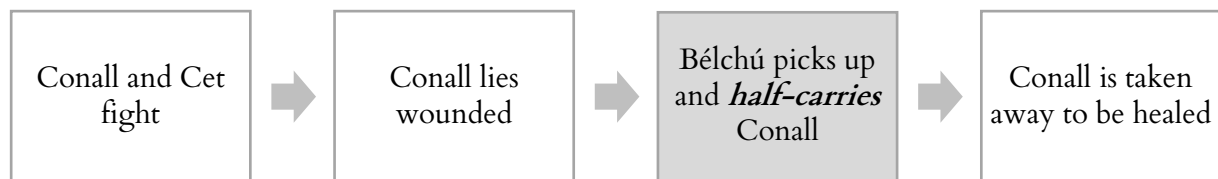
The charioteer then tries to lift Conall into the chariot, but fails and leaves his master behind while he returns home. The second instance of this motif occurs directly after Bélchú decides to bring Conall home with him:

‘Nít muirbeb-so(m) trā, acht atā nī cena,’ ar sē, ‘not-bēr lem dom tig 7 not-īcfait[h]er acum 7 māgat slān immorro caithfet frit.’

Īarsin trā tōcbaid for a muin 7 a leth ina diaid, co rāinic a t[h]ech. 7 do-beir leaga cucui gur bo slān.⁸⁴⁹

Here we are reminded of *AC*. Conchobar and Conall find themselves in parallel situations, as both are heavily wounded and have no strength to move on their own. They undergo a similar sequence of events: they both fight; both men lie wounded and are then carried off on someone’s back (see Figure 7).

ACMM



AC

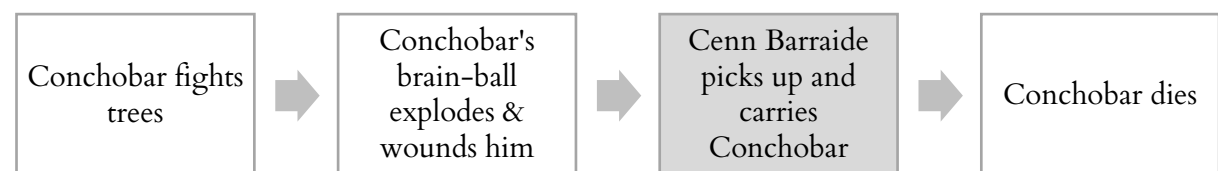


Figure 7: Narrative structures of *ACMM* and *AC*

Since both tales are part of the anthology of *aideda* in Ed., this suggests that the two versions of the motif are to be read in conjunction with each other. When doing so, it becomes clear that while there are general similarities between both episodes, the motif is employed in contrasting ways in *ACMM*: in *AC*, Conchobar is aided by his own servant and fellow Ulsterman Cenn Berraide,

⁸⁴⁹ *AACC*, §7: “I will not kill you then, however,” he said, “I will bring you with me to my house and you will be healed by me, and if you be healthy then I will cast at you.” Thereupon then he lifted [him] on his back while half of him [was] behind him, until he reached his house. And he brought doctors to him until he was healthy’.

while Conall's charioteer and kinsman failed to lift his master into the chariot, and leaves him to die in enemy territory. The second back-carrying episode deviates even further, as it is not a kinsman who performs the carrying but Bélchú, a member of the enemy faction. The manner in which the Conchobar and Conall are carried underlines this contrast: as Conall is carried off by Bélchú to his house, half of his body unceremoniously drags behind him on the ground. The addition of this detail deliberately inverts the depiction of this motif in *AC*, where Cenn Berraide displays care by securing the king with a string to his back and putting an arm around him. These oppositions suggest that the motif in *ACMM* may be a subversion of the back-carrying in *AC*.

