

Finn's Poem on May-Day

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FINN'S POEM ON MAY-DAY

THE only extant source of the twelfth-century *Macgnīmartha Finn* is the version contained in the fifteenth-century Bodleian (Oxford) manuscript known as Laud 610, f. 118 sq. It has been printed by Meyer, RC v (1882), 197 sq., with Corrigenda, ACL i (1900), 482, and translated by him in ÉRIU i (1904), 180 sq.

Paragraph 20 of Meyer's edition consists of the poem beginning *Cēt-temain*, which Meyer re-edited, with a translation, in his Four Old Irish Songs of Summer and Winter (1903), 4 sq. Meyer published a slightly altered translation in his Selections from Ancient Irish Poetry (1911), 54 sq. Another translation, with helpful discussion of some problems, has been published by Professor K. Jackson, Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry (1935), 23 sq., 41 sq. The translation printed below is based on the work of Meyer and Professor Jackson, to whom the present translator acknowledges his indebtedness.

The poem is clearly much older than other parts of the *Macgnīmartha*. It is supposed to have been made by Finn after 'he had learnt the three arts which establish a poet in his prerogative'. 'It is then', says the text, 'Finn made this lay, testing his poetic skill.'

As written in the manuscript the poem at first sight looks like an example of the alliterative 'rhetorics' common in Old and Middle Irish prose tales. Meyer, realizing that it was really a poem in rhyming stanzas, printed it as such in his Four O.I. Songs. To make it assume stanzaic forms he had, however, to change the order of the words in the second line (inverting *and cucht* to *cucht and*), and in several places had to emend the manuscript text.

Meyer was on the right road, but he hardly went far enough along it. MOST of the lines in his emended version conform to the syllabic pattern 5^1. ALMOST always there are at least three alliterating words in every line. The stanzas are always bound to one another by alliteration of the last stressed word of a stanza with the first stressed word of the stanza which follows it. There is always rhyme between the end words of *b* and *d*; and ALMOST always there is either *aicill* or interior rhyme or assonance (*amus*), binding *a* to *b* and *c* to *d*.

Though freedom to use alternative types of ornament (e.g. *aicill* or interior rhyme) is normal in Old Irish poetry, it is not normal to have variation in the number of syllables in corresponding lines, nor is it normal for a poem to have a pattern which can be formulated in words only by use of terms such as ALMOST.

Commenting on a later paragraph of the *Macgnīmartha*, Professor O'Rahilly has recently written:

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In *co tiasat gidh daimh dia tigh*, RC v, 203 x (Macgn. Find), the corrupt *gidh daimh* is probably to be emended to *dia ndaimh*, 'to their house', and *dia tigh* would be a gloss which became incorporated in the text (Celtica i. 333).

Meyer, then, has seen that in at least one instance a word (*cucht*) has been misplaced by the scribe in the poem beginning *Cēttemain*, and Professor O'Rahilly has suggested with probability that the same scribe has later incorporated a gloss in a corruptly preserved phrase. If we postulate many similar misplacings, some similar incorporation of glosses, and a number of the ordinary corruptions which mar late copies of an early text (homoioteleuton errors, etc.), it is possible to construct a text which follows a definite pattern of metre (*lethrannaigecht mór*), such as might have been expected in an Old Irish poem.[1] In the text so reconstructed: ALL lines except 13*c* have the pattern 5^1; the stanzas are ALL bound to one another by alliteration of their last stressed word with the first stressed word of the following stanza; at least three alliterating words ALWAYS occur in every line, except under special circumstances;[2] there is ALWAYS rhyme between the end words of *b* and *d*, and ALWAYS either *aicill* or interior rhyme or vowel assonance (*amus*),[3] binding *a* to *b* and *c* to *d*. The result can hardly fail to convince readers that the reconstructed text of *Cétemain*, printed above the manuscript text on the following pages, is more like the poem as originally composed than the text presented by the scribe of Laud 610, though here and there doubt may be entertained concerning the validity of certain details in the reconstruction.

The language of the poem as reconstructed indicates that the original was composed in the Old Irish period.[4] Forms such as *labraid* (:*canaid*), 4 (for older *labrithir*),[5] and the reduction of the originally disyllabic

[1] Reduction of two vowels in hiatus to a monosyllable (see p. 37) and use of forms such as *fúapair* (q. 4), for **fo-opair*, forbid explaining the syllabic irregularity of the scribe's lines on the grounds that the poem was written in the seventh century, for which century a few poems in rhyming stanzas with an irregular number of syllables in the lines have been attested (cf. e.g. Meyer, 'Über die älteste ir. Dicht. i', Kgl. Preuß. Ak. der Wissensch., Phil.-Hist. Cl., 1913, 51–58).

[2] When there are only two stressed words in the line, as in 14*c infra*, there can be only two words alliterating. Occasionally in the poem as reconstructed below a rhyming (or assonating) word does not alliterate (2*b*, 4*d*, 5*d*, 13*c*); this also reduces the number of alliterating words to two. Alliteration is often carried over from one line to the next.

