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OLD-IRISH VERSE FRAGMENTS
ATTRIBUTED TO FER MUMAN MAC ECHTAIN

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

In this paper I have assembled ten verse fragments attributed to a poet of this early period, Fer Muman mac Echtain, who appears to have been highly regarded by the medieval scholars who
assembled these sources\textsuperscript{1}. Included also are two additional items (Nos. xi and xii) which, while not attributed to Fer Muman himself, are contained in anecdotes about him.

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

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

\textsuperscript{1} For a discussion of his patronymic, see No. 1. Other poets whose work survives in similar compilations include Fland mac Lonán (d. 896), Mac Da Chéir (mid ninth century?), Rechtgal Úa Síadhal (ca. 750-815), Oengus mac Òhleini (fl. 800). For the remnants of Rechtgal Úa Síadhal’s verse, see D. Ó hAodha, Rechtgal Úa Síadhal: a Poem of the Old Irish Period, in A.P. Smyth (ed.), Seanchas, Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology, History and Literature in Honour of Francis J. Byrne, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2000, p. 193.

\textsuperscript{2} K. Meyer, Bruchstücke der Alten Lyrik Irlands, Berlin, 1919, p. 63.

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

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

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

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

5. For a fine collection of incidental verse and anecdotes relating to folk poets of the modern period, see S. Ó Croins - D. Ó Croins (ed), Seanachas Phadraig I Chruaile, Baile Átha Clath, Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 1982.

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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9. The term *dúil* is used to refer to an authorized list or compilation of glossarial or genealogical material; see *Dil* s.v. ‘dúil; also P. Russell, *Dúil Dromma Cetta and Cormac’s Glossary*, *Études celtiques*, xxii, 1996, pp. 147-174.


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

**DDC**. TCD ms 1288 (formerly n.1.13), pp. 361-62 (a fragment). Glossary articles in this copy are cited below by their location in the manuscript.

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

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

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

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


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

(E) **Fél LB (anfhóit)**. A gloss (with verse) on the word *anfhóit* ‘incaution’ in a copy of *Féileire Óengusso* (‘the Martyrology of Óengus’) in the Leabhar Breac (see Corm LB under above), p. 92 (30
Two versions of the gloss occur in the manuscript, one after another\(^\text{12}\); these are:

\textbf{Fél LB (\textit{anfhót})}. Page 92, lines \textit{m-n} (with \textit{z} being the last line of the page).

\textbf{Fél LB (\textit{anfhót})\(^{\text{e}}\)}. Page 92, lines \textit{n-o}.

\(\text{(F) Tre}\). The \textit{Trefhocul} tract, a Middle-Irish tract on metrical faults.

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

\textbf{Tre M.} RIA \textit{MS} D.ii.1 (Book of Uí Maine), fo. 143r ff.; ed. Calder, ibidem. Items below are cited by their line numbers in Calder’s edition.


\(\text{12. W. Stokes published these two versions of the gloss in } \textit{On the Calendar of Oengus, «Transactions of the R.I.A. Manuscript Series}, 1 [Part 1], 1880, p. cxiv.}\)

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

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

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

No. 1: *Bid cáích i faitchius i fóit*

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

14. This copy was brought to my notice by in a reference to the ms in John O’DONONAN’s edition of *Cormac’s Glossary*, Calcutta, 1868, p. 11; he had this information in turn from Dr. Charles O’Conor’s *Bibliotheca MS. Stowensi*, Vol. 1, 1818, p. 288, in the latter’s description of Stowe ‘MS 37’, a fourteenth-century vellum fragment. Prof. Liam Breathnach has since identified ‘ms 37’ with the present-day RIA ms D v 2. I wish to thank Prof. Breathnach for providing me with this information along with a transcription of the fragment: « … amal adubairt in fili i. Fer Muman
stance in which Fer Muman is identified by a patronymic. In the footnotes I have supplied variant readings from the two other copies (Fél LB², Corm LB, p. 21) only in such cases as they are of any interest or significance. (In one instance, for example, the reading *is cian imthigit innóic* in Corm LB appears to have been generated by oral transmission). Otherwise I have normalized the spellings. In the case of **TEXT 2**, the text is given as in Stoke’s transcription. The three copies of **TEXT 3** are all found in a commentary on the phrase *cuil deim de ét* (line 105 in Stoke’s edition) of *Amra Choluim Chille*. The sources present no significant variants and I have provided a normalized version.