The idea of a warrior risking his life to carry a wounded kinsman to safety is turned on its head here. Bélchú, although not necessarily presented as an enemy from the beginning, grows inimical towards Conall as the latter taunts him into killing him. The severity of his insults leads Bélchú to go to the extreme lengths of carrying Conall to his house and getting physicians to heal him, to ensure that he can kill him in battle and gain proper honour from his victory. This use of the motif conflicts with the positive connotations of back-carrying present in the other texts that have been considered so far, where it is an act of compassion, intended to *save* the carried person from death.

While the instances of back-carrying in *ACMM* can be taken as subverting the motif in *AC*, the concept of loyalty is subverted in both tales. While Conchobar is carried to safety by his fellow kinsman Cenn Berraide, the servant is likely guided by the prospect of increasing his status, which undermines the loyalty associated with this motif. It has been suggested that this symbolises the subjugation of pre-Christian values to the new Christian ideal—a warrior for Christ. In *ACMM*, the failed back-carrying attempt by Conall's charioteer can perhaps be understood as a play on the traditional depiction of the special relationship between the warrior and his charioteer in medieval Irish literature. As discussed in section 2.2.1, the charioteer is the warrior's closest companion, protecting and guiding the hero. So, while we would expect Conall's charioteer to carry Conall to safety, he fails, whereas Bélchú, his enemy, succeeds. The charioteer's failure might be taken as subverting the traditional literary role of the charioteer as the warrior's most loyal companion, and be taken as another sign that this relationship is failing to function as it should. Finally, Bélchú's successful effort to carry Conall on his back is devoid of sympathy or loyalty, and subverts the concept of sacrifice inherent to this motif entirely.

The transposition of the Cenn Berraide episode in *AC* ought to be revisited here. Through the relocation of this episode in the Edinburgh version of *AC*, the order of events in *AC* and *ACMM* are mirrored, allowing them to be read in conjunction. However, while the episodes preceding the back-carrying scenes appear similar at first glance, this analysis has shown that they are in fact imbued with highly dissimilar values: Conchobar's battle, which leads to the back-carrying, is enacted for Christ, while Conall's battle with Cet is fought for honour and glory. This creates a strong antithesis between Conchobar and Conall. Moreover, the events that follow the back-carrying present a clear contrast: while Conchobar dies and ascends to heaven, the wounded Conall longs for death, but his wish is unfulfilled as Bélchú drags the warrior home to satisfy his honour. Based on this, it might be tentatively suggested that the compiler(s) of the Edinburgh versions transposed the Cenn Berraide episode in *AC* to create a deliberate inversion between *AC* and *ACMM* within the *aideda* anthology.

Based on this analysis, I suggest that the audience is meant to perceive the parallel act of carrying in *ACMM* as a subversion of this motif as depicted in *AC*. In this context, the order of tales in the *aideda* anthology can be seen to be highly significant. As has been argued, the compiler placed *AC* first in the sequence to connect the anthology into a Christian framework. This emphasises the contrast between the converted Conchobar and the egocentric heroic values of the heroes in the subsequent tales. Consequently, the interpretation of the parallel back-carrying motif in *ACMM* acquires particular significance when read in conjunction with *AC*, revealing a conscious opposition between the newly Christian king Conchobar, who is carried off to ascend to heaven, and the vainglorious warrior Conall, who is dragged to his enemies' abode to satisfy his bearer's honour. While the concept of back-carrying can be conceived as Conchobar's final step towards conversion, heralding the beginning of Christianity, the representation of the same act in *ACMM* forms yet another step in Conall's life as a warrior in endless pursuit of glory, and is turned into an act of disgrace. This antithesis between Conchobar and Conall not only criticises the values of warrior society, but also emphasises that the belligerent way of life of the Ulster Cycle warriors is ultimately doomed.

