

An edition and translation of ‘Finn and Mac  
Lesc’ including ‘Fuitt co bráth’ and ‘Táinic  
sam’



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**DIAS**

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AN EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF 'FINN AND MAC LESC'  
INCLUDING 'FUITT CO BRÁTH' AND 'TÁNIC SAM'<sup>1</sup>

ABSTRACT

This article reconsiders the well-known 'nature' poems 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Tánic sam' within their manuscript and textual context. The poems form part of a prosimetric anecdote featuring Finn mac Cumail, known as 'Finn and Mac Lesc' or 'Finn and the Lazy Lad', which survives in the Book of Leinster (*s.* xii), Rawlinson B 502 (*ss.* xi–xii) and RIA C iii 2 (*s.* xvi). The introduction discusses the textual clusters in which 'Finn and Mac Lesc' survives, manuscript layout and textual transmission. The metre of the poems is reconsidered; I argue that 'Tánic sam' fits a syllabic metre rather than a stressed metre. Finally, the full anecdote is edited and translated with notes on the text and its language.

THE TEXT EDITED HERE is a prosimetric anecdote in which Finn mac Cumail and an otherwise unknown member of his *fian*, Mac Lesc mac Ladáin (*lesc* 'lazy'; perhaps *ladan* 'dumb'?), are apart from the rest of the *fian* in Slíab Cuilinn (Slieve Gullion, Co. Armagh). Finn asks Mac Lesc to go and seek water for them, but the latter refuses and recites a poem detailing the bad weather, beginning 'Fuitt co bráth' 'Forever cold' (4 qq). The tale is found in three manuscripts. In TCD MS 1339 (H. 2. 18), the Book of Leinster (*s.* xii) (L), p. 208a37–54, the text ends with 'Fuitt co bráth'. However, in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 502 (*ss.* xi–xii) (R), fols 59vb42–60ra18 and RIA MS C iii 2 (1236) (*s.* xvi) (C), fol. 10ra9–46, the text continues beyond that point with a short prose sentence introducing Finn's response, which is a poem praising the coming of summer and beginning 'Tánic sam' 'Summer has come' (7 qq).<sup>2</sup> The anecdote ends with another segment of prose describing how Finn punished Mac Lesc by binding him, naked, to a standing-stone, until the next morning. Editions and translations of the poems 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Tánic sam' are numerous, partly because of their association with the corpus of so-called 'nature poetry'.<sup>3</sup> However, the poems

<sup>1</sup>This article is based on my Masters thesis (University College Cork, 2019), and benefitted greatly from the advice and supervision of Dr Kevin Murray. I developed my work on the Book of Leinster in particular during my PhD, and I thank my supervisor Prof. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh for her advice. I would also like to thank Prof. Ruairí Ó hUiginn, Prof. Barry Lewis and an anonymous reader for their many helpful corrections and suggestions. I am responsible for any remaining errors.

<sup>2</sup>I would like to thank the Bodleian Library and the Royal Irish Academy for allowing me to consult these manuscripts.

<sup>3</sup>See Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The invention of Celtic nature poetry', in Terrence Brown (ed.), *Celticism*, *Studia Imagologica* 8 (1996), 97–124. Other discussions of this corpus include Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Early Irish hermit poetry?', in Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and

have been published for the most part in anthologies, without their prose context and with little academic discussion of their content.<sup>4</sup>

'Finn and Mac Lesc' has only been edited and translated in its entirety once, by Meyer in 1903.<sup>5</sup> His edition, based on **R**, offered no detailed critical commentary, and he did not seem to know of the existence of the version in **C** at the time. Meyer also included in this same publication an edition and translation of the now-famous poem 'Cétamon' 'May-day', recited by Finn in *Macgnímartha Find* 'The Boyhood Deeds of Finn', and an edition and translation of 'Scél lem dúib' 'I have a story for you', a poem which survives as part of the commentary on *Amra Choluim Chille* 'The Eulogy of Colum Cille'.<sup>6</sup> He justified the publication of these four poems together by saying that 'they bear internal evidence of having been composed either by one poet, or on the same pattern'.<sup>7</sup> This suggestion strongly influenced subsequent treatment of the poems, specifically 'Táinic sam'.

Thus, in 1971, Carney wrote an influential article which aimed to reassess Murphy's edition of 'Cétamon', which had been published in 1955.<sup>8</sup> Murphy heavily emended the text to fit a strict syllabic pattern. Basing his argument on Meyer's statement that 'Cétamon' and 'Táinic sam' were composed by the same poet, Carney criticised Murphy's approach and stated that 'Murphy's thesis, although he does not advert to the fact, would demand that *Táinic sam* should

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Kim R. McCone (eds), *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney*, Maynooth Monographs 2 (1989), 251–67; and more recently Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Early Gaelic nature poetry revisited', in Georgia Henley and Paul Russell (eds), *Rhetoric and Reality in Medieval Celtic Literature: Studies in Honor of Daniel F. Melia* (Hamilton, NY, 2014), 8–19 and Elizabeth Boyle, 'The forms and functions of medieval Irish poetry and the limitations of modern aesthetics', in Tom Birkett and Kirsty March-Lyons (eds), *Translating Early Medieval Poetry: Transformation, Reception, Interpretation* (Cambridge, 2017), 92–108.

<sup>4</sup>Hull made significant progress in the interpretation of parts of the text taking into account the **C** version, though he did not venture to edit the full anecdote again; Vernam Hull, 'Four Old-Irish songs of Summer and Winter', *Celtica* 9 (1971), 200–1. Other editions and/or translations include the following: for 'Fuitt co bráth': James Carney (trans.), *Medieval Irish Lyrics* (Dublin, 1967), 22–25; for 'Táinic sam': Kuno Meyer (trans.), *Selections from Ancient Irish Poetry*, 2nd ed. (London, 1913), 53; Myles Dillon (trans.), *Early Irish Literature* (Dublin, 1948), 159; David Greene and Frank O'Connor (ed. and trans.), *A Golden Treasury of Irish Poetry A.D. 600 to 1200* (London, 1967), 137–39; for both 'Táinic sam' and 'Fuitt co bráth': Kenneth Jackson (trans.), *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry* (Cambridge, 1935), 25–27, 43–44; Geoffrey Squires (trans.), *My News for You: Irish Poetry 600–1200* (Bristol, 2015), 80–81, 193–94, 221.

<sup>5</sup>Kuno Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs of Summer and Winter* (London, 1903), 16–23.

<sup>6</sup>'Cétamon' has been edited many times: Meyer (ed.), 'Macgnímartha Find', *RC* 5 (1882), 195–204, at 201; re-edited separately by Meyer, *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 8–13, and with corrections by Meyer (trans.), 'The boyish exploits of Finn', *Ériu* 1 (1904), 180–90, at 186; by Jackson (trans.), *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry*, 23–5 and 41–3; Gerard Murphy (ed. and trans.), 'Finn's poem on May-day', *Ériu* 17 (1955), 86–99; James Carney (ed. and trans.), 'Three Old Irish accentual poems', *Ériu* 22 (1971), 23–80. See the 'metre' and 'similarities' sections of this article below for a discussion of possible relationships between this poem and 'Táinic sam'. For 'Scél lem dúib', see Meyer, *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 14–15; Whitley Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'The Bodleian Amra Choluim Chille', *Revue Celtique* 20 (1899), 31–55, 132–83, 248–89, 400–37, at 258–9.

<sup>7</sup>Meyer, *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 5.

<sup>8</sup>James Carney (ed. and trans.), 'Three Old Irish accentual poems', *Ériu* 22 (1971), 23–80, at 43–7 and 51–2.

be reconstructed in exactly the same way as *Cétamon*, and we would have to assume almost the same amount of "corruption". His ignoring of the problem of *Táinic sam* is a grave weakness in his thesis.<sup>9</sup> He further elaborated on Meyer's argument, deciding that the 'poverty in diction and imagery' in 'Táinic sam' compared to 'Cétamon', as well as differences in metre and date (based on the language), suggest that 'Táinic sam' is a later imitation of 'Cétamon'. Carney thus argued that both poems were composed in a stressed, alliterative metre, and presented an edition and translation of both 'Táinic sam' and 'Cétamon' following this metre.

Although Carney's article was well received, there are problems with this interpretation. First, the manuscript contexts of 'Táinic sam' and 'Cétamon' are quite different, and there is no indication in the manuscripts that the poems are connected. 'Táinic sam' is only ever attested as part of the 'Finn and Mac Lesc' anecdote in which it follows the poem 'Fuitt co bráth'. 'Cétamon', on the other hand, survives in a single manuscript witness, namely Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc 610, in which it forms part of *Macgnímartha Find*. Secondly, the similarities of theme and vocabulary in both poems are superficial and to be expected in poems in praise of summer, which are common in other languages too. Finally, there are significant metrical differences between 'Táinic sam' and 'Cétamon', for example, in patterns of alliteration used.

Modern scholarship has isolated 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Táinic sam' from their manuscript and textual context and focussed on the latter poem's possible links to 'Cétamon'. Yet, 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Táinic sam' are not attested without their prose frame, and in prosimetric texts, 'the poetry—whether or not composed specifically for the context in question—and the prose are intended to be read as a single unit'.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it is worth reconsidering 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Táinic sam' as part of the 'Finn and Mac Lesc' anecdote, both contextually and metrically. The following edition presents the anecdote in full for the first time since Meyer's publication. I will start by analysing the manuscript contexts and textual transmission. Then, I will address the question of the similarities between 'Cétamon' and 'Táinic sam' and reconsider the metre of 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Táinic sam'. Finally, I include an analysis of the language, before the edition, translation and notes on the text.<sup>11</sup>

#### MANUSCRIPTS, TEXTUAL CLUSTERS AND TRANSMISSION

*Dublin, Trinity College MS 1339, the Book of Leinster (L)*

The Book of Leinster (hereafter L) is a well-known twelfth-century Irish codex which contains a large variety of vernacular writing.<sup>12</sup> It was probably com-

<sup>9</sup>Carney, 'Three Old Irish accentual poems', 34.

<sup>10</sup>Geraldine Parsons, 'Acallam na Senórach as prosimetrum', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 24–5 (2009), 86–100, at 87.

<sup>11</sup>I also intend to publish a fuller literary analysis of the text in the future.