**TEXT (VERSION A)**

Bidh cach i faithchus i foit
is brecth cia imtiagat óig
conidh de atá foit faithch
agus anfhóit anfhaitech

**TRANSLATION**

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

mac Echtain: Bidh cach ca aitchus i foit / is brecht cia imtiagait óig / conidh de ata fot faitech / 7 anfhóit anfhaitech. For the canonical text see *CIH* 1066.22.

**SOURCES:** D, fo.64vb; Fél LB (*anfhóit*), p. 92 (n-o); Corm LB, p. 21. **VARIANTS:** ca faithchus i foit D, afaithchus afoit Fél LB, ifaitces a foit Corm LB; becht Fél LB, is cian imthigit innóc Corm LB.


16. SOURCES: D, fo.64vb; Fél LB (*anfhóit*), p. 92 (n-o); Corm LB, p. 21. **VARIANTS:** ca faithchus i foit D, afaithchus afoit Fél LB, ifaitces a foit Corm LB; becht Fél LB, is cian imthigit innóc Corm LB.
Everyone is watching at a lookout (fót) in front of the ford of the warriors; that is why there is fót (‘watchfulness’) meaning ‘vigilant’ and anfhót (‘un-watchfulness’) meaning ‘unvigilant’.

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

Discussion

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

17. SOURCE: Féil LB (anfhót)1, p. 92 (l-n).
19. In Middle Irish fót is sometimes used for a place where something is examined: ar fhód fígha fátha (ML 98.27, cited in DIL s.v. 1.fót); ar fhód scrután gáise (Acallamh na Seanórach 6191, cited ibidem).
(Annals of the Four Masters, AD 590, cited in DIL, s.v. ‘fóit’).\textsuperscript{20} In version A, however, the manuscript form ‘fóit’ could be taken as a genitive (rather than a late dative) in which case the preceding word would be a 3 sg. or pl. possessive. Under this interpretation we might have something like bid cách i bhfaitchius a ‘fóit’ ‘everyone is anxious about his own place’.

**No. 11: Cochall coss ngall\textsuperscript{21}**

**TEXT**

(from Corm Y 683)

Gall i.e. corthe cloiche, ut est: nōs coma[i]thai gomathar selba co co-bhrannaib gall. Gall eatharda fordingair i. gall chruithe eðimus, ut prediximus. Is aire asberar gall de suidiu, fobthi is Gall ceta-roisathset nō rosuidigset i nērē. Gall i Frainc. Gall dono ainn do sainc[i]thandair nō do saerc[i]thandaib Franc i. tribus [tres MS] Gallie, 7 is candoir corpoirs ro-haimnmiged dōib. Gall enim graece [greco MS], lac latine dicitur, inde Galliae i. indastai. Sic dono gall is ainn do ela. Inde Fer Muman dixit:

**Cochall coss ngall, gamin brain.**

Gall dono ainn do chaiiuch dindo is gallus. 7 is a galia capitis rohainnmiged i. cathbarr a c[i]thind.

**TRANSLATION**

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{20} In later language, the declension of ‘fóit’ varies.

\textsuperscript{21} SOURCES: Corm Y 683, Corm LB. (s.v. gall), Corm M. (no. 70, s.v. gall); ed. K. Meyer, Bruchstücke, p. 68 (no. 158). VARIANTS: Cocholl chos ngall gemen brain LB, Cochuill c[i]thoss ngall gamin bran M.
Meyer translates the line as follows: «Die Fussbekleidung der Schwäne, die Winterröcke der Raben» («The foot-covering of the swans, the winter-coats of the ravens»). Influenced, perhaps, by the etymology of *gamen* in Corm Y 242, he considers this line to be from a «Winterlied» . There is a fundamental problem, however, in regards to *cochull choss*: the lack of plumage on the legs and feet of swans. Neither, for that matter, is *gamen* (see *DIL* s.v. *gemen*) ‘skin, hide’ likely to denote, in any normal circumstances, a cloak of feathers. This difficulty may, in fact, be the very point of the line: the rhetorical presentation of two nonexistents.