[3] The interior rhyme may be imperfect, as in *súaill*: *lúath* (3) and the vowel assonance may wholly disregard the presence or absence of consonants as in *Cētemain*: *rée* (1).

[4] Cf., e.g., the preservation of the deponent forms *cuirithir* (4, 9), *tuigither* (4), *búirithir* (12); the distinction indicated by the metre between non-relative *im* and relative *ima* in *im-sernar* (13) and *ima-cain* (14); the occurrence of words which early became obsolete such as causative *suidid* (2), *slabrae* 'cattle' (5), *con-greinn* 'gathers, provides' (6), passive *suidigthir* 'alights, settles' (12), *geilestar* 'pond' (13), *uisse* 'right, fitting' (14).

[5] *Labraid* is used in the early ninth century (Ml. 115^a2).

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sciach and *té*, to one syllable, in 4 and 7, suggest, however, that it is not older than the ninth century.[1]

Meyer in his Four O.I. Songs, 6–7, has drawn attention to similarities in phrasing between this poem and the poems *Fuitt co brāth* (on winter) and *Tānic sam* (on summer) edited by him (*ib.* 16–23) from the early-twelfth-century manuscript Rawl. B 502, 59^{v}2–60^{r}1. With the difficult line 8*b* of the present poem we may compare *lengait eoin ciuin cruaich. ocus daim luaith leith*;[2] and with 8*d* and 9*a meit cuithi cach lattrach léig*.[3] The insertion of *ro fáith* in 11*b* was suggested to Meyer by *tanic sam, ro faith gaim*:[4] the eye of the scribe may have travelled to the *aith* of *gaith*, causing him to omit *rofaith*.

*An asterisk (or pair of asterisks) indicates that a word (or phrase) is corrupt.

† A dagger (or pair of daggers) indicates that the text has been drastically emended.

My thanks are due to Professor M. A. O'Brien for several helpful corrections and suggestions.

[1] Disyllabic *rée* is guaranteed by the metre in 1*b* and 11*a*. Here preservation of the disyllabic form is probably due to the desire to indicate genitive inflexion (cf. the preservation of disyllabic forms such as *rée* to indicate plural inflexion in Early Modern bardic poetry, IGT ii, § 99).

[2] Translated by Meyer (*l.c.* 20) 'Gentle birds leap upon the hill, and swift grey stags' (*Tānic sam*, 2*cd*).

[3] Translated (*l.c.* 18) 'Big as a pit each . . . puddle' (*Fuitt co brāth*, 3*a*).

[4] Translated (*l.c.* 20) 'Summer has come, winter has gone' (*Tānic sam*, 5*c*).

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LAUD 610, *f.* 120*r.*, *col.* 1

Ro fogluim-sim in tr̄eide nemt[h]igius filid .i. teínm lāega *ocus* im*us* f*or*-osna *ocus* dīc[h]edul di c[h]ennaib. Is an*n* sin do-róine[1] Fin*n* in laīg-si oc f*r*omad a éicsi:

Reconstructed Text of Poem

1 Cétemain, cain cucht,
rée roṡaír rann;
canait luin laíd láin
día laí grían† gaí ngann.

2 Gairid cúi chrúaid den;
is fo-chen sam saír:
suidid síne serb
i mbi cerb caill chraíb.

3 Cerbaid sam súaill sruth;
saigid graig lúath linn;
lethaid fota fraích;
for-beir folt fann finn.

4 Fúapair sceith scell scíach;
im-reith réid rían rith;
cuirithir sál súan;
tuigithir bláth bith.

Text of Laud 610, *f.* 120*r.*, *col.* 1

1 Cettemain cainree rosai rand cucht canait luin laid lain diambeith laigaigann

2 Gairid cai c*r*uaid dean isfocen samh sair suidig sine s*er*bimme cerb caill craib

3 Cearbaid sam suaillsruth saigid graig luath linn. lethaid folt foda f*r*aích forbrid canach fan*n*finn

4 Fuabair osgellsceillshigi*ech* imrid reid riaenrith renacuirithersalsuan tuigithir blath inbith

Translation

Finn learnt the three arts which establish a poet in his prerogative, namely *teinm lāeda* (prophetic marrow-chewing) and *imus for-osna* (divination which illuminates) and *díchetal di chennaib* (incantation from heads). And it is then he made this lay to prove his poetic skill:

1 May-day, fair aspect, perfect season; blackbirds sing a full lay when the sun casts a slender beam.

2 The hardy vigorous cuckoo calls. Welcome to noble summer: it abates the bitterness of storm during which the branchy wood is lacerated.

3 Summer cuts the stream small; swift horses seek water; tall heather spreads; delicate fair foliage flourishes.

4 Sprouting comes to the bud of the hawthorn; the ocean flows a smooth course; [summer] sends the sea to sleep; blossom covers the world.

[1] MS. doroíne doroine.