<sup>12</sup>A small portion of the manuscript is kept in UCD under the name Franciscan A 3; this part of the manuscript is not relevant to the current discussion.

posed in Terryglass (Co. Tipperary) or Clonenagh (Co. Laois),<sup>13</sup> as Scribe A identifies himself as Áed mac meic (or Ua) Crimthainn, and he is addressed as '(...) chomarbu Choluim meic Crimthaind'.<sup>14</sup> Áed is one of several scribes involved in the copying and writing of **L**; O'Sullivan lists six scribes (A, F, M, S, U and T).<sup>15</sup> T appears to have worked later than the other scribes, perhaps as late as the early thirteenth century, and O'Sullivan describes him as 'the real author of the Book of Leinster as we know it' because he re-arranged material from A, F and U in the 'Metrical *Dindshenchas*' section of the manuscript, which contains 'Finn and Mac Lesc'.<sup>16</sup> Duncan argues that T was in fact four different scribes who worked on **L** at various times, the latest person being T2.<sup>17</sup> 'Finn and Mac Lesc' was written by A at the bottom of p. 208a. It is the last text scribed by A in this section, and the rest of the bifolium was filled and added to at a later time by scribe T (Duncan's T2), as seen in Table 1 below.<sup>18</sup>

The literary context of this section of **L** is particularly interesting. 'Finn and Mac Lesc' forms part of one of three sections of *dindshenchas* material in **L**. The codex contains a compilation of prose *dindshenchas* material (fols CXII–CXIX in A and U's hands), and two codicologically separate compilations of mostly metrical *dindshenchas* material (fols CVIII–CXI in U's hand and fols CLII–CLXVII in A, T (Duncan's T2) and F's hands).<sup>19</sup> 'Finn and Mac Lesc'

<sup>13</sup>Others argue that it was written in Kildare (Gearóid Mac Eoin, 'The provenance of the Book of Leinster', *ZCP* 57 (2009–10), 79–96) or Oughavall (Alfred P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster: Towards an Historical Geography of Early Irish Civilisation, A.D. 500–1600* (Dublin, 1982), 102–3), but O'Sullivan and Schlüter argue that the lack of surviving information about Oughavall goes against the idea that the monastery was rich enough to produce such a large codex (William O'Sullivan, 'Notes on the scripts and make-up of the Book of Leinster', *Celtica* 7 (1966), 1–31 at 1–2; Dagmar Schlüter, 'Medieval manuscripts and cultural memory: the case of the Book of Leinster', in Jan Erik Rekdal and Erich Poppe (eds), *Medieval Irish Perspectives on Cultural Memory*, Studien und Texte zur Keltologie 11 (Münster, 2014), 61–79 at 71–2).

<sup>14</sup>Sheryl L. Forste-Grupp (ed. and trans.), 'The earliest Irish personal letter', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 15 (1995), 1–11, at 6; O'Sullivan, 'Notes on the scripts', 6.

<sup>15</sup>O'Sullivan, 'Notes on the scripts'.

<sup>16</sup>O'Sullivan, 'Notes on the scripts', 9. *Dindshenchas* '(hi)story of notable places' was a very common textual device in medieval Irish texts, usually concerned with the aetiology of place-names. *Dindshenchas*-focussed texts were transmitted together in compilations entitled *Dindshenchas Érenn* (or *Senchas Dind nÉrenn*) 'The History of the Notable Places of Ireland', which are preserved in manuscripts dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The earliest surviving compilation of *dindshenchas* material survives in **L**; however, it is not titled *Dindshenchas Érenn* or *Senchas Dind nÉrenn* in this manuscript. It is written by several scribes and split into different sections of the codex. Applying the title *Dindshenchas Érenn* to the **L** compilations is thus anachronistic, even though **L** is the earliest witness to an interest in compiling *dindshenchas* 'articles' together. See David McCay, 'The *Dindshenchas* in the Book of Leinster' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2020) and Marie-Luise Theuerkauf, *Dindshenchas Érenn*, *Cork Studies in Celtic Literatures* 7 (Cork, 2023), 2–8 regarding **L**.

<sup>17</sup>Elizabeth Duncan, 'A reassessment of the script and make-up of *Lebor na Nuachongbála*', *ZCP* 59 (2012), 27–66.

<sup>18</sup>O'Sullivan, 'Notes on the scripts', 22. McCay, 'The *Dindshenchas* in the Book of Leinster', 53–5 provides a detailed explanation of the work of T(2) in this section and a description of the codicology, with a graph of the bifolium involved.

<sup>19</sup>Fols CLII–CLXVII are traditionally considered to be the 'Metrical *Dindshenchas*', although some prose articles are interspersed (on fol. CLVII especially), and, as will be seen below, some scholars have considered our anecdote and the other texts surrounding it as different from *dindshenchas* material. See Schlüter, *History or Fable*, 226–43.

| Medieval foliation   |         | Facsimile pagination                  | Scribe | Texts                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CLII–CLX             |         | 215–16,<br>191–204<br>(in this order) | A      | Mainly <i>dindshenchas</i> poetry and prose.                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>New bifolium:</b> |         |                                       |        |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| CLXI                 |         | 205–6                                 | A      | – ‘Ligi Guill i mMaig Raigni’<br>(continued from CLXv)<br>– <i>dindshenchas</i> poem on Lége<br>– <i>dindshenchas</i> poem on Ard Ruide (with prose introduction)<br>– ‘Oenach indiu luid in rí’ |
| CLXII                | recto   | 207                                   | A      | – ‘Oenach indiu luid in rí’<br>(continued)<br>– ‘Dámh trír tháncatar illé’                                                                                                                       |
|                      | verso a | 208a                                  | A      | – ‘Dámh trír tháncatar illé’<br>(continued)<br>– ‘Tuilsiter mo derca súan’<br>– ‘Bec innocht lúth mo dá lúá’<br>– <b>‘Finn and Mac Lesc’</b>                                                     |
|                      | verso b | 208b                                  | T(2)   | – ‘Secht o.f.n.’                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| CLXIII               |         | 209–10                                | T(2)   | <i>dindshenchas</i> poetry.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| CLXIII–CLXV          |         | 161–64                                | F      |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| CLXVI–CLXVII         |         | 211–14                                | T(2)   |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

Table 1: Scribes and texts, fols. CLII–CLXVII in the Book of Leinster.<sup>20</sup>

is found within the latter section, on CLXIIv. However, in his edition of the *dindshenchas* poems from L, Gwynn famously stated that the poems forming the end of Scribe A’s stint in this section ‘cannot be brought within any definition of the term *dindshenchas*, however loosely interpreted’,<sup>21</sup> as ‘the compiler seems at this point to have lost sight of his intention of collecting place-legends, and to have turned aside to put together a number of poems about Finn and the Fianna’.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ is preceded by several poems which

<sup>20</sup>In this table, I have listed only poems which form part of the ‘Fenian cluster’ of texts identified by Gwynn (discussed below), and texts which directly follow ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ on the same folio. I refer to the medieval foliation throughout since the order of leaves was changed in the facsimile pagination. See Dagmar Schlüter, *History or Fable? The Book of Leinster as a Document of Cultural Memory in Twelfth-Century Ireland*, Studien und Texte zur Keltologie 9 (Münster, 2010), 226–43 for a full list of contents with corresponding medieval foliation and facsimile pagination.

<sup>21</sup>Edward John Gwynn (ed. and trans.), *The Metrical Dindsenchas*, 5 vols, Todd Lecture Series 8–12 (Dublin, 1903–35), v, 25.

<sup>22</sup>Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindsenchas*, iv, pp. v–vi. See also Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindsenchas*, v, 19.

can be linked to *fiánaigecht*: ‘Ligi Guill i mMaig Raigni’ ‘The grave of Goll in Mag Raigne’ (CLXva32),<sup>23</sup> ‘Trí tuli bit a dún Ardda Rudi’ ‘Three affluences are in the fort of Ard Ruide’ (*dindshenchas* poem of Ard Rudi with prose introduction, CLXIva32),<sup>24</sup> ‘Oenach indiu luid in rí’ ‘Today the king went to a fair’ (CLXIVb1),<sup>25</sup> ‘Dám thrír táncatar illé’ ‘A company of three men came here’ (CLXIIrb5),<sup>26</sup> ‘Tuilsiter mo derca súan’ ‘My eyes slumbered in sleep’ (CLXIIva7),<sup>27</sup> and ‘Bec innocht lúth mo dá lúá’ ‘Small tonight the vigour of my heels’ (CLXIIva24).<sup>28</sup> There is also a *dindshenchas* text between ‘Ligi Guill’ and ‘Trí tuli’, which seems unconnected to Finn and his *fián*, namely ‘Senchas Lége láthar sain’ ‘The history of Lége, a special arrangement’ (*dindshenchas* poem of Lége i nUfá Failge, CLXIr37).<sup>29</sup> Besides this latter text, the others can, to different extents, be linked to *fiánaigecht*. Yet, there is no indication in the manuscript that this section is to be considered separate from what precedes. The initial letters are in the same style as the material in the preceding folios.<sup>30</sup> The material is in the same hand as what precedes (that of Scribe A), there are no headings marking a new section of the manuscript, and there is no blank space between any of the texts. Furthermore, the folios are linked together textually, as poems are continued with no apparent lacunae from CLVIIIv to CLXr,<sup>31</sup> CLXv to CLXIr and CLXIV to CLXIIr. Thus, there is no evidence that A considered these last few texts of his stint as different from the *dindshenchas* material he had been compiling; nor does it look like he added them at a later date than the preceding material. Consequently, ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ and the preceding ‘Fenian’ poems are to be considered as part of the section of *dindshenchas*-oriented poetry compiled by Scribe A on fols. CLII–CLXII.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Diarmuid Ó Murchadha (ed. and trans.), *Lige Guill: The Grave of Goll. A Fenian Poem from the Book of Leinster*, ITS 62 (London, 2009). See further Kevin Murray, *The Early Fenian Corpus*, Cork Studies in Celtic Literatures 5 (Cork, 2021), 15–7 (#A12).

<sup>24</sup> Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, iv, 368–71.

<sup>25</sup> Whitley Stokes (ed. and trans.), ‘Find and the Phantoms’, *RC* 7 (1886), 289–307. See further Murray, *The Early Fenian Corpus*, 23–6 (#A18a and b).

<sup>26</sup> Ludwig Christian Stern (ed. and trans.), ‘Ein ossianische Ballade aus dem XII. Jahrhundert’, in Kuno Meyer, Ludwig Christian Stern, Rudolf Thurneysen, F. Sommer and W. Foy (eds), *Festschrift Whitley Stokes zum siebenzigsten Geburtstage am 28. Februar 1900 gewidmet* (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 7–19. See further Murray, *The Early Fenian Corpus*, 29–30 (#A21).

<sup>27</sup> Ernst Windisch and Whitley Stokes (ed. and trans.), *Irische Texte mit Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1900), iv/f, 161–3. See further Murray, *The Early Fenian Corpus*, 31–2 (#A23).

<sup>28</sup> Meyer (ed. and trans.), ‘Cáilte cecinit’, *Ériu* 1 (1904), 72–3. See further Murray, *The Early Fenian Corpus*, 31 (#A22).

<sup>29</sup> Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, iv, 246–53.

<sup>30</sup> See for example ISOS, [https://www.isos.dias.ie/TCD/TCD\\_MS\\_1339.html#207](https://www.isos.dias.ie/TCD/TCD_MS_1339.html#207) (accessed 10 July 2023).

<sup>31</sup> Fol. CLVIII probably never existed (Schlüter, *History or Fable*, 239).