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

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

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

23. *DIL* s.v. *cochall*). In another version of the same commentary (*CIH* 578.34–6) *cochaill* is replaced by *imde b a netaigh 7 urcomla foraib* «the clipping of their wings and [the placing of] short spancels on them». We may note also the existence of a noun *gémen*, possibly *geimen* (v. *DIL* s.v. *gebend* ‘a fetter, a bond’). Could this be the word intended in the second half of our line?
alliterating pairs (one of which spans the caesura) and assonance in *cochull : choss* and in the last three words *ngall gamin bran*.

No. III. **As-béra fiach goblom grág**

**TEXT**

Nát .i. tón, ut dixit Fer Muman:

As-béra fiach goblom grác
ic creim nát námät anocht

**TRANSLATION**

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

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

**Discussion**

The headword of this glossary article, *nát*, appears to be borrowed from Lat. *nates* 'buttocks'. The lack of hiatus (i.e. *flach* for OIr. *fiách*) in the first line might suggest that this is a composition of the Middle-Irish period. On the other hand, both the hiatus and the 71 syllable count could be restored by the emendation of *as-béra* to pres. *as-beir* (as in the manuscript of DDC\(^2\), where *asb* is followed by the -er siglum).

A striking feature of these two grim lines is the masterful use of complex alliteration and assonance: As-béra fiach goblom *grÁc / ic creim nÁmät anocht*.

No. IV. **Ulcha dobrach i ndomhnach** (from *Dúan in Meirlig*)

24. **SOURCES**: O’Muls. 836; DDC\(^1\) (CHI 618.26-7); DDC\(^2\). (CHI 1076a.33-5).


26. **SOURCES**: DDC\(^1\) (CHI 612.29-31); DDC\(^2\) (CHI 1073a.7-12); Corm Y 498. **VARIANTS** (both in DDC\(^2\)): feirnech (*line 2*), soimlech (*line 3*).
Dobrach ì. fliuchaide, ut est Fer Muman a ndúain an merligh:

Ulcha dobrach i ndomhnach,
i láin, i mairt mac mairnech,
Fo bratach senrech sroiglech
srúamach maignech, mìl meirlech

TRANSLATION

Dobrach ì. ‘moist’, as Fer Muman (says) in the ‘Poem of the Brigand’:

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

Discussion

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

Soimlech (in place of sroiglech) in the DDC copies appears to mean ‘nicely bordered’ (from so- + imlech). I take mairnech to be a form of mairn ‘betrayal’. Both DDC copies have feirnech, for which I can offer no interpretation. Maignech is frequently used as an epithet of horses and may derive from maigne ‘big, great’ (DIL s.v. maignech).
No. v: Rucht fothuind fithend fói 27

TEXT
(from Corm Y 662, s.v. Fothond)

Fothond i.e. muclaithe ñarsind bís fo thuind amail in cerndubhán, ut dixit Fer Muman:

Rucht fothuind fithend fói,
andord ela, inmhuin ñí [aui MS],
osnad echtge, ñlaind ñuad,
fin muig mñaad, mend medras cōi.

TRANSLATION28
Fothond, i.e. pig-rooting (?), from that which is under the surface of the ground like the beetle, as Fer Muman said:

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

Textual notes and discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

might be adduced for the phrase *focal fothuind* – referring to the lamentation of Colum Cille’s followers after his death – in *Amra Choluim Chille*\(^\text{32}\). Although it is glossed by the relative form of *fo-theind* in the ensuing commentary (*i.e.* *is focal fòl[h]ēin[\*]d* ‘it is a word that nibbles’), the glossator does not take *fothuind* in the text to be a poor spelling for that form\(^\text{33}\). (If the explanation were so simple, why would he have bothered with the gloss in the first place?\(^\text{2}\)). In our text, the fact that the compiler of the glossary restores the form *fothond* as a head-word clearly shows that he considers it a noun. I am inclined to take the phrase *rucht fothuind* to mean ‘the sound of chomping’ (in reference to swine rooting for acorns and shoots). In this case *fothond* would be an o-stem noun. If, on the other hand, we read it as a feminine ā-stem referring to the *place* of this activity, the form *fothuind* would be either a preposition-less dative or – with emendation to *fothuinde* – a genitive singular\(^\text{34}\).