EPILOGUE

This study of *Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig* and *Aided Cheit maic Mágach* contributes to our understanding of medieval Irish literature on a linguistic, textual and literary level. The production of critical editions and translations has led to new suggestions for the interpretation of textual difficulties and has provided a basis for further textual and literary analysis. The study of the language of the two narratives has demonstrated that they can both be dated to the late Middle Irish period. This linguistic analysis not only enhances our knowledge of the Irish language in the medieval period, but also advances our understanding of the corpus of texts that were in circulation during that time. Moreover, the production of the critical edition of *AACC* has made the text from H.2.17 fully available for the first time, providing readings for the illegible sections in Ed. Textual borrowings unique to H.2.17 demonstrate how texts in medieval Ireland were part of a larger intertextual network, and show an active engagement with the narrative on the part of the scribe.

Engagement with these tales also takes the form of the compilation of the *aideda* anthology in Ed., which can be traced back to the twelfth, and possibly tenth century. This consciously arranged collection of tales constitutes a thematically grouped collection of deeply interconnected narratives, which I suggest can be regarded as a thematic cycle. The anthology can also be interpreted as an example of the interest in generic categorisation of the medieval Irish *literati*, and perhaps represents an example of a type of generic collection of tales of which more could have once circulated in medieval Ireland. This idea of generic anthologies invites further study, as it could reveal more about the relationships between manuscripts and texts, and potentially shed more light on the compilatory approaches of the medieval Irish *literati*.

As for the transmission of the two individual *aideda*, the examination of references in other sources pertaining to the deaths of Ailill, Conall and Cet dates these narrative traditions back to at least the tenth century. While Conall's death is depicted relatively uniformly across all sources, the study of the references to the deaths of Cet and Bélchú has brought to light intriguing variations. Either the narrative might have been known by another title, or an altogether different account of their deaths may have existed, with a changed setting and a different role accorded to Bélchú. A recurring feature in both narrative traditions is the possible association with the region of Bréifne. All references to Conall's death show close connections to East Bréifne, where one of the manuscripts containing the text of *AACC*—H.2.17—was composed, while the Bréifne place-

names Belcoo and Ballyconnell present further links to this area. The association of the deaths of Conall and Bélchú with Bréifne encourages further investigation of the other *aideda* in the anthology in Ed., in order to establish whether any further connections between the *aideda* anthology and Bréifne exist which support Bréifne as its place of composition or compilation.

The literary commentary has demonstrated that reading the *aideda* anthology as a group of anti-heroic tales constitutes a fitting interpretative framework. The placement of *Aided Chonchobair* within this collection in particular impacts upon the interpretation of the group, situating the events and characters of these tales, which are filled with pre-Christian ideals, at the dawn of the Christian era. In this context, Irish heroic society is depicted as being dysfunctional and self-destructive as a result of the breakdown of the relationships upon which this society was founded. The analysis of these relationships has shown that the bonds between charioteer and hero, host and guest, women and men are subverted and undermined, while values such as hospitality and loyalty are exploited. The use of incitement plays a key part in both tales, generating chaos and death as opposed to victory and heroism. The motif of back-carrying, a vehicle used to express values such as compassion and sacrifice, is depicted in parallel ways in *AC* and *ACMM*, yet creates a deliberate antithesis between the newly Christian king Conchobar and the vainglorious warrior Conall, emphasising the importance of reading the tales of the *aideda* anthology as an interrelated group.

This study of the *aideda* anthology and two of its death-tales, *AACC* and *ACMM*, has advanced our understanding of this group as a thematic, generic and cyclic collection, and attests to the extensive and ongoing engagement of medieval Irish *literati* with their materials throughout the centuries. The multidisciplinary approach employed in this thesis, combining historical, textual, linguistic and literary analysis, has shed new light on all aspects of *AACC* and *ACMM*, and lays the theoretical groundwork for a fuller exploration of the other tales in the *aideda* anthology and other thematic textual groupings in medieval Irish literature more widely.