<sup>32</sup> I make this argument in more detail in my doctoral thesis: Nina Cnockaert-Guillou, ‘Compilation and creativity in medieval *fiánaigecht*: a case-study of “Three Men and the Dog of Irúath”’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2024), 25–61. I also presented this research at the Fourth International Finn Cycle Conference, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick (23 June 2022), in a paper entitled ‘A reassessment of the cluster of *fiánaigecht* poetry in the Metrical *Dindshenchas* of the Book of Leinster’, which I intend to publish.

Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B 502 (**R**)

What is now known as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 502 (hereafter **R**) is a compilation of two independent vellum manuscripts interspersed with paper leaves assembled by the seventeenth-century antiquarian James Ware. 'Finn and Mac Lesc' is found in the second section, which has been dated to the end of the eleventh century or the beginning of the twelfth century.<sup>33</sup> It contains mostly religious texts and genealogies, but also verse and prose items, all of which appear to have been copied by a single scribe.<sup>34</sup>

**R** is at the heart of a long-standing argument about the identification of the lost Lebor Glinne Dá Locha (LGDL) or Book of Glendalough. Ó Riain suggested that **R** was LGDL based on references to LGDL as a source of texts in other manuscripts including RIA MS C iii 2 (hereafter **C**) in which another version of our text is found (see below).<sup>35</sup> His reasoning concerning **C** differs from that of Carney;<sup>36</sup> and both arguments have been re-examined by Breatnach.<sup>37</sup> More recently, Bisagni has reviewed the evidence in relation to *Amra Choluim Chille* (*ACC*), the eulogy of Colum Cille attributed to the sixth-century poet Dallán Forgaill, and put forward his own suggestions.<sup>38</sup> Though the identification of LGDL is not my purpose here, a small part of the controversy focusses on 'Táinic sam', which is part of 'Finn and Mac Lesc', therefore I will briefly summarise the arguments involving this poem here. Carney believed the **C** version of 'Táinic sam' to be independent from the version in **R**; and he thought that **C** derived it from LGDL, as 'Táinic sam' is followed by a reference to LGDL.<sup>39</sup> Ó Riain, on the contrary, pointed out the similarities between the two versions and concluded that **R** is in fact LGDL, and that the **C** version of 'Táinic sam' derives from **R**/LGDL.<sup>40</sup> Breatnach argued that **R** was not the immediate exemplar for **C**.<sup>41</sup> He pointed out that 'Fuitt co bráth', which precedes 'Táinic sam' in both manuscripts, has an additional quatrain in **C**. According to him, because LGDL is mentioned as a source shortly after the **C** version of 'Fuitt co bráth',

<sup>33</sup>Brian Ó Cuív, *Catalogue of Irish Language Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Oxford College Libraries. Part 1: Descriptions* (Dublin, 2001), 174.

<sup>34</sup>Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, 171.

<sup>35</sup>Pádraig Ó Riain, 'The Book of Glendalough or Rawlinson B. 502', *Éigse* 18/2 (1981), 161–76; see also subsequent articles by the same author, 'NLI G 2, f. 3 and the Book of Glendalough', *ZCP* 39 (1982), 29–32, 'Rawlinson B. 502 alias *Lebar Glinne Dá Locha*: a restatement of the case', *ZCP* 51 (1999), 130–47, and 'The Book of Glendalough: a continuing investigation', *ZCP* 56 (2008), 71–88.

<sup>36</sup>James Carney (ed. and trans.), *The Poems of Blathmac Son of Cú Brettan*, ITS 47 (Dublin, 1964), xii–xiii.

<sup>37</sup>Caoimhín Breatnach, 'Rawlinson B. 502, *Lebar Glinne Dá Locha* and *Saltair na Rann*', *Éigse* 30 (1997), 109–32; see also by the same author, 'Manuscript sources and methodology: Rawlinson B. 502 and *Lebar Glinne Dá Locha*', *Celtica* 24 (2003), 40–54 and 'Aspects of the textual transmission of *Sex Aetates Mundi* and *Druimm Cetta céte na noem*', *Éigse* 35 (2005), 9–26.

<sup>38</sup>Jacopo Bisagni (ed. and trans.), *Amrae Coluimb Chille: A Critical Edition*, Early Irish Text Series 1 (Dublin, 2019), 61–76.

<sup>39</sup>Carney, 'Three Old Irish Accentual Poems', 40.

<sup>40</sup>Ó Riain, 'The Book of Glendalough or Rawlinson B. 502', 174.

<sup>41</sup>Breatnach, 'Rawlinson B. 502, *Lebar Glinne Dá Locha* and *Saltair na Rann*', 114.

which is different from **R**, it means that **R** is not LGDL.<sup>42</sup> Ó Riain pointed out that the reference to LGDL in **C** specifically mentions the following texts, and not what precedes (i.e., not ‘Fuitt co bráth’ and ‘Táinic sam’).<sup>43</sup>

The foregoing is obviously just a small part of the discussions on LGDL; however, one may note that neither Ó Riain nor Breatnach considered ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ as a unit. Like previous scholars, they presented the poems ‘Fuitt co bráth’ and ‘Táinic sam’ as individual texts, despite the prosimetric frame with which they are found.

In **R**, ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ survives with other poetic material at the end of *ACC* (fols 54ra1–59vb17).<sup>44</sup> ‘Colum Cilli co Dia dommerail’ ‘Colum Cille enjoined me to God’ (fol. 59vb18–38), a prayer attributed to Adomnán, directly follows the end of the main text of *ACC*.<sup>45</sup> ‘Dia ard árlethar’ ‘God above regulates’ (fol. 59vb39–42), a poem of three quatrains attributed to Colum Cille, also precedes ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’.<sup>46</sup> Our tale then runs from fol. 59vb42 to 60ra17, and includes the poems ‘Fuitt co bráth’ and ‘Táinic sam’, the former attributed to Mac Lesc and the latter to Finn. The text directly following the anecdote is a poem beginning ‘Colum caid cumachtach’ ‘Holy, mighty Colum’ (fol. 60ra18–33).<sup>47</sup> The following poem, beginning ‘Guidium mac Feidelmíd’ ‘I pray to the son of Feidelmíd’ (fol. 60ra34–60rb16),<sup>48</sup> is also of interest since it precedes the other version of our text in **C** (for which see below).

Though the poems listed above are not found within the commentary on *ACC* itself, the contents of all these texts (excluding ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’) indicate that they are to be read as a continuation of *ACC*. Russell has shown the importance of manuscript layout when discussing *ACC* and its commentary.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Breatnach, ‘Rawlinson B. 502, *Leabar Glinne Dá Locha* and *Saltair na Rann*’, 114.

<sup>43</sup>Ó Riain, ‘Rawlinson B. 502 alias *Leabar Glinne Dá Locha*: a restatement of the case’, 142. The reference reads: ‘don logaimsir-so sís do rēir Lebuir Glinne da Lacha’, ‘for this time and place below according to the Book of Glendalough’ (C iii 2, fol. 10r47). Although the reference is found at the bottom of column *a*, and ‘Druim Ceta cēte na naem’ begins on the first line of column *b*, the adverb *sís* specifically refers to what follows in writing, ‘below, onwards, throughout’; see *eDIL* s.v. *sís* (d) (<https://dil.ie/37699>, accessed 23 October 2023).

<sup>44</sup>Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, 186–7. *ACC* ‘proper’, i.e. the text in majuscules with commentary in smaller script, starts on fol. 56ra5 and ends on fol. 59vb17. On the structure of *ACC*, see Bisagni, *Amrae Columb Chille*, 14–17.

<sup>45</sup>Paul Grosjean (ed. and trans. from **R**), ‘L’hymne d’Adamnán à Colum Cille’, *Revue des Études Indo-européennes* 1 (1938), 184–91.

<sup>46</sup>Kuno Meyer (ed.), ‘Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Aus Laud 615’, *ZCP* 10 (1915), 338–48 at 345.

<sup>47</sup>Julius Pokorny (ed. and trans.), ‘Ein altirisches Gebet zu St. Columba’, *ZCP* 8 (1912), 285–8.

<sup>48</sup>Kuno Meyer (ed.), ‘Neue Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Cainnech’s Hymnus auf Colum Cille’, *ACL* 3 (1907), 217–19.

<sup>49</sup>Paul Russell, ‘*In aliis libris*: adaptation, re-working and transmission in the commentaries to *Amra Choluim Chille*’, in Elizabeth Boyle and Deborah Hayden (eds), *Authorities and Adaptations: The Reworking and Transmission of Textual Sources in Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2014), 63–93, at 66–9. Indeed, studies of manuscript layout deserve to be incorporated into discussions of medieval Irish texts. This was done recently by Chantal Kobel, ‘Fort Margan co mBáni Bieit inna Lini: elements of readability in the *Leabhar Breac*’, a paper delivered at the Royal Irish Academy *Leabhar Breac* Conference (Dublin, 28 April 2023) and by Ralph O’Connor, *The Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel: Kingship and Narrative Artistry in a Mediaeval Irish Saga* (Oxford, 2013), 154–5. See also Nina Cnockaert-Guillou, ‘Textual structure, dialogue and the layout of the manuscripts of

In particular, he has argued that the textual layout of all versions of *ACC*, in which the main text is followed by the commentary (contrary to other instances of texts with a main display script and marginal glosses and commentary), indicates that the glossing and commentary tradition was no longer active at the time of copying.<sup>50</sup> In light of this, the poems found at the end of *ACC* on 59v–60r in **R** are particularly interesting because of how they are laid out on the page.<sup>51</sup> On 59v, the scribe was finishing *ACC*, its majuscule text interspersed with commentary in minuscule script. When he reached the end of the main text of *ACC*, after adding the commentary, he marked the *dúnad* of the poem (59vb17). He proceeded with a new poem on a new line, 'Colum Cilli co Dia dommerail', in the same style as *ACC*, that is, with the main text in majuscules, and some commentary in minuscule script. The initial of the poem, a large C, is decorated and coloured in the same fashion as the initials of sections of the *ACC* poem, and the poem is introduced by an ascription to Adomnán boxed in red ink above the first line of the poem. As in the preceding material, the scribe coloured letters at the beginning of segments of commentary and lines of verse. As such, this poem beginning 'Colum Cilli co Dia dommerail' is laid out exactly like *ACC*.

By contrast, the following poem, beginning 'Dia ard árlethar', follows in the same minuscule script as the commentary on 'Colum Cilli co Dia dommerail', and if it were not for the *dúnad* of the preceding, one could mistake it for the commentary on 'Colum Cilli co Dia dommerail'. It is marked by the scribe with a slightly larger initial D coloured in red, and the poem is indicated in the middle margin by a *phi*-sign and an ascription to Colum Cille, both boxed in red ink.<sup>52</sup> The words at the start of poetic lines are coloured in red, but the poem is written in the same script throughout and only takes up four lines in the column. Its end is marked by a *dúnad* coloured in red, and 'Finn and Mac Lesc' follows directly, on the same line and in the same minuscule script.