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5 Berait beich (bec nert)
bert bonn bochtai bláith;
berid slabrai slíab:
feraid saidbir sáith.

6 Seinnid caille céol;
con-greinn séol síd slán;
síatair denn do dinn,
dé do loch linn lán.

7 Labraid tragna trén;
canaid ess n-ard n-úag
fáilti do thoinn† té;
táinic lúachra lúad.

8 Lengait fainnle fúas;
im-said† crúas cíuil cróich†
for-beir mes máeth méth;
*in*nisid loth loíth*.

9 *Leig lath fath feig*;
fert* ar-cain cúi chrúaid;
cuirithir brecc bedc;
is balc gedc* láith lúaith.

5 Beraid beich beg an*ert* b*ert*bond bochta blaith b*er*id buarslaib resliabh feraid seng saidbirsaith

6 Sein*id* crot caille céol *con*gren*n* seolsid slán siadair dean*n* dacach din*n* dé do loch lín*n* lai*n*

7 Labr*aid* tragna trénbard canaid eas nard nua failti dolin*n*te tanic luachra luad

8 Lingid fain*n*le fan*n*afuas imasoich c*r*uas ciuil croich foirbrid mes maethmed in*n*isid loth loíth

9 Leig lath fathfeig fertar caincai c*r*uaid cuirither iasg mbrecc mbedg isbalc gedg laith luaith

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5 Bees of small strength carry bundles in their feet, blossoms having been reaped; the mountain, supplying rich sufficiency, carries off the cattle.

6 Woodland music plays; melody provides perfect peace; dust is blown from dwelling-place and haze from lake full of water.

7 The strenuous corncrake speaks; the high pure cataract sings of joy from the warm water; rustling of rushes has come.

8 Swallows dart aloft; vigour of music surrounds the hill (?); soft rich fruit flourishes; . . ..

9 . . .; . . . the hardy cuckoo sings; the trout leaps; strong is the swift warrior's . . ..

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10 Losaid foirbríg fer;
ór a mbúaid mbreg mbras;
caín cach caille clár;
caín cach mag már mas.

11 Melldach rée rann:
†ro fáith† gaíth garb gam;
gel ros; toirthech tonn†;
oll† síd; subach sam.

12 Suidigthir íall én
†i n-íath† i mbí ben;
búirithir gort glas
i mbí bras glas gel.

13 Greit mer, imrim ech;
im-sernar sreth slúaig;
rosáer rath geilestar,
ór eilestar úaid.

14 Ecal aird fer fann;
fedil fochain ucht;
uisse ima-cain
'Cétemain, cain cucht!'

10 Losaid fer foirbrig ogh mabuaid mbreg mbras caín cach caille coi*nn*le [oi*nn* *superscript with sign to insert between* c *and* l] clar cáin cach mag mármas

11 Mell dagreeruan gaith garb gam gel cachros toirtech sidh subach samh

12 Suidither ialen amilea*n* buirither gort glas ambi bras glas geal

13 Greid merort imrim each imaser*n*ar sreth sluaig rosaerad crand gealistir *con*id ór eilestar uad

14 Egal ferfann fedil focaín aird ucht uisi us men*n* imacoin cetteman caín ciui*n* cucht .c.

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10 Men's vigour thrives; the excellence of great hills is complete; fair is every spreading wood, and every great goodly plain.

11 Delightful the season: winter's harsh wind has departed; woodland is bright; water fruitful; peace is immense; summer is joyous.

12 A flock of birds settles on land where a woman walks; there is noise in every green field through which a swift bright rivulet flows.

13 Fierce ardour and riding of horses; the serried host is ranged around; the pond is noble in bounty and turns the iris to gold.

14 The frail man fears loudness; the constant man sings with a heart; rightly does he sing out 'May-day, fair aspect!'

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NOTES

1. The manuscript version of quatrain 1 is unmetrical and does not give sense: disyllabic *rēe* is a genitive, but the syntax of the manuscript version does not permit a genitive here; moreover *rēe* in the manuscript version ends a line, where a monosyllabic word is required by the metre; *rosai* is meaningless; *cucht* does not rhyme with *gann*; the fully stressed *mbeith* occurring before *laī* breaks an alliterative series of *l*s.

Fortunately the last line of the poem (which must echo the first) proves that *cucht* originally occurred at the end of the first line (not at the end of the second). Having transposed *cucht* to the end of the first line, we can now construe *rēe*, placed at the beginning of the second line, with *rann* to mean 'division of time', 'season' (archaic use of genitive preceding its governing word), and *rosai* may be understood as the adjective *rosaīr* (archaically preceding its noun) with *r* omitted before a following *r* by scribal oversight.