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APPENDIX 1

Transcription Aided Cheit maic Mágach from Ed., NLS, Adv. MS 72.1.40

(p. 7, l. 10) Cid d;ata ad– ceit m–c mag⁸⁵⁰ ni–. luidh cet fecht ann ac^rich nul– do cuingh_i gon_a
 du_ine inn_i ba min_ic lais .i. ul– do goin uair ni dech– asa annoen riam g_uⁱn ult–
 Luⁱd s_ium s_iar iarum 7 trⁱ noi cinn do ult– lais 7 docu^r7h iarum conall cernach f– a l–g co br^efn_i
 connacht laad snachta an gemr– do sunr– co fuair conall a fast_ig he ac fuine a
 acot⁸⁵¹ 7 a ara bat– uero na eochu fon carp– am^u_ich is e cet so ar conall 7 n_i fiu
 duin comra^c fr^s ar a doilgh_i 7 ar a cr^odacht is amnus in fer fil ar conall · fe ama_i ol in tara
 n_i maith tig t– do beol– in pest fil f– dig– ul– gabail tige fair 7 n_i me_ab–
 tra com^u_itim d^u_it fr^s oir ata dia beogacht a commu_ic so a ath–^a conall n_i tib^u_r manum
 do laith gaili f– nere– 7 dob– tra comar_a f–sna eochu gad– conall dual am_u_ing na
 neoch 7 dob– an dlochtan acinn in carp– 7 teit as sair co hult– fe aceit ar
 antara n_i fe ar cet is mait in tanoc– tu^c for na heocha. Conall so ar se
 7 biaid caradr– de 7 bid maith he fe amae orin tara in f– rolá ár connacht
 do tab–t mela f–t 7 n_i toirceba tainm cobr⁸⁵² canabás no cana ruac– a
 fesc^u_r · Maith^{ám} ar cet. lotar ina diaid co hat ceit am_in a conall ar cet. Cid s_in aceit
 ar conall nⁱ ra^ca as an_iu aclóain or cet doig lem or conall acintóg cuici 7 notuairgenn
 (p. 8) cach d_ib acheili co clos fon díthr– uli angn_ite^c 7 ambolcfa^dach 7 gair na sc^u_r 7
 [sore–?] nanar– ac laigh_h na lath ngaili robat– is_in ath cotorc– cecht diarde
 anunn 7 anall · Marb im– cet fo cet oir 7 dororc– conall anel 7 dusc– conall asa nel
 b– lat nahechu co hult– orse ar naromaigse^r connacht acet_us farofeimid
 in gilla tra atocb–som is_in carp– 7 ceileb– in gilla do iarum 7 luid diatig. Olc so
 tr^a or conall aonf– do connachtaib 7 ro^ogellusa am ar se nach mu_irf–? Aonf– do connachtaib 7
 ro bo f–r lem ina rige in dom– nech do connachtaib dom atgu_in conaba f– aon
 fe^r do connachtaib no beit momarb–. Belchu br^efn_i tra is e tan– ar tús cetso or
 se conall do– sunna arse 7 bit maith aneriu festa or se o dotorc– in da árchoin
 so doloits_it– aner_iu et^urra la tab–t arlaindi arsl–_i f– conall fair tirlaind

⁸⁵⁰ Dot over suspension stroke.

⁸⁵¹ Dot over suspension stroke.

⁸⁵² Dot over suspension stroke.

*dim aath– or se atbeo ar belchu n_i buige fr^t on ar conall ambeosa fir a conall ar
 belcu acu_inc_i do gona atai f–msa 7 n_i dingensa oir is marb cena tu
 Ni lemta cid mo br^t dogoin ar conall acaill– tr^aag n_it muirbebsom tr^a acht ata
 Ni cena ar se not b– lem dom tig 7 not icfait– acum 7 magat slan im– caitfe^t
 fr^t · Iars_in tr^a tocb– f– amuin 7 al7h ina diaid co rainic ate^c 7 dob– leaga cucui
 g^ur bo sl– · Bid fir ar belcu fr^a m–caib rag– in fe^tsa uaim 7 in dingna ar
 les · Marb– in f– res_iu dech– uain · Tig– iarum cucui uili amar– dagaid cofacar
 sa in airec– foscl–i ar b– cinn 7 marb– ina leb– · Rofit– fe^t in imn_id 7 an u_ile moir
 .i. conall in m_iduc ar conall frⁱ belcoin teit sair 7 fac– in te^c fusl–_i
 Mait di– abelchu ar conall tarr am leb–sa ni to or belchu do c7n ditsa ar conall mina t_is_i
 is_in leb– bid eicin ar belchu · dunaig di– belcu in te^c · Iar cotl– do belchoin fusl–_i conall an
 te^c doth–ait m–c belchoin dochum na imd–_i ambai anath– 7 do b–ait a trⁱ sl–_i tr^t
 g^ur marbsat 7 eirgid conall iars_in 7 imr– acl–em f–ra comboi spr^eatac anincinn_i
 im na fr^aigtaib 7 b–id aceit^r cinmu lais sair coriacht ate^c re s_iu roba matin
 comid hi ad– ce_it 7 belchon brefni cona m–caib ins_in*