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*Acallam na Senórach*, *Studia Celtica Fennica* (forthcoming). See also Réjean Bergeron and Ezio Ornato, 'La lisibilité dans les manuscrits et les imprimés de la fin du Moyen Âge: préliminaires d'une recherche', *Scrittura e civiltà* 14 (1990), 151–98 at 151–2 and Malcolm B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Aldershot, 1992), 23.

<sup>50</sup>Russell, 'In aliis libris', 68–9. For other discussions of the commentary on *ACC*, see Dagmar Bronner, 'Die Kommentare zu Amra Coluimb Chille', in Dieter Bachmann, Karin Stüber, Thomas Zehnder (eds), *Akten des 5. Deutschsprachigen Keltologensymposiums. Zürich, 7.- 9. September 2009*, Keltische Forschungen: Allgemeine Buchreihe 1 (Vienna, 2010), 33–43, and Bronner, 'Der kommentierte Kommentar: Schreiber M und die mittelirische Edition von Amra Coluimb Chille im Lebor na hUidre', in Franziska Bock, Dagmar Bronner and Dagmar Schlüter (eds), *Allerlei Keltisches: Studien zu Ehren von Erich Poppe. Studies in Honour of Erich Poppe* (Berlin, 2011), 79–96.

<sup>51</sup>The following description is most useful if readers also refer to the digital images of the manuscript, available on the website of the Bodleian Library (fol. 59v: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/ea96c258-35fa-4d52-949c-5a0ef99ce659/surfaces/3af46e40-75e7-4b92-b71c-dc6a8b81ad2c/>, accessed 24 October 2023).

<sup>52</sup>These signs are used to indicate poetry in the commentary throughout the version of *ACC* in **R**, as well as in other manuscripts; see Christina Cleary, 'Critical notes and signs in the Book of Leinster *Táin Bó Cúailnge*', in John Carey (ed.), *Táin Bó Cúailnge from the Book of Leinster: Reassessments*, ITS Subsidiary Series 32 (Dublin, 2020), 90–121, at 105–8.

The initial M of our text is coloured in red, but there is no other indication that a different text has started. The second sentence of the initial prose segment is marked by a red initial (the *con* compendium), and ‘Fuitt co bráth’ is indicated by a *phi*-sign in the middle margin, like ‘Dia ard árlethar’. The initial F is larger than the rest of the script, though not at the beginning of a line, and is in much thicker ink than the rest of the page. It is not coloured, and is perhaps reminiscent of the type of large initials using heavy black ink noticed by Ó Cuív, such as the ones on fol. 60rb.<sup>53</sup> The poem is laid out in the same way as ‘Dia ard árlethar’, i.e. with the initial letters of each verse coloured in red, but the poem written continuously. It continues over the beginning of 60ra, and the *dúnad* is coloured to mark the end of the poem. The prose introducing ‘Táinic sam’ continues on the same line as the end of the poem, and in the same script. However, ‘Táinic sam’ is then written in the usual fashion for medieval Irish manuscripts; each verse starts with a larger initial in the left margin, and *cinn faoi eite* are used to ensure this. The initials and *cinn faoi eite* are coloured in red and purple. Following ‘Táinic sam’ and the prose conclusion of the anecdote, which continues on the same line as the end of the poem, the next poem, ‘Colum caid cumachtach’, is laid out in the same way as ‘Táinic sam’ with each verse starting in the margin (though no *cinn faoi eite* are needed). ‘Guidium mac Feidelmí’ follows in the same fashion.

The contrast between the layout of these last three poems and what precedes is all the more noticeable since these are on a verso and recto which face each other when holding the manuscript open. The anecdote about ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ was included in this body of material, yet its content is unconnected to Colum Cille or ACC as far as I am aware. It appears on fol. 59vb almost as a filler text, for it is not laid out with verses starting on a new line. Yet, if it was added by the scribe of R as a filler text, one would have expected it to end on fol. 59vb rather than continue for a significant portion of fol. 60ra.<sup>54</sup> ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ may therefore have been present in this scribe’s exemplar of the commentary on ACC.

*Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS C iii 2 (C)*

This sixteenth-century vellum manuscript is missing leaves, and is bound out of order, as folios 1–3 should be placed after fol. 7.<sup>55</sup> The manuscript contains an incomplete copy of ACC with extensive commentary, a version of *Immacallam in Dá Thúarad* ‘The Colloquy of the Two Sages’, and a fragment of the Triads of Ireland. In a detailed colophon on fol. 12v, the scribe identifies himself as Forandán, and indicates his patron, Domhnall Óg Mac Fhlannchadha, as well as the date the manuscript was compiled, 1552, begun in Cathair meic

<sup>53</sup> Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, 174.

<sup>54</sup> On filler texts, see the forthcoming article by Chantal Kobel, ‘The Book of Ballycummin: codicology and the significance of filler-texts’. I am grateful to Dr Kobel for sending me a copy of her article and discussing the context of ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ with me.

<sup>55</sup> Kathleen Mulchrone, Thomas O’Rahilly, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick and A. I. Pearson, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, 8 vols (Dublin, 1926–70), vi, 3421.

Nechtain and completed in Baile Meclandcada, closer to the patron.<sup>56</sup> Cathair Mhic Neachtain (anglicised Cahermacnaghten) in the parish of Rathborney, b. Burren (Co. Clare), was the location of a law school run by the Uí Dhuibh dá Bhoireann.<sup>57</sup> Domhnall Óg Mac Fhlannachadha, the patron of the book, also had a law school in Baile Meclandcada (Knockfin Crossroads, parish of Killilish, b. Corcomroe), so this manuscript appears to have been compiled for the use of learned brehons.

The Mac Lesc anecdote is again (as in **R**) found as part of the texts included at the end of *ACC*, on fol. 10ra. Due to the similarity of the context, I will also discuss the layout of **C** to compare the treatment of the texts by the scribe with that in **R**.<sup>58</sup> As in **R**, *ACC* in **C** is presented in a majuscule script with the commentary in minuscule, and both run continuously, thus indicating that the commentary and the main text were copied from an exemplar.<sup>59</sup> No colours are used in **C**. *ACC* and its commentary end on fol. 9rb24 with the words 'f.i.n.i.m. don āth-sin' 'end of that subject matter'.<sup>60</sup> It is directly followed by the poem 'Colum Cilli co Dia dommerail', which is also laid out in majuscule script with commentary in minuscule script. The first letter of the text was intended to be an enlarged capital but was never filled in (fol. 9rb28). The commentary is much longer than in the version in **R**, and a short poem of two verses is included within it on fol. 9vb, using *cinn faoi eite* to start each verse on a new line (the initial letters are set in the margin for both verses). As in **R**, the texts following 'Colum Cilli co Dia dommerail' are all in minuscule script, and the layout of *ACC* with majuscule and commentary is abandoned. 'Colum Cilli co Dia dommerail' is thus followed by 'Colum caid cumachtach' (fol. 9va44), with the initial letters of the verses in the margins. 'Dia ard árlethar' is then added on the same line after the *dúnad* of 'Colum caid cumachtach' (fol. 9vb11), with a slightly larger initial *D*, but otherwise no indication of a new text, and the poem runs continuously until fol. 9vb16 and the mention 'finim air uile'. The inclusion of 'Dia ard árlethar' as continuation of the preceding poem in **C** is reminiscent of its presentation in **R**, as mentioned above. The scribe of **C** then started 'Guidium mac Feidelmí' as normal with an initial in the margin, the rest of the poem following suit and *cinn faoi eite* making sure that each verse starts on a new line. This poem ends on fol. 10ra8, where the *dúnad* is followed, on the same line, by a scribal note seemingly expressing doubt on the order or relationship of the texts.<sup>61</sup> The scribe then copied 'Finn and Mac Lesc' from fol. 10ra10 onwards,

<sup>56</sup>Mulchrone et al, *Catalogue*, vi, 3422; Elizabeth FitzPatrick, 'Ollamh, biatach, comharba: lifeways of Gaelic learned families in medieval and early modern Ireland', in Liam Breatnach, Ruairi Ó hUiginn, Damian McManus and Katharine Simms (eds), *Proceedings of the XIV International Congress of Celtic Studies, Held in Maynooth University, 1–5 August 2011* (Dublin, 2015), 165–189, at 166.

<sup>57</sup>FitzPatrick, 'Ollamh, biatach, comharba', 166.

<sup>58</sup>For the following description, refer to **C** fols 9r–10r, ISOS ([https://www.isos.dias.ie/RIA/RIA\\_MS\\_C\\_iii\\_2.html#21](https://www.isos.dias.ie/RIA/RIA_MS_C_iii_2.html#21)) (accessed 7 November 2023).

<sup>59</sup>See discussion above with relation to **R**.

<sup>60</sup>I read 'ath' as *fáth* 'subject-matter of a composition'; *eDIL* s.v. fáth (b) (<https://dil.ie/21356>, accessed 25 January 2024).

<sup>61</sup>The note reads '*ar .c.c. co dia domerail tig so sís. 7 ní cuimnigim-si ara cuit cindti dei*'; I tentatively translate 'after "Colum Cilli co Dia dommerail" this comes below. And I do not remember

with an initial in the margin at the start of the first prose segment and for each verse of both ‘Fuitt co bráth’ and ‘Táinic sam’. The last line of the column is filled by the words ‘don logainsir-so sīs do rēir Lebuir Glinne da Lacha’ ‘for this time and place below according to the Book of Glendalough’,<sup>62</sup> and ‘Druim Céta Céte na naem’ starts on the new column (fol. 10rb), with each verse initial set in the margin as for the previous material.<sup>63</sup> The poem is finished in the bottom margin (three verses), with the final words in the bottom right corner of the page reading ‘f.i.n.i.t. amen don amra’.

Thus, as in **R**, the layout of ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ and surrounding texts in **C** suggests that our anecdote was copied by the scribe from an exemplar of the commentary on *ACC*, in which ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ had already been incorporated into this corpus of texts at the end of *ACC*. The mention ‘f.i.n.i.t. amen don amra’ further suggests that these texts were considered part of *ACC* – ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ with them. Nevertheless, ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ does not occur in any other version of *ACC* as far as I am aware, and its occurrence in a different context in **L** indicates that it was not solely associated with *ACC*. The relationships between the different versions and manuscripts thus need to be teased out further.

#### *Manuscript relationships: R, C and ACC*

‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ is found in two distinct contexts, i.e. *dindshenchas* and *ACC*. In both of these it seems to be part of clusters of texts. In **L**, I have shown above that the Fenian focus of some poems at the end of Scribe A’s stint is not highlighted by the scribe in any way, and so this so-called cluster must be thought of as an integral part of the rest of the *dindshenchas* section. In the context of *ACC* in **R** and **C**, ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ is included as part of a cluster of texts which mark the end of *ACC*, but unlike in **L**, our anecdote appears to be unconnected to the surrounding material. Though Fenian material was often interpreted in various ways – and indeed, the poems in ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ are general enough to have been understood in other contexts – there is no indication of the reason for the incorporation of the text in this place.<sup>64</sup>

In seven of the ten main manuscripts containing a copy of *ACC*, one or more of the poems ‘Colum Cille co Dia dommerail’, ‘Dia ard árlethar’, ‘Colum caid cumachtach’ or ‘Guidium mac Feidelmí’ are present at the end of *ACC*, and often in a similar order (see Table 2 below). The fact that ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’

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its definite part of it’, maybe referring to the scribe not recalling how ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ relates to the preceding material.