The omission of *mbeith* and insertion of *grían* in the last line are more difficult to defend. It is almost certain, however, that *mbeith* did not occur in the original poem, as it breaks what was doubtless meant to be alliteration of *lāin* with *laī*. *Dīa laī . . . gaī [n]gann* 'when . . . casts a slender ray' (with one syllable missing from the metre) suggests the insertion of *grían*, which always seems to accompany *gaí* (literally 'a spear') when *gaí* is used to indicate 'a ray'. Moreover by inserting *grían* we get an extra alliteration. An early scribe may have omitted *grían* by accident. A later scribe, noticing that a syllable was wanting, may then have inserted *mbeith* after *día* because *día mbeith* 'if there be' was a common phrase.

2*a*. Meyer understood *crúaid* here and in 9*b*, and *crúas* in 8*b*, to mean 'loud' and 'loudness'. *Crúaid* has a basic meaning 'hard, not easy to penetrate', and derived meanings 'hardy, vigorous, robust', 'harsh', 'difficult'. It therefore seems probable that the vigour of the singer rather than the loudness of the song would have been suggested by *crúaid* and *crúas* to a speaker of O.I.

The adjective *den*, and a variant *dein* (Contrib. 604, 611), are used of very varied objects: here of a cuckoo; of God SR 1471; of groups of persons *ib.* 773; of all created things 1803; of toilsome work 1451; of *rūathar* 'an onset' 4765. The meanings 'firm, strong, vigorous', suggested by Professor Jackson, E. Celt. Nature Poetry, p. 42, are suitable.

2*cd*. The adj. *serb* 'bitter' seems here to be used substantivally. I take *imme* to stand for the preposition *i* followed by the nasalized form of the consuetudinal copula *bi*.

3*b*. The rhyme with *finn* shows that *linn* here is the *u*-stem noun (modern *lionn*), not the *ī*-stem *linn* 'a pool'. Though *lionn* commonly means 'beer', here and in 6*d* it seems to mean 'water': cf. *sorchu cach*

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lind. fothrucud find ocā mbítis 'brighter than all water was the fair bath about which they were busy' (*Immram Maíle Dúin*, ed. Van Hamel, p. 70, § xxviii, q. 160).

3*cd*. The manuscript version of this half-quatrain has twelve syllables, whereas the metre requires ten. A disyllabic word must be omitted: *canach*, as it does not alliterate, is probably the word to be omitted. If we then transfer *folt* from 3*c* to 3*d*, 3*c* conforms to the normal syllabic pattern (5^1) and 3*d* conforms to the normal rhyme-pattern, which demands interior rhyme or assonance with 3*c* (*fota*: *folt*): with the suggested misplacing of *folt* by the scribe we may compare his misplacing of *cucht* commented on *supra*, n. 1.

As in TBC (ed. Windisch, p. 882, footnotes, l. 8, *amail do-luid grian hi folt feda* 'as the sun sank into the foliage of the wood') *folt* is here used, not of human hair, but of foliage. It seems probable that a glossator, rightly or wrongly considering *folt finn* to refer to *canach* 'cotton-grass', introduced *canach* as a gloss, which later was incorporated in the text (cf. *supra*, p. 87; *infra*, nn. 5*c*, 9*c*, 13*c*, 14*c*).

The general trend of the language of the poem (cf. *supra* p. 87) suggests that here (and in 8*c*) for Middle Irish *forbrid* (*foirbrid*) we should read O.I. *for-beir*.

4*ab*. The scribe's *osgellsceillshigiech* (in which the final *ch* represents a suspension-stroke which might be expanded as *n*, etc.) must be reduced to three syllables containing at least two alliterating words and providing at least one rhyme or assonance with a word in the interior of 4*b*.

If for *shigiech* we read *scíach*, the gen. sg. of *scé* 'hawthorn', we have rhyme with *rían* (MS. *riaen*) in 4*b*.

In *osgellsceill*, which now remains to be reduced to two syllables, we seem to have confused repetition of the word *scell*. In *Regimen na Sláinte* (*Reg. Sanitatis Magnini Mediolanensis*), ed. S. Ó Ceithearnaigh, ii. 5110 (5119, 5132), *gan sgealla* nō *gan eitnida* (*gan sgealla, ōna sgeallaib*), referring to grapes, means 'without stones'. The same word seems to be at the base of Scottish Gaelic *sgeallag meilte* 'mustard seed' (Dwelly's Illustr. G.-Engl. Dict.), and of spoken Irish *sgeallán* 'a section of potato for planting, having at least one eye' (Ó Cuív, *Cnósach Focal ó Bhaile Bhúirne*). Cf. 2 *scell* and *scellán* in RIA Contrib. In reference to a hawthorn in May, *scell* can hardly mean anything but 'bud'.

By restoring the other syllable wanted as *sceith* 'bursting forth', we get suitable sense, additional alliteration, and a rhyme with *im-reith* (MS. *imrid*).

4*c*. Rhyme with O.I. *tuigithir* in 4*d* suggests restoration of an O.I. deponent form *cuirithir* in place of the scribe's unmetrical *rena cuirither*, probably understood by him as a passive 'by which is put'. Use of an absolute *cuirithir*, for O.I. prose *fo-ceird*, is doubtless poetic (cf. *infra*, n. on 9*c*).