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


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

\(^{34}\) This emendation is not out of the question, as the line appears to be short a syllable.
male’. On the other hand, the history of the suffix in that pair is unclear, and it would be rash to discount the possibility that we are dealing with a genuine word\textsuperscript{35}. If we follow O’Clery and take \textit{fithend} to mean ‘boar’, it could be either a genitive plural (governed by the preceding phrase) or else nominative singular (syntactically independent of the preceding phrase). \textit{Fói} might be the genitive singular of ‘fó ‘chief, lord’ – an attested word in the obscure poetic lexicon (\textit{Bérla na Fíled}) – or else a poetic name (see \textit{DIL} s.v. \textit{2Fó}) for \textit{Cnámchoill} (in Tipperary?)\textsuperscript{36}.

No. \textit{VI}: \textit{Is dána drech daimíni}\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{TEXT} (normalized)\textsuperscript{38}

\textit{Duillén} i. gáí, ut dixit Fer Muman:
\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
  \item Is dána drech Daimíni
  \item iter ócú érechtai;
  \item Is a síthmruig suidíthi
  \item léicit duillén ndeiliúthi
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

\textbf{TRANSLATION}

\textit{Duillén} i. a spear, as Fer Muman said:

Bold is Daimíne’s aspect
among risen warriors;
from an established \textit{síd}-dwelling
he lets fly a barbed spear.

\begin{footnotes}
\item For the name \textit{Cnámhchoill}, see E. \textsc{Hogan}, \textit{Onomasticon Goedelicum \textsc{[1910]}}, Blackrock, Four Courts Press, 1993, p. 272a.
\item Sources: Corm \textsc{Y} 488 (s.v. \textit{duillén}), DDC\textsc{1} (\textit{CIH} 613.4-5 s.v. \textit{duilleán}), DDC\textsc{2} (\textit{CIH} 1073a.30-2 s.v. \textit{duilleáin}).
\item \textbf{MS READINGS AND VARIANTS}: Doimine Corm \textsc{Y}, Daimine DDC, Daimine DDC\textsc{5}; \textit{gc- eiríthi} Corm \textsc{Y}, \textit{ocaíb eircéita} DDC, \textit{ocaíb eircéita} DDC\textsc{5}; \textit{síthmbrug suidíthi} Corm \textsc{Y}, \textit{síthmbrug suidíthe} DDC, \textit{síthmbrug suidíthe} DDC\textsc{5}; \textit{léicit duillén deiliúthe} Corm \textsc{Y}, \textit{léicit duillén deiliúthe} DDC, \textit{leicit deiliúthi} DDC\textsc{5}.
\end{footnotes}
Discussion

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

I am unable to identify this Daimíne. Perhaps he was the son of Cairpre Dam Argait, king of Argialla, whose death in 564 is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* (hereafter, AU). According to *Senchas Dáil Fhiatach* (LL 330b43), a ‘Daimíne’ is said to have given hospitality to Eochu Rígéices, a ‘royal poet’ and grandson of the Ulster king Dallán mac Dubthaig. Eochu – who would have flourished towards the end of the sixth century – is one of the *ur*-poets of Irish bardic tradition.

The metre of the poem appears to be a loose form of *cas-bairdne* (77 77 77 77).

**No. vii: Nemain dega deirge**

**TEXT**

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

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


40. SOURCES: DDC¹ (*CHI* 618.28-9); DDC² (*CHI* 1076a.36-8); O’Mulc. 839. The copy in O’Mulc. 839 has one line only: *Nemain dega Ḯ. oíble tened, ut dicitur: nemain dega derci et reliqua.*
Nemain (‘fury’) of fire i.e. flames of fire, as Fer Muman said:

The fury of red-hot fire,

[whereby?] boilings apprehend sucking food.

Discussion

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

These lines offer another example of complex alliteration and assonance: «Nemain Dege / ar-rethat Beadhndéoil». The subject matter presents a mystery. Perhaps this is an example of the cooking and cauldron imagery which is sometimes used in reference to poetic inspiration.41

No. viii: Mo shon ó mac Máile hUmai42

TEXT

Ocus in sétrad dano, 7 Fer Muman cecinit:

Mo shon ó mac Máili hUmai.

TRANSLATION

And the sétrad then, and Fer Muman sang:

My prosperity from the son of Máel Umai.