<sup>62</sup>My transcription and translation. Underlining indicates expansions of abbreviations requiring editorial interpretation, such as suspension strokes.

<sup>63</sup>Note that the poem is interrupted on 10rb15 where it seems to end with a *dúnad*, and a new poem is introduced, beginning ‘Secht céit do bliadnaib brasa’. This corresponds to **R**, fol. 55rb, and the introductory sentence of this new section in **C** is the same as the introduction of the whole poem in **R**, boxed in red on fol. 55rb.

<sup>64</sup>For a discussion of interpretations of Fenian material in different manuscript contexts, see Martina Maher, ‘The Cín Dromma Snechtai-*fianaigeacht* complex in London, British Library, MS Egerton 1782’, in Sharon J. Arbuthnot, Síle Ní Mhurchú and Geraldine Parsons (eds), *The Gaelic Finn Tradition II* (Dublin, 2022), 100–13.

is only present in two of these witnesses suggests it may have been misplaced in the course of textual transmission; however this also posits a link between **R** and **C**, or a reason for the inclusion of our text in this particular cluster, though this reason seems opaque at this point. Table 2 lists the order of the texts found at the end of *ACC*.<sup>65</sup>

This table aims to show the parallelism in the order of the texts in all manuscripts of *ACC*. Despite this, 'Finn and Mac Lesc' is found only in **R** and **C**. *Lebor na hUidre*, G 50, Laud 615 and the Yellow Book of Lecan all omit our anecdote, so it seems there was probably a different tradition, or version of the commentary that only **R** and **C** followed, or that was added to **R** and copied into **C**. Of course, the tale might have been present in the fragmentary copies; for example, the version in the *Liber Hymnorum* ends right after *ACC* and 'Colum Cille co Dia dommerail'; thus we cannot know if this was followed by the same corpus of texts as in **R** and **C**, nor whether 'Finn and Mac Lesc' was included there.<sup>66</sup> In no copy of *ACC* does our tale occur inside the commentary on the *Amra* proper, as far as I am aware. Though one should note the presence of the 'nature' poem beginning 'Scél lem dúib' 'I have news for you' in the commentary on *ACC*, in which it is attributed to Find ('ut dixit Find'), it is not specified whether this refers to Finn mac Cumail.<sup>67</sup> The commentary indicates that 'Scél lem dúib' was added to illustrate the use of the word *rian*, which also occurs in 'Táinic sam' (1d), but there is no indication that this poem was also included at this point in the commentary. Although Meyer edited 'Scél lem dúib' together with 'Finn and Mac Lesc' and 'Cétamon', there is thus no evidence that the poems of 'Finn and Mac Lesc' are connected to it.

Both **R** and **C** have extensive commentary, and no comparison of the different versions of the commentary on *ACC* has been published so far. As pointed out by Bisagni, the commentary was 'open to a continuous process of selection, diminution and accretion'.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the line of transmission for the commentary is much more difficult to trace than that of the main text of *ACC*. Furthermore, Davies argues that glosses and commentary have not received enough scholarly attention, and that they actually testify to the learned, lively, and playful mind of glossators of the time.<sup>69</sup> If so, a detailed analysis of the *scholia* on *ACC* might lead to conclusions as to patterns followed by commentators, and help us understand why 'Finn and Mac Lesc'

<sup>65</sup>All poems are listed according to the first line. Orthography varies in the manuscripts, but I have used one version for the sake of clarity. The manuscripts not mentioned here are RIA, MS 23 P 16, *An Leabhar Breac* (only the preface and the first line of *ACC* survive), NLI MS G 466 (the copy breaks off at IX, 1, Bisagni (ed. and trans.), *Amrae Coluimb Chille*, 276–7), and BL MS Egerton 1782 (the copy breaks off at VI, 13, Bisagni (ed. and trans.), *Amrae Coluimb Chille*, 272–3).

<sup>66</sup>J. H. Bernard and Robert Atkinson (ed. and trans.), *The Irish Liber Hymnorum*, 2 vols, Henry Bradshaw Society 13, 14 (London, 1898), i, pp. x–xi.

<sup>67</sup>Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 14–15, Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'The Bodleian Amra Choluimb Chille', 258–9; see also Jacopo Bisagni, 'Scél lem dúib: an emendation', *Studia Celtica* 42 (2008), 166–71.

<sup>68</sup>Bisagni, *Amrae Coluimb Chille*, 17.

<sup>69</sup>Morgan Thomas Davies, 'Protocols of reading in early Irish literature: notes on some notes to "Orgain Denna Ríg" and "Amra Coluim Cille"', *CMCS* 32 (1996), 1–23, at 17–19.

| <i>Lebor na hUidre</i>           | Laud 615                         | <b>R</b>                         | <b>C</b>                        | Yellow Book of Lecan             | <i>Liber Hymnorum</i>           | G 50                                        |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <i>lacuna</i>                    | ‘Colum Cille co Dia dom-merail’  | ‘Colum Cille co Dia dom-merail’  | ‘Colum Cille co Dia dom-merail’ | ‘Colum Cille co Dia dom-merail’  | ‘Colum Cille co Dia dom-merail’ | ‘Colum Cille co Dia dom-merail’             |
| ‘Dia ard árlethar’               | ‘Dia ard árlethar’               | ‘Dia ard árlethar’               | ‘Colum caid cumachtach’         | ‘Colum caid cumachtach’          | <i>MS breaks off</i>            | ‘Fo réir Coluim cén ad-fíás’, <sup>70</sup> |
| ‘Colum caid cumachtach’          | ‘Colum caid cumachtach’          | <b>‘Finn and Mac Lesc’</b>       | ‘Dia ard árlethar’              | <i>other texts</i> <sup>71</sup> |                                 | <i>other texts</i> <sup>72</sup>            |
| <i>other texts</i> <sup>73</sup> | ‘Guidium mac Feidelmí’           | ‘Colum caid cumachtach’          | ‘Guidium mac Feidelmí’          |                                  |                                 |                                             |
|                                  | <i>other texts</i> <sup>74</sup> | ‘Guidium mac Feidelmí’           | <b>‘Finn and Mac Lesc’</b>      |                                  |                                 |                                             |
|                                  |                                  | <i>other texts</i> <sup>75</sup> | ‘Druim Ceta cete na naem’       |                                  |                                 |                                             |
|                                  |                                  |                                  | ‘F.i.n.i.t. amen don amra’      |                                  |                                 |                                             |

Table 2: Cluster of texts at the end of ACC in surviving manuscripts

<sup>70</sup>Fergus Kelly (ed. and trans.), ‘A poem in praise of Columb Cille’, *Ériu* 24 (1973), 1–34.

<sup>71</sup>Starting with *In tenga bithnua*; see John Carey (ed. and trans.), *Apocrypha Hiberniae* 2, *Apocalyptica 1. In tenga bithnua: The ever-new tongue*, Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum 16 (Turnhout, 2010).

<sup>72</sup>Starting with *Amra Senáin*; see Liam Breatnach (ed. and trans.), ‘An edition of *Amra Senáin*’, in Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and Kim R. McCone (eds), *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney* (Maynooth, 1989), 7–31.

<sup>73</sup>Starting with *Scél Tuáin meic Cairill do Finnen Maige Bile*; see John Carey (ed. and trans.), ‘Scél Tuáin meic Chairill’, *Ériu* 35 (1984), 93–111.

<sup>74</sup>Starting with ‘Cormac cain buich neóit’, a poem found as part of the preface on ACC in **R** and the *Liber Hymnorum*; see Stokes (ed. and trans.), ‘The Bodleian Amra Choluimb Chille’, 44–5.

<sup>75</sup>Starting with *Immacallam in dá thúarad*; see Stokes (ed. and trans.), ‘The colloquy of the two sages’, *RC* 26 (1905), 4–64, 284–5.

occurs only in **R** and **C**, and in the same place in both.<sup>76</sup> Because it is not placed after the cluster of texts but within it, and because it occurs earlier than the words 'F.i.n.i.t. amen don amra' in **C**, I am inclined to think 'Finn and Mac Lesc' is in fact part of the commentary, even if it may originally have occupied a different place therein.<sup>77</sup>

### *Textual relationships?*

The manuscript contexts require the **R** and **C** versions to be compared and contrasted with the one in **L**; indeed, **R** and **C** often agree closely together against **L**. For example, the first sentence of the text in prose is the same in **R** and in **C**, whereas only a couple of the same words ('Aithech mith', **L** §1, l. 1) are present in **L**, which has a completely different phrasing. The same goes for the sentence introducing the first poem, which is the same in **R** and **C** but does not appear in **L**, in which it is worded differently. As for 'Fuitt co bráth', there are several instances where **R** and **C** agree against **L**; for example, in 2a: 'Is méit muir mór cech lond' (**L**) against 'Méit muir mór cech loch lonn' (**R** and **C**). The line in all three manuscripts is hypometrical, so it is likely that both *is* and *loch* are to be taken as part of the line. In 'Fuitt co bráth' 3c, **R** and **C** have 'nís-tā' while **L** reads 'nocus-tā'. The verbal form in **L** is difficult, but understandable (see notes), whereas the line is hypometrical in **R** and **C**. In 4c, **R** gives 'con-gab donenn dar cach leth', agreeing with **C** against **L** which has 'Ro iad corrthi for cach leth'. These variants are few, but they show a closer relationship between **R** and **C** than with **L**, suggesting that the latter is part of a different line of transmission; the absence of the second part of the tale in **L** also tends to confirm this hypothesis.

However, an important difference between the manuscripts is the addition of a stanza in the first poem as the initial quatrain in **C** (1B in the edition below), before the verse beginning 'Fuitt co bráth'; and this does not appear in **R** nor in **L**. This is also found as the first quatrain of a poem told by the old woman who hides Diarmait and Gráinne on the Hill of Howth in the text known as *Úath Beinne Étair* 'The Hiding of the Hill of Howth' (*ÚBÉ*).<sup>78</sup> This poem is a ruse to make them believe that the weather is too bad to go outside, in order to allow Finn to catch them, but it is ultimately unsuccessful. This text only survives in two sixteenth-century manuscripts, RIA MS 23 N 10 and BL Harleian MS

<sup>76</sup>I am grateful to Dr Christina Cleary for sharing her knowledge of the commentary on *ACC* and discussing the context of 'Finn and Mac Lesc' with me.

<sup>77</sup>It was pointed out to me that 'Táinic sam' contains the word *snéid* (1c) which also appears in *ACC* (Stokes (ed. and trans.), 'The Bodleian Amra Choluimb Chille', 168–9). However, this is not proof that 'Táinic sam' was ever incorporated into the commentary of *ACC*, especially as 'Táinic sam' constitutes the second part of the 'Finn and Mac Lesc' anecdote.