APPENDIX 2

Transcription *Aided Ailella 7 Chonaill Chernaig* from Ed., NLS, Adv. MS 72.1.40

(p. 3, l. 8) Bai f- amnus do ult- conn- c-nach m-c aimairgin loech is dech robai
 aner- ba mor ac^odatu .i. f- na dech- asa naindin riam erat
 gon cenn connactaig lais.⁸⁵³ ro^{bai} gai ina laim. Dorala frⁱ Connacht comór oir do marbsa^ssom abrait^r
 7 ni raibi do connachtaib im- f- haro marbsom ama^c no ab^rath- no aath- 7
 romarbsom trⁱ m-c oill- 7 med- 7 ise di- romarb belcu brefne 7 atrⁱ
 m-c 7 ise romarb secht m-cu mág- do connachtaib .i. anl- m-c mag- 7 docha
 m-c mag- 7 mag c^urp m- m. 7 find m-c m. 7 scanul- m- m. 7 cet 7 aill- m-
 .m. 7 ise romarb aill- m-c mata m^ursci do connachtaib oir ba hí amat-
 som mata m^uresc 7 m-c son im- rosaruaid do laignib 7 docosnum
 rige laigni do cuaid^sm sⁱar 7 rogabsom^{ri}ge Connacht fodeigⁱ thiar 7 sl-ed
 in m-c atir amat- tu^cad fars^sm tiar. Dororc- im- lupra 7 tr^uaigi fo
 deoigh for con- cn- iar marb- acumalt- .i. conc- 7 concul- contorc- cumha 7 tr^oi^{ge}
 7 claime more fairsⁱum comarabi n-t nacosuib do imtecht 7 ro imraidh
 sⁱm aici ciategl- · arachad dia gaire 7 diabetug-. aill- 7 m7-
 am arsé isⁱat sⁱn lanemain dia ticfa molesug- sa acht is mor
 mo faltamus frⁱu cena 7 cid mor ch-a bid eigin dam dol ann arse
 Luⁱd iarum aenor co rainic raith cr-an 7 luid isⁱn raith ait ambai
 aill- 7 m7- 7 f-aid aill- failti frⁱs is moch- dui tar m7- aconn- acht^{cena}
 (p. 4) [...] ar con- [m]aith do denum for[m] is [...]sa di- donti donⁱ f-m Rotfia am failti ar m7-
 denth- tech foleit
 [...] comor f-m m^ur na rata 7 donith- te^c dó 7 b-or muc 7 ad 7 fuⁱg- m7- 7 aill- 7
 da [b]a[i]rdin d.ii- 7 molt 7 in cori anbr-thⁱ 7 caitsⁱum sⁱn uⁱli anainfecht. Donísⁱum tochⁱ-
 [...] m^ur naratha 7 donidsⁱum adai-t ga^c n oidci aconnachtaib 7 ticedⁱ riamatin dia
 tig. bl- lan doip aca biath- fon altsⁱn 7 in com bfeith cétnai do denum dosom frissⁱn
 ISed no airfi^rh connachtai ga^c lai eisⁱn aca indisⁱ dip am- no marbadsom ama^c 7 ambr-ri 7 a
 nait^r. Dob-t^s connacht angai do dianimsn- 7 diasn-e 7 ro imsn- resⁱu ro eirgedh