42. SOURCE: MV ii §10, p. 34.
Meyer read the line as containing Moshono, a hypochoristic form of an otherwise unattested name Sonid. In the manuscript, however, there is clearly a space between moshon and omacmaili humaí. I take son to be the adjective son2, used here as a substantive meaning ‘prosperity, well-being, advantage’ (DIL s.v. son). There is another example of this substantive use in a legal commentary (CHI 351.13–4) where is used to provide an etymological gloss for almsan ‘alms’: aílim son ‘I deserve prosperity’. It is also rather appropriate that line is cited as an example of sétrath (= sétath ‘treasure poetry’ < sét + nath), a metre used in a genre in which a poet seeks recompense from his patron44.

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

44. Murphy, pp. 49, 54.
45. For the previous year (609), AU records the death of Conall s.o. Daiméine. Cf. Doiméine in No. VI.
No. ix: Ind hue issind ass gandhir

Text (from LL)

Can dimbrig. Fer Muman ecind.

Ind hue issind ass gandhir
fo t[h]arrib taeblerg tuignech
deoraid amal cech Laignech
maignech amal cech Mumnech.

Translation

Without want of emphasis. Fer Muman sang:

The grandson in a needy man’s shoe
at the foot of grassy hillsides.

An exile like every Leinsterman,

having his own home like every Munster man.

Discussion

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

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

Sources: Tre LL, p. 37b27 (= Auras. 5145-9); Tre M, fo. 145b 24-26 (= Auras. 5150-54). LL has the better readings. The first line in M has: Ind hue innd ras gandhair.

47. Calder, Aurasceapt, p. 530 (glossarial index s.v. dim-brig). Calder suggests that amal cech ‘like every’ is the locus of the fault.
classical bardic poetry for a person of high rank. If this interpretation is correct, this would be the earliest attestation of the figure.

**No. x: Goth gruce golfad bréice**

**TEXT (from LL)**

A chotut ut Fer Muman dixit.

Goth grūce, golfad bréice,
baeth crīche, crīch co ndorthor,
far meith siu saeb a thiūgthol,
taistel Milchon meic Onchon

**TRANSLATION**

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

**Discussion**

In the *Trefhocul* tract this verse is given as an example of cotut ‘hardening’, a metrical fault whereby an accented syllable or a final syllable is not given its proper value. The text in Tre M actually provides this information in a gloss: *A cotut i. timorcain friaicnead no i cind* ‘its hardening, i.e. reduction on an accent or at the end of the word’. From the example, I take it to mean that the form (*d*)torthor has undergone an invalid reduction of its syllabic length in order to accommodate the 4x7^2 structure of the metre. The reduced word could be *doróthar* ‘a bad onrush’ (of an illness?) or, allowing for some emendation, *tor-othar* ‘a

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

**Significant variants in Tre M:** gruige, gulfad mbreice, iar torthor, thiugthol.

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sorrowful illness' (< 'tor 'sorrow' + othar 'illness' or 'sick attendance')\textsuperscript{50}. Still another possibility is torathar 'monstrosity, outrage'.

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

In baeth cřiche we may have an instance of an adjectival followed by a genitive complement (\textit{GOI}, p. 159); thus, 'foolish, with respect to his final end'.

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

**No. xi: In éssar dam to há? (\textit{‘Imacallam na Déise’})\textsuperscript{52}**

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

\textsuperscript{50} Cf. dobás 'hard or unfortunate death' (\textit{DIL}, s.v. dobás)

\textsuperscript{51} The line in Corm Y 725 reads: Gruc i. laoch nō garb, ut dicitur; guth gruice, cruth n̄brege, et reliquâ. It may be noted also that in DDC\textsuperscript{3} (\textit{CIH} 615.4-5) the articles for gruic (\textit{a cruciatu i. pianeth, nó cúmgach}) and guth (\textit{a gudore}) occur one after the other, an indication, perhaps, that this version was the source of those headwords.

\textsuperscript{52} Sources: Corm Y 70 (s.v. ə); Corm LB, p. 5 (s.v. ə); Corm M, no. 70 (s.v. ə); DDC\textsuperscript{3} (\textit{CIH} 617.23, s.v. mó); H(mó). (\textit{CIH} 2112.36-39); ACC (comm) Eg, f. 6\textsuperscript{a} (glossing ə); ACC (comm) G, p. 27.22-7 (glossing ə). Variants: a quiabusdam plebilibus (\textit{sic}) LB, a quibas flebilbas M.