<sup>78</sup>That the quatrain was incorporated into 'Fuitt co bráth' at a later stage of textual transmission is evident from the place-names mentioned. Magh Luirg (anglicised Moylurg), mentioned in *ÚBÉ*, is in county Roscommon, whereas 'Finn and Mac Lesc' is set in Slieve Gullion, County Armagh. Meyer points out that the mention of Magh Luirg, a place so far away from the setting of *ÚBÉ*, i.e. the Hill of Howth in Dublin, suggests that the poem does not belong to that tale either (Kuno Meyer, 'Úath Beinne Étair', *RC* 11 (1890), 125–34, at 127). The title of the text is re-evaluated in Caoimhín Breatnach, 'Explanations of three rare words in the tale known as *Úath Beinne Étair* and a re-assessment of this title', *Ériu* 70 (2020), 73–81, at 77–81.

5280. The second quatrain of this poem is also similar to the first verse of ‘Fuitt co bráth’:

|                                        |                                         |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <i>Úath Beinne Étair</i> <sup>79</sup> | <b>L</b>                                |
| Fuit co bráth!                         | Fúit co bráth!                          |
| <b>Rus dail</b> in doinnenn ar cāch,   | <b>ro dail</b> in donend ar cāch        |
| aponn <u>cech</u> eittride a fān,      | is áth <u>cach</u> n-ettrigi n-án,      |
| is <u>lind</u> lān <u>cech</u> n-āth.  | 7 is <u>lind</u> lān <u>cach</u> n-āth. |
| <b>R</b>                               | <b>C</b>                                |
| Fuitt co bráth!                        | Fuid co brāch!                          |
| <b>is mō</b> in donenn ar cāch,        | <b>is mō</b> an doinnend ar cāch,       |
| is ab <u>cach</u> etrice án,           | is obh <u>gach</u> eitrice án,          |
| is <b>loch</b> lān <u>cach</u> āth.    | 7 is <b>loch</b> lān <u>gach</u> áth.   |

Table 3: textual correspondances in the verse beginning  
‘Fuitt co bráth’ in **L**, **R**, **C** and *ÚBÉ*

The instances where **L** has different readings to **R** and **C** have been underlined in bold; in these cases, the same words (although not the same form for the preverb in line *b*) are in *ÚBÉ*. The corresponding passages in **R** and **C** are rendered in bold. The occurrence in line *c* in **L** of *áth* for *ab* in **R**, *obh* in **C** and *aponn* in *ÚBÉ* may be a coincidence, but is worth noting.

The similarities in this quatrain seem to link **L** and *ÚBÉ* together. Consequently, **L** and **C** appear to be more strongly connected to *ÚBÉ* than **R**; **L** by its shared readings with the first verse from *ÚBÉ*, and **C** because of the interpolated quatrain it shares with *ÚBÉ*. The links between *ÚBÉ* and **L** are quite striking, as *ÚBÉ* contains a later form of the language (see language notes below); it is tempting to suggest that the surviving versions of *ÚBÉ* were inspired by the poem in **L**. It is known that a version of the story of Diarmait and Gráinne existed long before the sixteenth century, for their elopment is mentioned in the tale-list present in **L**, and some verses sung by them are quoted in *ACC*, but no early version of the tale has survived.<sup>80</sup>

If **C** does have a link to *ÚBÉ*, and to **L**, points of difference between the texts of **R** and **C** could suggest that **C** is actually part of **L**’s line of transmission. However, some of these are found in the second part of the text which is missing from **L**, thus preventing any further comparison. For example, there are two occurrences where **C** has a word missing compared to **R**: ‘Táinic sam’ 3c ‘find’

<sup>79</sup>RIA MS 23 N 10, p. 13 (my transcription). The text from this manuscript was edited by Nessa Ní Shéaghda (ed. and trans.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne: The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne*, ITS 48 (Dublin, 1967), 131–7 (Appendix D). For an edition from BL MS Harley 5280, see Kuno Meyer (ed. and trans.), ‘Úath Beinne Etair’, *RC* 11 (1890), 125–34.

<sup>80</sup>Stokes, ‘The Bodleian Amra Choluimb Chille,’ 154–7, 264–5. See also Ní Shéaghda, *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, pp. xiii–xiv, where she mentions ‘the fourteenth-century compilation of poems by Gearóid Iarla fourth earl of Desmond (†1398), in which the author refers in almost every poem to the story of Diarmaid and Gráinne’. The evidence and scholarship on the topic are summarised in Kevin Murray, *The Early Finn Cycle* (Dublin, 2017), 95–105.

and 6a 'dron', but this part of the text is absent from **L**, and in both cases, the metre seems to favour the readings in **R** (see notes). Notwithstanding this suggestion, **C** and **R** thus do seem to be closer.

'Finn and Mac Lesc' is a short text, and the various links between its only three known copies are not easily explained. As we have seen, it seems that the version in **L** constitutes a different strand of the textual tradition, both because it is missing the second part of the text found in **R** and **C**, and because it often disagrees with **R** and **C**. Since these last two copies agree quite closely, only have small differences, and place the poem in the exact same manuscript context, I am inclined to think that they are part of the same line of textual transmission. However, the relationships between *ACC* and the anecdote remain to be elucidated.

Through its connections to *dindshenchas* in **L**, to *ACC* in **R** and **C**, and its intertextual links to *ÚBÉ*, 'Finn and Mac Lesc' is therefore a particularly interesting anecdote. The poems 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Táinic sam' are obviously the focus of the text, but the fact that they do not survive outside of this prosimetric context should be borne in mind in future analyses of the tale. Furthermore, it is clear from the manuscript context that the textual tradition of 'Táinic sam' is unconnected to that of 'Cétamon'.

#### SIMILARITIES BETWEEN 'TÁINIC SAM' AND 'CÉTAMON'?

Before discussing the metre of 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Táinic sam', Carney and Meyer's argument regarding the similarities between these poems and 'Cétamon' need to be reassessed. It is worth noting here that while Meyer edited four poems together, Carney focussed his argument on the similarities between 'Táinic sam' and 'Cétamon', leaving out 'Fuitt co bráth' and 'Scél lem dúib'. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, these similarities between 'Táinic sam' and 'Cétamon' are very general, namely their ascription to Finn and their focus on nature in the summer. Meyer points out some parallels between the poems, but these are too slim to posit such a close connection between them (see Table 4 below; the words mentioned in both poems are marked in bold). 'Cétamon' and 'Táinic sam' are both praising summer, and it is therefore not surprising that in describing nature, they mention cuckoos, horses or deer. Such tropes also occur in poems written in other languages such as the thirteenth-century English lyric 'Sumer is icumen in' or in Welsh poetry by Dafydd ap Gwilym.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, 'Fuitt co bráth', a poem about winter, contains tropes also found in other seasonal poems such as the Welsh 'Llym awel' 'Sharp is the wind'.<sup>82</sup>

Of the phrases mentioned by Meyer and listed in Table 4, the only direct textual parallel would seem to be between 9c in 'Cétamon' and 6d in 'Táinic

<sup>81</sup> 'Sumer is icumen in' can be found in Carleton Brown (ed.), *English Lyrics of the XIII<sup>th</sup> Century* (Oxford, 1932), 13; Dafydd ap Gwilym's poems 'Mis Mai' 'May' and 'Mis Mai a Mis Tachwedd' 'May and November' are edited and translated in Dafydd Johnston (ed. and trans.), <https://dafyddapgwilym.net>, poems 32 and 33 (accessed 23 January 2024).

<sup>82</sup> Jenny Rowland (ed. and trans.), *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: A Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge, 1990), 454–7 and 501–3.

sam', which both use the noun *bedg* 'leap' and same adjective to qualify *íasc* 'fish' or *íach* 'salmon'. However, *brecc* is a common adjective for fish and both words alliterate, so they are prone to be juxtaposed in poetry and this echo may well be a coincidence.<sup>83</sup>

| 'Cétamon'                                                                             | 'Táinic sam'                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 <i>b</i> saigid <b>graig</b> lúath linn 'the swift herd of horses seeks the pool'   | 4 <i>c</i> rethid <b>graig</b> 'a stud of horses runs'                               |
| 4 <i>a</i> fúabair <b>oscell</b> scéill shigin 'panic startles the heart of the deer' | 3 <i>a</i> foss n- <b>oss</b> ro gab tess 'heat has affected the deer's tranquility' |
| 4 <i>c</i> cuirither sál <b>súan</b> 'ocean sinks asleep'                             | 6 <i>c</i> <b>sūanaid</b> ler lonn 'the strong sea sleeps'                           |
| 9 <i>c</i> cuirither íasc <b>brecc bedc</b> 'the speckled fish leaps'                 | 6 <i>d</i> fo-ling íach <b>brec bedc</b> 'a speckled salmon leaps'                   |

Table 4: Lines cited by Meyer as 'internal evidence' that 'Cétamon' and 'Táinic sam' were composed by the same poet.<sup>84</sup>

I have not found other instances of direct textual parallels between both poems, besides commonplaces such as 'Táinic sam' 2*a*, 'Canaid cuy' 'A cuckoo sings' compared to 'Cétamon' 2*a* 'Gairid cáí' 'A cuckoo calls', and 'Táinic sam' 1*d* 'dīa mbi rēid rón rían' 'and the seals' course is smooth' compared to 'Cétamon' 4*b* 'imrid réid rían rith' 'the smooth sea runs apace'.<sup>85</sup> In the latter example, the association of *rēid*, *rian* and *rón* or *rith* may easily be attributed to alliteration, and *rian* 'sea' or 'course' is found elsewhere with *rith* (*ACC*), *rón* (*Immram Curaig Mail Dúin* 'The voyage of Máel Dúin's curach') and other words beginning with *r-*.<sup>86</sup> Carney criticised 'Táinic sam' as 'an arrangement of clichés' compared to 'Cétamon', mentioning the image of cuckoos singing and birds leaping, and the 'parenthetically awkward and poetically disconnected image of the leap of the "swift slender stag"'.<sup>87</sup> However, these criticisms come down to personal taste and are not evidence of any direct textual relation between the two poems.

On the basis of these apparent similarities in theme between 'Cétamon' and 'Táinic sam' and his own opinion of the poetic quality of 'Táinic sam', Carney thus suggested that the former influenced the latter not only in its subject matter but also in its metrical structure. Given that the suggested similarities are superficial and that the manuscript context of 'Táinic sam' is completely different to

<sup>83</sup> Indeed, *brecc* is used substantively to mean a small fish, usually understood to be a trout; *eDIL* s.v. 2 *brecc* (<https://dil.ie/6621>, accessed 23 January 2024). As for the phrase *do-cuirethar bedc* 'makes a bound', it is very common across the literature; see *eDIL* s.v. *do-cuirethar* I(c) (<https://dil.ie/17442>, accessed 23 January 2024).

<sup>84</sup> Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 5 and 7.