⁸⁵³ Written in left margin.

ga^c bo. Mor tr^a cumachta 7 armitin 7 ord– inti m7– 7 bamor ahacob^ur im ga^c ní .i. xxx.
 fe^r ca– lai do cl– clodh di no tagall f–gus aonfecht ba comaosa dis_i immorro aceili .i. aill–
 f– cin ainim .i. cin ed cin neoid. Ba maith ac^rt 7 abrig 7 abr–h anfir_{s;n}
 .i. in f– nobith acimirt frⁱ haill– no tic7 gilla .m–. dia gairm do comr– frⁱa 7 is– aderad
 aill– an bh– cotair incl–th_i. Docomrai^c7som frⁱa mnaib aili dia cinds_i 7 ba hét lés_ium an
 n_{s;n} gu^f rogabs_i conall cernach ina tegus for aill– na derad an_{s;n} t– acet. Lu_id⁸⁵⁴ Laa noen
 ann matin moch acetem– bai aill– comriachtain frⁱ mnai ataib in lis. Bai di–
 conall ac imsn– gai forsan raith. Doluid do– .m–. ama^c oir dofit– s_i .c.lud robu_i
 c^raeb cu_{ll} frⁱ taob nalanamn– for glúasacht co facc– .m–. an_i is_in. Maith a conall ar .m–.
 conall cernach taimms_i cusaniu conall cl– t^ruag taimm festa antan robsom cernaç som nilemta
 tech tar dorath–acht aniu du_t in sairug– ut . roimr– iarum conall bai digail fergus
 ann am arse 7 nusc–toigenn in gai cuca cotarla anoill– on taob co araill no com
 ad afastig notgu_n trⁱanatu_{ghi} suas luid cá– cuci 7 dob–ait leo anunn
 he. Cia doroine ar cach conall doroine ar aill– amai ni fir om ar conall is fir or medb
 Mas fir dono ar se ata dig– fergus ann. Old du_t and–nus aconall ar aill– olc do demum
 frⁱmsa⁸⁵⁵ . Notber em as dominch– re s_iu bamarbsom ar notmu_rrbfet connachta
 iarmh–u_{bsom} lor lem or conall co dech– am carp– andorus in lus ni bamarbsom frⁱs_n or ail–
 Lu_id ina carp– marb ail– tall fo c.oir Iars_n t^ra rodibra^cs_t connachta commor eis_m
 marb–som soch–i mor dibsom. bageis dosom dol a nath gan s_thl–⁸⁵⁶ ina díaiğ
 Bat– m_{anaigi} ac nide m_{anaig} is_n abaind leth fuas de 7 notic⁷h abua^red
 s_n cu_ici conid ed s_n do fust re cac cotorc– leo iars_n ar cur air Connacht. Na
 [...d?] martine do fe^raib mu_{gi} is_{at} rob– a cenn de [...] do ern– doip(?) 7 [...]
 ail– robat– 7 as_n dig– comraig ru^csa^t acenn de 7 in tan robat– aca ara– is and
 tan– .m–. is_n iarmo^racht .m–. a cenn ban b–rta 7rl–. ru^csa^t sein leo cenn conall an dig– com–
 r[uc]sat ul– leo foth– 7 ata tiar fós in cenn. Toill– .c. rig ghamna ann no cetr–
 acimirt fich–i no lanam– acosair ata atarng^re do ult– a breth bud th– doris
 7 do icf– an–t .c. na intib aris acht coneabat as as 7 is de s_n ata dith ul– le
 dit ul– adaid aill– 7 conaill cernach comuici s_n

⁸⁵⁴ Dots under word, i.e. erasure.

⁸⁵⁵ Dot over a.

⁸⁵⁶ Fada over suspension stroke.