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4*d*, 5*a*. The metre indicates that manuscript *in* and *a* should be omitted.

5*c*. The manuscript line must be reduced by a syllable. The fact that *buar* 'cattle' can be explained (cf. *supra*, n. 3*d*) as a gloss on an obsolete *slabrae* (acc. *slabrai*—MS. *slaib re*) marks it out for omission.

5*d*. There are only two monosyllabic words in the manuscript version of this line. The one to be omitted to reduce the line to five syllables is clearly *seng*, as *sāith* is required for the rhyme.

6*a*. This line has a syllable too many, and, as *céol* is required by the rhyme, *crot* is indicated for omission. An early copyist, not recognizing an archaic construction by which genitive *caille* preceded its governing word *céol*, may have inserted *crot* 'harp' before *caille* to normalize the syntax.

6*c*. I take *siadair* to be a modern spelling of a hitherto uninstanced O.I. *síatair*, passive of an uninstanced 'strong' *séitid* 'blows', conjugated with alternation of *é* and *ía* such as appears in *tíagu* 'I go', *tégi*, 'thou goest', *ríadait* 'they ride', *ní réidid* 'ye do not ride', etc. A *séitid* 'blows' with weak conjugation, preserving *é* throughout, is well attested in Irish of all periods.

For manuscript *dā cach* simple *do*, with practically the same meaning, has been read, to reduce the number of syllables to five.

6*d*. The rhyme shows that for manuscript *lain* we should read *lán*. I take *linn* to be dative of the *u*-stem *linn*, with the meaning 'water' as in 3*b* (see note *supra*), and *linn lán* (archaic in its word-order and in its lack of a preposition) to be for later *lán di linn*. [Meyer's translation 'of full waters' would have required *lenna* in O.I. (or *linne* if the word intended were the *ī*-stem *linn* 'a pool').] The word *dinn* 'dwelling-place' in 6*c* is therefore probably to be read as though its modern spelling would have been *dionn* (not *dinn*): such *u*-stem inflexion of *dinn* is attested for the tenth century by Metr. Dind. (Gwynn), ii. 12. 42, though *i*-stem inflexion is attested earlier in *i ndinnib* (: *hi linnib*), Fíacc's Hymn, l. 28, Thes. Pal. ii. 315.

7*a*. The manuscript version has a syllable too many. As alliteration demands the retention of *trén*, *bard* must be omitted: perhaps an early copyist inserted it to obtain rhyme with *ard*; but the rhyme *labraid*: *canaid* suffices.

7*b*. It would appear from the scribe's *eas n-ard* that *ess* 'waterfall' was originally neuter.

Rhyme with *lúad* and alliteration with *ard* suggest that Meyer was right in altering the scribe's *nua* to *n-úag*.

7*c*. Alliteration here requires aspiration of the initial of *fáilti*. Such aspiration of the initial of the object of a verb was common in Early Modern Irish and is not unusual in Middle and Old Irish (cf. Thurneysen, Grammar, p. 144).

The scribe's *do linn te* cannot represent the original reading faithfully,

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as it does not give alliteration. It seems probable that *linn* 'water' (cf. *supra*, n. 3b) (or M.I. dat. sg. *linn* 'pool', for the *linni* which would have been more normal in O.I.) has been substituted for *thoinn*, which, as well as meaning 'wave', is often used vaguely for 'water'.

7*d*. *Lúad* combines the senses of 'moving' (better attested for the compound *imlúad*) and 'mentioning, discussing' (well attested both for the simplex and the compound). Professor Jackson's translation 'rustling' (Early Celtic Nature Poetry, p. 24), adopted here, seems aptly to combine the two notions.

8*a*. With this unique instance of *fūas* 'upwards' Meyer (Four O.I.S. 25) compares *leth fūas de* 'above him' (ZCP i. 105. 9). Professor O'Brien (ÉRIU xii. 236) suggests that the common *etarbúas* 'up above' is etymologically connected, and he sees in the variation *fúas*: *súas* a parallel to the variation which is common in *sa-dess*: *fa-dess*, *sa-thúaid*: *fa-thúaid*. As either *fainnle* or *fanna* must be omitted to reduce the number of syllables to five, the form *fúas* is here guaranteed by alliteration.

8*b*. As emendations of the scribe's *imasoich*, which gives one syllable too many, *im-foich* (= *im-fuich*) 'assails (?)', which gives an extra alliteration, and *im-saig* 'seeks (?)' might be suggested. But *im-fuich* hardly seems to occur outside legal usage and *im-saig* is rare. Therefore the more frequent *im-said*, 'surrounds' has been preferred.

For *crúas* see *supra*, note on 2*a*. The line cited *supra*, p. 88, l. 7, gives some ground for understanding *crōich* as an archaic form of *crúaich*, acc. sg. of *crúach* 'a hill'.

8*c*. For *for-beir* see end of note on 3*cd*. For the scribe's *med* Meyer's emendation *méth* has been accepted.