<sup>85</sup> 'Táinic sam' is edited below. I have quoted the lines in 'Cétamon' following Meyer; Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 2–13, but see also Carney (ed. and trans.), 'Three Old Irish accentual poems', 41–3.

<sup>86</sup> See references in *eDIL* s.v. *rian* (a) and (b) (<https://dil.ie/35219>, accessed 23 January 2024).

<sup>87</sup> Carney (ed. and trans.), 'Three Old Irish accentual poems', 39.

that of 'Cétamon', I think it would be worthwhile to revisit the question of its metrical structure.

#### METRE

'Finn and Mac Lesc' contains two poems which are meant to be read together; I will start by discussing the metre of the first of these, 'Fuitt co bráth'. This poem appears to be in the well-known *rannaigeacht mór* metre, or perhaps *rannaigeacht chetharchubaid gairit dialtach*.<sup>88</sup> There is a lot of ornamentation in the poem, though it does not follow the metrical rules perfectly. *1a* is shortened to three syllables, as required for *rannaigeacht chetharchubaid gairit dialtach*, but this is also common in early poetry according to Knott.<sup>89</sup> *1d* is hypometrical in **R**, but **L** and **C** supply the missing syllable; *2a* and *3c* are hypometrical in **R** and **C**, but **L** supplies the missing syllable in both instances, though the interpretation of *3c* is difficult (see notes for further discussion).

There is end-rhyme in *bd* throughout the poem, though in *4bd* it is imperfect (Cuilt : fuit). There is *aicill* rhyme in all couplets except the first, which is to be expected due to the shortened first line (*1ab*).<sup>90</sup> There is *amus* (assonance) between all the end-words of 1 (*bráth* : *cāch* : *án* : *āth*); *bráth* in *1a* rhymes with *bd* as well. There is *úaitne* (consonance) between the end-words of 2 (*lonn* : *gann* : *linn* : *slamm*) and in *2ab* (*mór* : *gúr*). Alliteration occurs in ten out of sixteen lines (62.5%).

'Táinic sam' is more complex than 'Fuitt co bráth', and does not seem to follow the same metre throughout. In the manuscripts, the poem is laid out in the usual fashion with large initials at the start of verses (discussed above) and verses of four lines, which are usually 5<sup>1</sup>.<sup>91</sup> Two lines are hypometrical by one syllable: *3a* (4<sup>1</sup>) and *4a* (4<sup>1</sup>); in the case of *4a* the line is obviously difficult to interpret and something must be missing (see notes for discussion). Two quatrains (5 and 7) have lines of 6<sup>1</sup>. Despite this slightly eclectic syllable count, the poem is consistent in its ornamentation. There is perfect or imperfect end-rhyme between *bd* throughout (perfect in verses 1, 4 and 5). There is *aicill* rhyme in all the couplets of the quatrains with lines of 5 syllables, and in *7ab* and *cd*.<sup>92</sup> In verse 5, which has lines of six syllables, there is no *aicill* rhyme but *úaitne* occurs in both *ab* (*glass* : *doss*) and *cd* (*gaim* : *coin*). Alliteration is omnipresent in the poem, occurring in twenty-four out of twenty-eight lines (85.7%).

<sup>88</sup>Eleanor Knott, *An Introduction to Irish Syllabic Poetry of the Period 1200–1600* (Cork, 1928), 13–5; Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics* (Dublin, 1961), 52 and 54.

<sup>89</sup>Knott, *Irish Syllabic Poetry*, 14, n. 1.

<sup>90</sup>*1cd* án : lān, *2ab* lonn : droñg, *2cd* linn : find, *3ab* léig : rēid, *3cd* dín : fír, *4ab* gribb : glicc, *4cd* leth : nech.

<sup>91</sup>**R** uses dots to indicate the end of lines in most of the verses.

<sup>92</sup>*1ab* sōer : clōen, *1cd* snéid : rēid, *2ab* mbláith : sāim (imperfect *aicill* rhyme; makes *amus*), *2cd* crūaich : lūaith, *3ab* tess : dess, *3cd* fonn : lonn, *4ab* barr : drum (if refusing the scribe's emendation; see notes for discussion), *4cd* mūd : cūan, *6ab* dord : forbb, *6cd* liac : iach, and in *7ab* tīr : sil and *7cd* daim : brain.

Though this ornamentation does not fit perfectly with the metres as set out in *MV*, it is quite close to *lethran-naigeacht mór* (5<sup>1</sup>5<sup>1</sup>5<sup>1</sup>5<sup>1</sup>), and *dá trían rannaigeachta móire* (6<sup>1</sup>6<sup>1</sup>6<sup>1</sup>6<sup>1</sup>) for verses 5 and 7.<sup>93</sup> ‘Tánic sam’ does not have consonance in all words in line-final position, and does not have internal rhyme in all couplets, but it contains either *aicill* rhyme or *úaitne* instead. These metres also indicate that alliteration should be present in every line, and that is almost the case in ‘Tánic sam’. That two quatrains within the poem are in a different metre is not altogether surprising as mixtures of metres occur frequently in poems attested in contemporary manuscripts such as *L*.<sup>94</sup> For example, Breatnach lists four *dindshenchas* poems in *L* which contain a mix of *rannaigeacht* metres, and nine poems containing a mix of *rannaigeacht* and *deibide* or another type of metre.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, the two types of *rannaigeacht* used in ‘Tánic sam’ require the same ornamentation, so the two quatrains of 6-syllable lines do not appear out of place. That ‘Tánic sam’ is composed in a mixed *rannaigeacht* metre is also consistent with the fact that it is only ever attested in a prosimetric context alongside ‘Fuitt co bráth’, also in *rannaigeacht*.

Meyer described the metre of ‘Tánic sam’ and ‘Cétamon’ thus: ‘the half-lines vary in length very freely, and often in the same stanza, from four to seven syllables; the rhyme-words are all monosyllabic; there is internal assonance (...); alliteration is carried through not only within the half-lines and lines (...) but also from one line into another, and from one stanza into the following (...)’.<sup>96</sup> Murphy then argued that ‘Cétamon’ was composed following *lethran-naigeacht mór* and reconstructed a text for the poem to match these metrical rules exactly.<sup>97</sup> However, Carney disagreed, and argued that both ‘Cétamon’ and ‘Tánic sam’ were composed in a stressed metre ‘consisting of couplets with monosyllabic end-rhyme. Each line has four phrases, the couplet eight, and hence is taken here as belonging to the *ochtfhoclach* (“eight-phrased”?) type’; ‘apart from the final monosyllable rhyme, there is no syllable count’, and ‘the number of syllables may vary considerably’; ‘there is a caesura after the second phrase, and the two parts of the line are usually linked by rhyme between the last word of the first part and a word in the second’.<sup>98</sup> In his edition, Carney lays out ‘Tánic sam’ following this proposed accented pattern.

An analysis of the metre of ‘Cétamon’ is outside the scope of the present study, but the syllable counts and metrical ornamentations listed above for ‘Tánic sam’ contradict Carney’s and Meyer’s statements for this poem. As seen

<sup>93</sup> Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, 56–7; Rudolf Thurneysen (ed.), ‘Mittelirische Verslehren’, in Ernst Windisch and Whitley Stokes (eds), *Irische Texte mit Wörterbuch*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1891), iii, 1–182, at 81 and 83–4 (§58 and §70). See also Roisín McLaughlin (ed. and trans.), ‘A critical edition of Mittelirische Verslehren III’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 2007, 223–4 and 250–2 (§58 and §70).

<sup>94</sup> Liam Breatnach, ‘*Sluindfjet dúib dagaisti in dána*: a Middle Irish poem on metres’, in Caoimhín Breatnach and Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail (eds), *Aon don Éigse: Essays Marking Osborn Bergin’s Centenary Lecture on Bardic Poetry (1912)* (Dublin, 2015), 51–90, at 55–61.

<sup>95</sup> Breatnach, ‘*Sluindfjet dúib dagaisti in dána*’, 58–9.

<sup>96</sup> Meyer, *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 17.

<sup>97</sup> Murphy, ‘Finn’s poem on May-day’, 87.

<sup>98</sup> Carney, ‘Three Old Irish accentual poems’, 34–5.

above and contrary to what Carney stated, the variation in the syllable-count in 'Táinic sam' is not considerable; rather, it is consistent and the poem does not need to be emended in order to fit *lethrannaigeacht mór*, with two verses in *dá trían rannaigeachta móire*. Although two lines are hypometrical in the manuscripts (3a and 4a), this is also the case with 'Fuitt co bráth' (1d, 2a and 3c), which is clearly syllabic. 'Táinic sam' contains slight variations from the ornamentations required by the metrical tracts, but that is to be expected since the poems were composed before such metrical rules were fixed, and again 'Fuitt co bráth' contains similar variations, as pointed out above.

Furthermore, there is little evidence for early patterns of alliteration such as the ones theorised by Sproule, Hollo and de Vries. According to Sproule, 'Cétamon' has 35% complex alliteration, whereas 'Táinic sam' has only 26%, a figure that he considers within the range of complex alliteration occurring by accident or semi-consciously.<sup>99</sup> Only two 'possible' instances of Hollo and de Vries' paired alliteration and mirrored alliteration occur in 'Táinic sam'.<sup>100</sup> 'Cétamon' seems to have more, though de Vries accepts some examples are 'doubtful'.<sup>101</sup> As mentioned above, if 'Táinic sam' is meant to follow a pattern of *lethrannaigeacht mór* and *dá trían rannaigeachta móire*, then alliteration is expected in all lines and such examples of alliterative patterns may well be coincidental. On the contrary, the instances of mirrored alliteration are significantly more common in 'Cétamon', which also contains consistent linking alliteration between stanzas (*fidrad freccomail*), where 'Táinic sam' only has one instance (5d–6a).<sup>102</sup>

Thus, the syllabic counts mentioned above, the lack of alliteration patterns such as *fidrad freccomail* and the manuscript layout with dots marking the end of each line indicate that if 'Táinic sam' was once composed in a stressed metre, the versions which have survived were understood and written following a syllabic metre. I do not believe that there is sufficient evidence to support a reading of 'Táinic sam' following a stressed alliterative metre.

Consequently, there is also a lack of proof to support the argument that 'Cétamon' and 'Táinic sam' were composed following the same metre, by the same poet, or in imitation of one another. The ornamentation described above shows that 'Táinic sam' is nonetheless a well-constructed poem which, similarly to 'Fuitt co bráth', makes use of alliteration, repetition and anaphora in clever ways. We should thus read 'Táinic sam' together with 'Fuitt co bráth', as part of the 'Finn and Mac Lesc' anecdote – and, therefore, as it is presented in the manuscripts.

<sup>99</sup>David Sproule, 'Complex alliteration, full and unstressed rhyme, and the origin of *deibide*', *Ériu* 38 (1987), 183–98, at 187 and 194. Sproule does not list the examples of complex alliteration in 'Táinic sam', but de Vries lists these following Carney's edition in Ranke de Vries, 'Instances of mirrored alliteration in the earliest Irish poetry', *Australian Celtic Journal* 13 (2015), 33–95, at 65.