APPENDIX 3

Transcription Aided Ailella 7 Chonail Chernaig from Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1319

(p. 474, col. 1, l. 9) Bai fe^r amnus do ultaibh .i. conall ce^rnach

[ai]margin. laech is dech robu; aner-

[..] remes ba mor ac^odaiti .i. fe^r na d

e(?)ach- as ainad catha riam ⁱaret rob

ui gai ina laim doralá comor f- *connacht*

aib *ar romarbsadsein* atrⁱ br^a;t 7 nirbo co

im dig do connachtaib fe^r na marbsom ma^c no

b[r?]tiar *no ath^{ar} ise romarb trⁱ m^ca ai*

ll-a 7 medba 7 ise romarb bélcoin

br^eifne 7 atrⁱ ma^c 7 ise romarb .s.

m-cu magach .i. anlúan ma^c magac

7 dota ma^c .m. 7 mog corb ma^c .m. 7

fin- ma^c .m. 7 scannla ma^c .m. 7 aill- ma^c .m.

7 céat ma^c .m. ul- dixit // *finn moġc*

Couall ce^rna^c cli frⁱ cat . rotbi .s. ma^cu magac

orb dotha ros dig- . scannal cet anlúan

aill-

(p. 474, col. 2) ISe din romarb aill- cr^uac- m-c mada

mu^usce do *connachtaib ar robi am-r mada*

trⁱ m-c sroib cind m-c rosa ruaidh do

laignib dian deb^{ra}d //

Trⁱ m-c rosa ruaid *inriġ . roimset intir*

toláib frⁱ. aill- c^uach- *finn ahalmain . co*

irbⁱ sund atem-r b^eag. //

ET do *cosnum rige laig^{ne} docoidsim siar*

7 *sloimmedh ma^c atir amaha^r do^{ra}diad farsium*

7 *dogabsom rige connacht tiar cotr^en dodor*

cōhoar lubr^a 7 tr^oiġi fadeóigh ar conall
iarneg adacomaltasom .i. conarbu^r 7 cucul-
gotorch- cuma 7 claime 7 troiġi fair
sium conaraibi n-t anacosaib do imtecht
no ina lamaib do lut Roimraid iarom cia
leaglach aragað dom cales aigti 7 a
be ath aigti 7 agaire .i. aill- 7 meadba
ém olse is; s;n lanamain gus aticeab dom
lesug- IS olc molatha^r olse 7 gid olc
is ecen du;n dul ars;bal //

Lu;d iarum aenar siar g- ranic ra; c^raçan
fe^raid aill- failti frⁱs is mocen ar aill-
7 medb acht cena it mor tfala inlet
atangus Mait do denum f- omolse is
amlaec mait is alma donti doni maith
f-m Rotfia failti ém ar medb

(p. 475, col. 1) Cu;ngiter teç ar le;ç diamsa frⁱ mur
na rata doniter ón 7 b-ar muc
7 að dó fu;gell aill-a :i . xii. bⁱar
gín 7 molt 7 in co;ri enbr^uiti 7 do cai
tedsom s;n u;li Dognisium toch aill-
fodin na catr^ac .i. rata cr^uach- cond
enad ⁱargti cech naidçi ar connachtaib
7 coticed ria madain dia tig
fe;n s;n Blian lan doib ag a biath-
fon alt s;n 7 in coim e;d .c. na cach
noidçi do denum dosom ISead roⁱar
fided connachta fes;n gan⁸⁵⁷ dia conall ga
innis;n am- romarb am-cu 7 ambr^aittrⁱ 7 an

⁸⁵⁷ Dot over *n*-stroke

aithu^r Dobe^rdis flaiti *connacht* angó
 dó diani–dsma 7 diasnaídi no
 indsmatsom re s_iu atre,sed cath
 Ba mor tr^{at} a acumachta 7 aordan 7
ⁱarmidiu na hí medba Bamor ac
 or umcan⁸⁵⁸ red .i. trⁱ ca fe^r ca–⁸⁵⁹ naidci
 do claeclod di no adall fe^rgusa aen
 fecht Bacomais ace_ili inti aill– .i.
 fe^r cin loct cin ainim cin neoid cin ed
 cin uaman Bamait ac^{at} 7 abr^{at} 7 abr^g
 in fe^r nobid agim_{i,t} fid cille⁸⁶⁰ frⁱ hai
 ll– doticed gilla medbe diagⁱarm