9*ab*. *Lēig lath* may mean 'the swamp is lovely'. Cf. *leíchet*, TBDD (ed. Knott), 710. Professor Knott (*ib*., p. 133) cites LU 1519 *ara lēchet* glossed by 'H' *.i. ara chaīmi*. Professor Jackson, E. Celtic Nat. Po., p. 42, cites *lēig* used of a king from Meyer's Über die ält. ir. Dicht. IV. iv. 7. For *lath (loth)* 'a swamp' (fem. *ā*-stem) see Hessen, and cf. *blāth for laith*, ZCP vi. 267, § 5, clearly indicating something out of place. Cf. also modern Munster *lathach* (fem. *ā*-stem) 'mud'.

Though *ar-cain* in 9*b* may be considered to give sufficient assonance with *lath*, one is tempted to transpose *fēig* and *fert* (cf. q. 1, note on scribe's misplacing of *cucht*), as *féig* 'sharp' would give good rhyme with *léig* and might qualify *ar-cain* ('the loud cuckoo sings clearly'). But absence of certainty as to how *fath* (= *fáth* 'reason, etc.'?) and *fert* 'a mound' are to be construed, and how an additional syllable is to be found to complete 9*a*,[1] makes it difficult to regard as probable the result of any attempt at restoring the original text.

[1] The phrase *lattrach léig* cited *supra*, p. 37, l. 8, suggests reading *latrach* for *lath* (cf. *latrach* 'any unoccupied or rough piece of ground', Dinneen—attested also by Mac Clúin *Réilthínt Óir*, ii. 7).

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For *crúaid* see *supra*, note on 2*a*.

9*c*. For *cuirithir* see note on 4*c*. The scribe's *iasg* 'fish', doubtless originally a gloss on *brecc* (MS. *mbrecc*), must be omitted, as it increases the number of syllables to six (cf. *supra*, n. 5*c*).

10*a*. To obtain the required monosyllabic ending the scribe's *fer foirbrig* must be read as *foirbrig fer*.

10*b*. For the scribe's *mabuaid* we should doubtless read *a mbúaid*, understanding the *a* as a 3rd pl. poss. pronoun used proleptically (as often in Old and Middle Irish) to anticipate the following gen. pl. *breg*.[1] As *búaid* is neuter, its nom. sg. nasalizes the *b* of *breg*.

10*c*. The hypermetrical *coinnle* doubtless represents an original merely accidental duplication of *caille*.

11*a*. Resemblance to the phrase in 1*b* and the need for assonance clearly suggest reading *rann* (assonating with *garb*) for the scribe's *ruan*.

11*b*. The insertion of *ro fáith* has already been discussed *supra*, p. 88, l. 9.

The form *gam* (guaranteed here by rhyme with *sam*) is the oldest genitive form attested for O.I. nom. and dat. *gaim* 'winter'. Later, on the model of *sam* 'summer' (gen. *saim*), a nom. *gam* was developed with a gen. *gaim*. Cf. Thurneysen's discussion of the word in Z. f. vergl. Sprachforsch. . . . begründet von A. Kuhn (neue Folge, lix, 1932, pp. 2, 8; lxi, 1934, p. 253).[2]

11*cd*. Though omission of *cach* is unimportant, purely conjectural insertion of *tonn* and *oll* is admittedly an unsatisfactory method of obtaining the syllabic regularity, alliteration, and rhyme wanting in the scribe's version of this half-quatrain.

12*a*. The passive of the deponent *suidigidir* 'places, settles', used here in its absolute form *suidigthir* (manuscript *suidither*), literally 'is settled', of a flock of birds alighting, is used in *Bech-bretha* (Best and Thurneysen, The Oldest Fragments of the Senchas Mār, 14) of a swarm of bees settling, *in suidigther* (col. 2, l. 14), *i suidigther* (l. 27), 'in which it settles'.

12*b*. The scribe's *amilean* (:*geal*) seems to represent the end of a line of which the first two syllables are wanting. Alliteration and the scribe's *ambi* (12*d*), for O.I. *i mbí*, suggest emendation to *i mbí ben*, *b* and *l* being easily confused. Restoration of the missing first syllables as *i n-íath* is not so insecure as the purely conjectural insertion of *tonn* and *oll* in 11 *cd*: the number of words which will both rhyme (or assonate) and alliterate with *íall* or *én* is limited.

13*a*. For *greit* 'ardour' (gender and declension doubtful) see *ar grāin ocus greit ocus gaisced* 'for dreadfulness, fierceness, and valour', *Fled*

[1] The place-name *Brega* (gen. *Breg*) which is always plural, may be meant.

[2] In addition to Thurneysen's instances, the palatal *m* of *gaimigfer* 'hiemabo', Wb. 14[a]9, indicates *gaim* as the O.I. form of the nominative.

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Bricrend § 93 (Windisch, IT 302. 14), and examples cited by Meyer, Four O.I. Songs of S. and W., 25.