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

Text A (from Corm)

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

‘In essar dam do á?’
‘Tó, mena má mo á.
Ara taire mo á mo á’.
‘Mani má do á, tó’.

54. The article in DDC\(^5\) (CH 617.23) reads as follows: Mo. i. moch. ut dr.-Iad asar dam do a 7rI. The glossary word $m$ (with its lengthened vowel) may have been artificially derived from the adverbial prefix $mos$– ‘soon, quick’.

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

56. The text given here is based on Meyer’s edition of Corm Y, with the addition of flebilibus (corresponding to $ó$ dáinib trúaga in the Irish prose) from Corm M and Corm LB [‘flebilibus sic’] and the emendation of a coine in the MS to $ac$ $óin$. Marks of length have been supplied. The other copies of Corm and the DDC versions do not contain the Irish gloss $i$. mar do cúalaid etc. (here placed in square brackets).
Á i.e. cart or chariot, as Fer Muman heard from some [wretched] men in the north, i.e. as Fer Muman heard to the north of him from miserable men contracting a loan:

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

Discussion

In H(mó) the introduction to the verse explicitly refers to the matter of a loan: *Dia luid Fer Muman a tír Connacht, co cuala in fer fria e[h]eli ag an iasacht* («Fer Muman went into Connacht, and he heard the one man saying to the other while contracting a loan ...»). This corresponds closely with the version («Imacallam na Déise») in ACC (comm) Eg and ACC (comm) G, for which the former has the following: *Á .i. ainm ele do charr amail as follus i n-Imaccallaim na dési thall .i. fer tánaicc do iarrad iasachta [carr add. G] ar a chéile* («Á, i.e. another word for cart, as is clear in ‘the Conversation of the Two Men Yonder, i.e. a man who came to seek the loan of a cart from his fellow»). This agreement adds considerable weight to David Green’s argument, reported by Watkins, that *a coine* in Corm Y could be emended to *oc òin* ‘contracting a loan, and I have translated accordingly57.

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

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57. C. WATKINS, *Faria iii*, No. 2, p. 161, n. 1. Glosses in ACC (comm) Eg (n1) also provide a line-for-line translation of the quatrain into late Middle Irish: *An doastar dam do á (.i. in esci dam do charr) / tó maine ma (.i. dogebair mina maidhe) / ara taire mo á mo (.i. mo charr co moch) / maine má do a to (.i. mina maidhe do charr, tchfa); see K. MEYER, *Contribu-
    tions to Irish Lexicography*, Dublin,1912, s.v. 3d.
nent, strong future from *eis- *lend* (cf. *iasacht*), and a complex pattern of rhyme and «concatenating alliteration» (unstressed *mo, to* alliterating with stressed *mÓ, tÓ*). None of these, however, necessarily supports an early date. The consensus now is that *essar* is the reduplicated s-future of *oidid* ‘borrows, the same verb that gives us the verbal-noun form *díin*. Finally, the alliteration between 2 sg. possessive *tÓ* (*do* in the manuscripts) and *tÓ* does not constitute evidence that the verse was formulated when the initial dental of the possessive was unvoiced; as in Modern Irish, the initial *d* of possessive *do* was devoiced before vowels.

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

**No. xi. Cuilenn co mboin**.59

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

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

58. For a recent and comprehensive discussion of this verb, see S. Schumacher, *Die Keltischen Primärverben. Ein vergleichendes, etymologisches und morphologisches Lexicon*, Innsbruck, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 2004, pp. 728-57 (and particularly 752-3). Variants: ind iasar, *DDC* 2*H(mó)*; *INn esar M; An doastar dam do á ACC (comm) E 6*1 (i. in esci dam do chart?).