(p. 475, col. 2) do coim rias–ain ria is– ade^redh aill–
 coroisc in clu_ichi seó *conricedsom*
 din frⁱa mnai dia cimnsi Bahed lesi
 on gorragab si conall ce^rnach arai
 gacht(?) frⁱ all– na de^rad in_{s,n}
 Laa nand di– madan moç iceite
 main boi aill– icedlud 7 tic ic dul
 connai asc^ei⁸⁶¹ caille itaib nar
 ata aleat aneas bu_i conall acind
 sma gai f–s_{i,n} rait bu_i cr^aeb cu_ill
 frⁱ taeб nalanamna f–gluasacht
 conaca medb inn_{s,n} Mait tr^a
 a conaill armedb conall cernach tainm
 gusaníu conall grana clam tr^{at}
 tu bud esta arintan robsat cernach

⁸⁵⁸ Dot over *n*-stroke.

⁸⁵⁹ Dot over *n*-stroke.

⁸⁶⁰ Dots under and above second *c*.

⁸⁶¹ Superscript *e* over *i*.

sa nilamar *techt tar dorataigacht*
 aniu rodamairis iss follus du,t
 insarug– ut Roimraid *conall* boi di
 gail fe^rgusa ann ém olse rochtain
 in gáí cu,gi cotarrla anaill– ontaeb
 coraili coriacht asguma doria
chtada^r fir co haill– 7 nob–aid dochum
 in tige Cia dorinde so orcach
conall dorindeor aill– alla amai
 or *conall* ní fir ón is fir ón *ar* medb
 masa fir olsé at– digail f–gasa and

(p. 476, col. 1) Olc du,t a *conail* oraill– ande^rnais
 narbead tarmartsa do denum f–tsa
 notbe^ras iarum dom ínchaibs, rias,u
 bamarbsa *ar* nod mu,rfead *connachta*
 iarmegaibs, lor limsa *ar conall acht conde*
 çar amcarbad andorus an lis ní ba
 marbsa cós,n *ar aill– lu,d conall inac*
 arbad marb aill– tall iars,n rolena
 id⁸⁶² *connachta conall marbaid*som soccr^a,de
 mor dibsom Ba ge,s dosom *techt oat*
 gu^rods,tlod ina diaid badu^r ima(n)na
 igi agnígi mianaiğ sanabainn
 uasa conticed ambuadred cu,
 gi sanabaind *conid* ed⁸⁶³ ronasta
 leo comor cotorcha^r acu iars,n
 iarcu^r anⁱar Notrⁱ ruad coin mair
 tine atir fe^r mu,gi is,at tall

⁸⁶² Dot underneath d.

⁸⁶³ Hook under e.

a cenn de .i. dernaib doib se;_n
7 ategl– aill– . robadu^r 7 do digail
conrai ru^sat in cend leo 7 intan rob
as icaⁱarleč_h isann doriacht medb
is;_n iarmoracht isan adub–t medb
A ceann ban b–ta iarngle · na trⁱ ru
a connoin martaine · is drea[c?] curad
rusnít s;_n cenn conaill m–c aimirgin

(p. 476, col. 2) dom dioigh is olc so⁸⁶⁴
Rucsat se;_n siar ace_ann do digail
conri ru^sat ulaid bud tuaid Tall
ad cetr^r agimirt fidcilli and no
lanamain a cosair 7 at– atarngaire du
ll–t abrei_t sair aridis_i 7 dosficfa
an–t .c.na. acht conesbet isde at–
ulaid be_iti ul– bat– iat aided
aill– 7 cona_ill Ce^rnach . FINIT

⁸⁶⁴ Line written in top margin of page.