One syllable of the scribe's *merort* must be omitted. As there are already three alliterations in the line and *aicill*-rhyme between *ech* and *sreth*, metrical considerations cannot guide us. It is easier, however, to understand *mer* 'fierce' in the context than *ort* (*ord*) 'order' (or *fort* 'on thee'); *mer* has therefore been retained.

13*c*. The meaning, and the scribe's spellings elsewhere,[1] justify understanding *rosaerad* as *rośáer rath*. The hypermetrical *crand* 'tree' may originally have been a bad gloss[2] on obsolete *geilestar* (*eilestar* 'iris' in 13*d* may have turned the glossator's mind to thoughts of plants and trees). For discussion of *geilestar* 'pond' see Atkinson, Glossary to Brehon Laws, 443.

14*ab*. Line 14*a* is a syllable too short and 14*b* a syllable too long. Misplacing is to be suspected such as has clearly occurred in the case of *cucht* in q. 1 (see note *supra*). As the place of *ucht* in 14*b* is guaranteed by the rhyme, *aird* must be the misplaced word. In 14*a* it can only have come after *Ecal*, as elsewhere it would break the alliterative series of *f*s.

The assonance needed in 14*b* is to be found in *fedil* (: *ecal*). To secure a third alliteration the scribe's *focaín* must be read as *fochain*, prototonic by reason of Bergin's law (ÉRIU xii. 197): 'When the verb does not stand at the head of its clause, particularly when it follows its subject or object, it takes the dependent form, that is, a simple verb has its conjunct ending and a compound verb is prototonic.'

The adjective *ard* 'high' may be used to indicate loudness of voice. Its genitive *aird*, restored, as suggested, to 14*a*, would seem to be used substantivally as complement of the adjective *ecal* (*ecal aird* = afraid of, timorous in respect of, loudness).

In 14*b* the dative of *ucht* 'chest, bosom' is used archaically without a preposition. It doubtless here indicates boldness or loudness of speech: cf. the spoken Munster derived substantive *uchtach*, which means 'good delivery, confidence, boldness' of speech.

14*c*. Either *uisi* or *us menn* must be omitted to reduce the number of syllables to five.

If we omit *uisi* and include *ūs menn* 'clear tidings', we have: (1) a word *ús* which does not occur outside glosses; (2) a stressed *menn* which does not alliterate, though the normal three alliterations do not occur in the suggested form of the line.

On the other hand, if we retain *uisse* (MS. *uisi*) and omit *us menn*, we can explain *menn* as an original bad gloss[3] on an obsolete *uisse* 'right,

[1] *rosai rand* 1*b* (= *rośair rann*); *med* 8*c* (= *méth*).

[2] For similar glosses incorporated in the scribe's text see *supra*, n. on 3*cd*.

[3] *Cf. supra*, n. on 3 *cd*.

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fitting', and look upon *us* either as an accidental repetition of the first syllable of *uisi* or as part of the original gloss. That only two words alliterate (*uisse* with *ucht* and *ima-cain* with *Cétemain*) in this reconstruction of the line need not worry us; for the line as reconstructed contains only two stressed words, and though at least three alliterations are the rule in this poem, relaxation of the rule is to be expected where the number of stressed words does not suffice: in Early Modern *dán díreach*, for example, the usual number of interior rhymes is not demanded when a sufficient number of stressed words does not occur.

14*d*. Either the scribe's *caín* or his *ciuin* must be omitted to reduce the numbers of syllables to five. Rhyme with *ima-cain* shows that it is *ciuin* which should be omitted and that *cain* (a common variant of *caín*) should be read.