59. **SOURCES**: H(*mÓ*). (*CHI* 2113.1-5); *DDC* 3 (s.v. *mÓ*); *DDC* 4, p. 362 (s.v. *mÓ*). Variants shared by *DDC* 3 and *DDC* 4 include: (a) for *in godra* : *in goora*, glossed in turn by *in beced* (= *in mbéicced* ‘the shouting’); (b) for *isin caill* : *issin caillidh*; (c) *tÓ* for *cid rombíd : cia romboth*; (d) *do luid mo fris* before (e); (e) for *Cia fáirneac* : *Cia fáirnac* (sic); (f) omission of *condla co n-uaidh* co *trib traiar fear* (parenthesized in the text above); (g) for *con : chúana* in *DDC* 3 (*DDC* 3 being illegible here).
It was on that trip that Fer Muman heard murmuring (?) in the forest on the border of Uí Néill and Leinster. Fer Muman sent Nóinn son of Becán into the forest to see what it might be. ‘What did you find?’ said Fer Muman. ‘Holly …’

Discussion

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

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

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

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

Notes on the forms

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

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

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

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

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

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\textsuperscript{63} F. Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, p.382, n.150.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibidem, p. 382, n.150.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibidem, p. 382.
\textsuperscript{66} Plural *ada* is glossed with *buada* ‘benefits’ in two glossaries: H.3.18, p. 416 (*CIH* 951.2-3) and the Stowe Glossary, 226.
\textsuperscript{67} Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, p. 382.
tion. Perhaps its should be emended to *co n-dlaí*, with the figurative extension of *dlaí* ‘wisp, tuft’ to mean ‘screen, shelter’ (cf. *o chéit-samhain … go tteile gach dos dlaoi da cluimh* «till the bushes cast their covering of foliage» and *fo dlaí* «under cover»; cited by *DIL* s.v. *dlaí*). I take *núaidib* (read *nóadaib*) as the dat. pl. of *nóad* a ‘Berla na Filled’ word meaning ‘(the act of) covering’ and, by transferral, ‘dwelling’ (see *DIL* s.v. *núad*). Hence, I would read: *daur co n-dlaí co nóadaib* «oak with [its] shelter and coverings». Alternatively, it might be dat. pl. of *núaidhe* ‘newish, rather new, novel’ used substantively to mean ‘new, renewed, fresh things’ (referring to foliage, acorns, timber?).

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

**fersait mol muil.** I take *fersait* (*fersatt* in the DDC copies) 3 pl. s-preterite *fersait* < *feraid*. This verb is frequently used figuratively to indicate the ‘pouring forth’ of sounds, cries, lamentations, etc. (see *DIL* s.v. *feraid* u(b)); cf. *ná fer mol | frisin marb* ‘pour not praise upon the dead’, LL 275 a 9). *Mol* I take to be *mul* (also *mol*) ‘a heap’ (possibly from Lat. *moles* ‘a pile, load’; and figuratively, ‘a great amount’), followed by the genitive of *mol* (see *DIL* s.v. *2 mol* ‘used of a constantly reiterated refrain or noise’). Hence: *fersait mol muil* «they made a great clamour». Alternatively, *mol* in the first instance could be taken as *2 mol*, and *muil* as the gen. sg. of *1 mol* ‘an axle or rotating shaft, esp. the shaft of a (horizontal?) mill-wheel’ (*DIL*).

**uas boin biosair con.** Given that the preposition *uas* ‘above’ may be used figuratively to mean ‘surpassing, superior to’, I am inclined to follow a suggestion made by my colleague Dr Simon Rodway that dat. sg. *boin* (of *bó*) might here refer to the sound made by an ox or cow. There is an interesting parallel to this suggestion in *Sanas Cormaic* (Corm v 134) where the etymology for *bó* derives the word from the sound made by the
animal: *Bó nomen de sono factum suae vocis* .i. aínm arna dènam d’foghar in gotha uodèin («*Bó*, a name made from the sound of its own voice»). *Blosair* is probably a form of *blúasair*, a rare word meaning ‘loud cry, belling of a stag’, and *con* ‘of dogs’ is clear enough. The difficulty lies in relating the two words to the preceding phrase. I see two possibilities: *blosair* is either (a) a nominative plural or (b) a scribal error for dative singular *blo-sair* (governed by the preposition *úas*). In the case of (a) we might understand it to mean: «greater than [the sound of] a cow [are] the yelps of dogs»; or (b): «they made a great clamour / surpassing [the sound of] a cow [and] the yelping of dogs». Of the two choices I am inclined to prefer the latter.

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

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

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

68. The form *chúana* in DDC ap- appear to be the adjective *cúanna* ‘belonging to a dog-pack’ with expected lenition after nominative plural *blosair*. 
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