INDEX

ar-cain, 9, 'sings'.
ard 'loud': substantivally 'loudness', n. 14*ab*.
bláth (m.) 'flower': gen. sg. *bláith*, 5.
bochtae (p. part. of *boingid*), 5, 'reaped'.
bras: 10 (of the hills in spring) 'great'; (of a stream in a field), 12, 'swift'. Glossators (see Contrib. 246) explain *bras* as *mór* 'big' and *solam* 'brisk'. The meaning 'big' is guaranteed by instances such as that in 10 and *a ṗiana it brassa* 'their pains are great', *Fél.* Prol. 75. The meaning 'brisk, swift' is guaranteed by spoken Munster *pras* and by examples such as *don each shanntach shiubhalbhras* 'for the eager swift-moving steed', McKenna, *Aithd. Dána*, 81. 3.
brí (f. *g*.-stem) 'a low hill': gen. pl. *breg* n. 10*b*, Co. Meath and the north of Co. Dublin.
búirithir, 12, 'resounds, is noisy'.
Céitemain, 1, 14 (f. IGT ii. 10; m. *ib.* 89) 'May-day'.
cerb, 2, 'lacerated'; **cerbaid,** 3, 'cuts, reduces in size'.
clár (m. *o*-stem), 10, 'level surface, expanse'.
con-greinn, 6, 'gathers, provides'.
? croich, n. 8*b*.
crúaid 'vigorous', **crúas** 'vigour', n. 2*a*.
cucht (m. *u*-stem), 1, 14, 'shape, form, aspect, appearance'. Cf. *cucht ocus cuinnsi ocus cruth .i. écusc* ['form, appearance'], O'Dav. 344; used specially of pleasing appearance, e.g.: *ropo rīgda a chucht* 'his appearance was kingly', Metr. Dind. iv. 356. 82; *a clainne cuchta* 'of their lovely offspring', LL $7^{a}22$ (= Macalister, L. Gabála, iii. 172, l. 1337); *ba cuchtach leis innas na mná* 'he thought the woman's manner pleasing', LL $125^{b}46$.
cuirithir: *c. súan*, 4 (and note), 'puts to sleep'; *c. bedc*, 9, 'leaps'.
dé (f. *d*-stem) 'smoke', with meaning sometimes transferred to smoke-like things, such as in spoken Irish the last breath of a dying person; used of 'haze' on a lake, 6.
den, n. 2*a*, 'vigorous'.
denn (gender and decl. doubtful), 6, 'dust'. Meyer, Four O. I. Songs, 25, cites '*denn* dust, snuff, powder, P. O'C.' Dinneen's *deannach* 'dust' is apparently current in Ulster, Connacht, and Munster today (McCionnaith, Engl.–Ir. Dict. 369, *s.v.* 'dust'). Meyer, Contrib. 611, cites several old instances of another derivative, *dendgor*, likewise meaning 'dust'.
dinn (n. *i*.-stem, which becomes a *u*-stem), n. 6*d*, 'a dwelling-place'.
eilestar (m. *o*-stem), 13, 'iris' (Contrib. 39). Various modern forms, such as *feileastrom, seiliostrom, eiliostrom, siolastar*, are listed *s.v.* 'Flagger . . . yellow flag, wild iris', McCionnaith, Engl.–Ir. Dict. 490.
ess 'waterfall' (*u*-stem, commonly m., but apparently n. in 7).
fáith (pret. of *feithid*): *ro fáith*, n. 11*b*, 'has gone'.
fochain, n. 14*ab*, prototonic form of *focain* 'sings'.
folt (m. *o*-stem) 'hair': n. 3*cd*, 'foliage'.
fúapair, 4, 'approaches, comes to'.
fúas, n. 8*a*, 'upwards'.

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gaim (gender doubtful) 'winter', n. 11*b*.
geilestar (m. *o*-stem?), n. 13*c*, n. 'pond'.
? gedc, 9.
greit (gender and decl. unknown), n. 13*a*, 'ardour'.
? ima-soich, n. 8*b*.
im-cain 'sings out': rel. *ima-cain*, 14.
im-reith, 4, 'flows around'.
imrim (n. *n*-stem), 13, 'riding around'.
im-sernar, 13, 'is ranged around' (passive of a compound of *imm* and *sernaid* [v.n. *sreth*] 'spreads, arranges').
láaid: *día laí*, 1, 'when casts'.
lath (loth) (f. *ā*-stem), n. 9*ab*, 'a swamp'.
léig, n. 9*ab*, 'lovely (?)'.
linn (m. *u*-stem), n. 3*b*, n. 6*d*, 'water'; **linn** (f. *ī*-stem) *ib*. 'pool'.
? loíth, 8.
losaid, 10, 'flourishes': cf. Wi., *Táin*, p. 566.
loth, 8, see **lath.**
lúachair (f. *i*-stem), 7, 'rushes' (collective).
lúad (m. *o*-stem), 1° 'moving', 2° 'mentioning, discussing': *lúachra lúad*, n. 7*d*, 'rustling of rushes'
ré (n. or f.) 'time': *rée rann*, 1, 11 (and notes), 'division of time, season'.
rían (m.), 4, 'sea'.
sáith (f. *i*-stem), 5, 'sufficiency'.
sam (m. *o*-stem), 2, 11, 'summer'.
scé (f.) 'hawthorn': gen. sg. *scíach*, n. 4*ab*.
sceith (f. *i*-stem), 4, 'putting forth, bursting'.
scell (m. ?), n. 4*ab*, 'bud, etc.'
síatair, n. 6*c*, 'is blown'.
séol (n.? or m.), 6, 'music': cf. ÉRIU xi. 169; Ét. Celt. iii. 362.
serb 'bitter': 'bitterness', 2.
síd (m.), 6, 11, 'peace'.
sreth (f. *ā*-stem) 'spreading, arranging': *sreth slúaig*, 13, 'the serried host'.
suidid, 2, 'settles, abates'.
suidigidir 'places, settles': pass. *suidigthir* used of birds and bees alighting, n. 12*a*.
tuigithir, 4, 'covers'.
ucht (m. or n. *u*-stem) 'chest, bosom': dat. sg. *ucht* 'loudly, boldly' (of singing), n. 14*ab*.

GERARD MURPHY

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