<sup>100</sup>Kaarina Hollo, 'The alliterative structure of Mael Ísu Ua Brolcháin's *A aingil, beir*', *Ériu* 41 (1990), 77–80, at 78; de Vries, 'Instances of mirrored alliteration', 33 and 65.

<sup>101</sup>de Vries, 'Instances of mirrored alliteration', 64.

<sup>102</sup>Carney, 'Three Old Irish accentual poems', 35. See also James Carney, 'Linking alliteration (*fidrad freccomail*)', *Éigse* 18/2 (1981), 251–62.

## LANGUAGE

‘Finn and Mac Lesc’ does not contain any historical references to help with dating. As a short prosimetric text, it is also difficult to date on the basis of the language, and the prose and two poems may not have been written at the same time. As such, the linguistic features listed below and the suggested date are merely indicative.<sup>103</sup> Examples cited are from **R** unless otherwise stated.

*Orthography and phonology*

Prepositions are spelled following Old Irish usage and are not reduced nor lenited as is common in the Middle Irish period: ‘Fuitt co bráth’ 4*b* *īar* (Mīr *ar*), ‘Táinic sam’ 5*a* *for* (Mīr *ar*, though *for* endures), 7*b* *fri* (Mīr *ri/re/ra*). In the prose, the prepositions are in their earlier forms as well: **R** §1 l. 4 *fo* (Mīr *fā*), **R** §1 l. 7 *for* (Mīr *ar*). In **R** §1 l. 9 *do īarair* and §3 *do īarair*, the proclitic vowel of the preposition is not elided.<sup>104</sup> The confusion of prepositions in the Middle Irish period leads to the confusion of mutations following prepositions; note ‘Fuitt co bráth’ 4*b* *īar gleō* (OIr *īar<sup>N</sup>*), but **L** has *īar ngleō*).<sup>105</sup> The dative u-quality is retained in the o-stem *teglach* in **R** §1 l. 2 *hi tegluch*. The article retains final *-nd* throughout, though some other words have final *-nn*: §1 l. 4 *ōnd*, l. 6 *Chuilind*, l. 6 *Find*, l. 9 *ind usci*, ‘Fuitt co bráth’ 2*c* *dond linn*, 2*d* *find* §2 *Find*, §3 *ind*, *Find*, in contrast to two examples in ‘Fuitt co bráth’ 1*b* *in donenn* and 3*d* *snechta finn*. In ‘Táinic sam’ 5*b* *daire*, the syllable *-ai-* is retained (Mīr *-oi-*).<sup>106</sup>

Some Middle Irish features include ‘Táinic sam’ 2*a* *míbláith*, the nasalised form of the adjective *bláith* (earlier *mláith*), or it may otherwise represent an intermediate spelling between *mláith* and *bláith*.<sup>107</sup> Though already a feature in Old Irish, in the Middle Irish period short unstressed vowels are more often found as schwa in final position, which comes to be spelled *a*, *o* or *u* after broad consonants and *e*, *i* or *iu* after palatal consonants.<sup>108</sup> In this text, there are several examples of the confusion of final unstressed vowels, though these are not guaranteed by rhyme: ‘Fuitt co bráth’ 2*b* *cui*ri (io-stem, nominative singular), 4*b* *im Choirthi* (io-stem, accusative singular), ‘Táinic sam’ 5*b* *daire* (io-stem, genitive singular), §3 *do Choirthi* (io-stem, dative singular). Though one notices an Old Irish accusative plural of o-stem *rann* retaining final unstressed *-u* in **R** §1 l. 3 *na runnu-sa*, *eDIL* notes that the *-a-* is often found as *-u-* in Middle Irish, as is the case here.<sup>109</sup> In ‘Fuitt co bráth’ 3*a* *Méit cuithi*, one may treat *cuithe* (io-stem) as genitive singular with Old Irish spelling, but *méit* is normally followed by the accusative in such a construction, and *eDIL* suggests that a following

<sup>103</sup> See also a list of diagnostic features in Murray, *The Early Fenian Corpus*, 8–9 (#A6).

<sup>104</sup> Liam Breatnach, ‘An Mheán-Ghaeilge’, in *SnG* 221–334, at 236 (§3.27). This work of reference is used throughout the language section and cited as Breatnach, *SnG* with following paragraph number.

<sup>105</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 4.4.

<sup>106</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 3.4.

<sup>107</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 3.16.

<sup>108</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 3.1.

<sup>109</sup> *eDIL* s.v. 2 *rann*, *rand* (<https://dil.ie/34805>, accessed 25 January 2024).

genitive is a later development.<sup>110</sup> The noun *méit* is spelled alternatively with a palatal and non-palatal consonant, the latter a feature of the Middle Irish stage of the language.<sup>111</sup> Finally, in §3 *ō sain 'mach*, the initial unstressed vowel is elided, a common Middle Irish feature.<sup>112</sup>

**L** has fossilised nasalisation following *cach* and *etrige* in 'Fuitt co bráth' 1*c* and *d*. Such petrified nasalisation after *cach*, which originates in the neuter and/or after the accusative singular, is not uncommon in the later language.<sup>113</sup>

*Nominal morphology: nouns, adjectives and pronouns*

'Táinic sam' contains several neuter nouns with following nasalisation; 4*a* *Fūam* *ngæth* is a clear example as *fúam* is in the nominative singular. However, other examples are not diagnostic; other nouns which were originally neuter are found without the article and in positions where they cannot show following nasalisation: 'Fuitt co bráth' loch 1*d*, muir 2*a*, taul 2*c*, leth 4*c*, 'Táinic sam' ag 1*c*, tīr 7*a*, sīl 7*b*; and while *cēol* 2*a* has following nasalisation, it is in the accusative singular.

'Táinic sam' contains two instances of the Old Irish nominative plural of masculine o/a adjectives: *lūaith* 2*d* (Mīr *lúatha*), and *caiss* 5*d* (Mīr *cassa*).<sup>114</sup> There are no equative constructions apart from the ones with *méit* in 'Fuitt co bráth'. The comparative form of *mór* is used in 'Fuitt co bráth' 1*b* is *mō in donenn*, but one would expect the same form in Old or Middle Irish. There are two other comparative forms in the prose; they retain the Old Irish ending *-(i)u*, which becomes schwa in the Middle Irish period and is spelled *-e/-i* after palatal consonants; §3: *áiniu*, *ēscaidiu*.<sup>115</sup>

In 'Fuitt co bráth', an adverb is formed from an adjective with the preposition *co*, **L** 4*a* *cu gribb*. There are a few instances of this usage in the glosses; the usual way of forming an adjective in Old Irish is to use the dative singular of the adjective preceded by the article.<sup>116</sup> However, forming an adverb with *co* becomes the norm by the end of the Old Irish period.

There are no independent pronouns in the poems, and only three in the prose. All three are third singular masculine *é*. The first two are used in §1, one with the copula (l. 2) and one as object of *ro chart* (l. 6). This last usage is attested from the eleventh century onwards.<sup>117</sup> The third independent pronoun is in **C** §3, but not in **R**, and is probably scribal. The word groups in this sentence are also in a different order in **C** §3: *ro cengalt Fint do choirdhe cuild lomnacht co matan é*. This latter pronoun functions as direct object of the active verb and is placed at the end of the clause, as is the tendency in Middle Irish.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>110</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *méit*, *mét* III (b) (<https://dil.ie/31852>, accessed 28 November 2023).

<sup>111</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *méit*, *mét* (<https://dil.ie/31852>, accessed 28 November 2023).

<sup>112</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 3.26 and 3.28.

<sup>113</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *cach*, *cech* (<https://dil.ie/7528>, accessed 28 November 2023).

<sup>114</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 6.5.

<sup>115</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 6.11.

<sup>116</sup> *GOI* §§379, 381.

<sup>117</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 10.15.

<sup>118</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 10.15. See also Anders Ahlqvist, 'On the position of pronouns in Irish', *Éigse* 16 (1976), 171–6.

No infix pronouns are used in the poems, except perhaps in **R** and **C** in ‘Fuitt co bráth’ 3c nís-tā dín, but as discussed in the notes, this line is problematic. There are three other instances in the prose. In §1, an infix pronoun is used in ‘dos-rala 7 Find’, ‘he (literally ‘they’) and Finn happened to be’ (1. 4); this construction is attested elsewhere in Old Irish, ‘where a plural concept, expressed in a plural verb or pronoun, consists of two elements, one already known and one about to be mentioned’.<sup>119</sup> In §3 At-berat-som, there is a petrified infix pronoun Class B third singular neuter. In **L** §1 l. 7 at-bert, there is also a possible petrified infix pronoun, but **R** and **C** retain *as-bert* so this may be scribal. There may also be an infix pronoun in §3 ro cengalt, though it was certainly not understood by the scribe of **C** who adds an independent object pronoun in this clause.

There are no suffixed pronouns in either prose or poetry.

### *Definite article*

In the prose, plural definite articles are all monosyllabic *na* (**R** §1 l. 3 and §2).<sup>120</sup> In the poetry, the only plural definite article is used in its monosyllable form as well (‘Fuitt co bráth’ 3c). There are no instances where a dative plural form would be expected. There are no examples of the late Middle Irish form of the definite article *an*, except in ‘Fuitt co bráth’ 1Bc, but this quatrain shows a different stage of the language (see below).

### *Verbs*

The perfective particle *ro* is retained throughout, though in the prose it seems to be used for the preterite, as expected in the Middle Irish period. There is one instance of lenition after *ro*, a common feature in Middle Irish, in §2 ro chá-chain, but it is isolated and may be scribal. The reduplicated preterite is retained in §2 ro cháchain; this is still found in the early Middle Irish period and it gradually disappears afterwards.<sup>121</sup> All occurrences of the augmented preterite in the prose retain the non-palatal final consonant of *gaibid* (*ro gab* §1 and §2), as well as in the poetry (‘Tánc sam’ 3a *ro gab*). In Middle Irish, one often finds *-gaib*, a spread of the palatal final consonant ending of the present indicative third singular conjunct into the preterite third singular conjunct, though OIr non-palatal *-gab* is also found.<sup>122</sup> There may be one instance of confusion between present and preterite in ‘Fuitt co bráth’ 4c con-gab (OIr present indicative *con-gaib*), but the preterite also suits this line, so I have translated it as such. §2 As-rubart also retains the non-palatal final consonant (MÍr *as-rubairt* or *adubairt*).

<sup>119</sup> *GOI* §402. See also Aaron Griffith, ‘A note on pronominal coordination in Old Irish’, in Robert Nedoma and David Stifter (eds), *\*h2nr. Festschrift für Heiner Eichner, Die Sprache: Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 48 (2009), 66–70.

<sup>120</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 7.6.

<sup>121</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 12.55.

<sup>122</sup> McCone, ‘The Würzburg and Milan glosses: our earliest sources of “Middle Irish”’, *Ériu* 36 (1985), 85–106 at 94 and Breatnach, *SnG* 12.45.

Most verbs in the poems are in the third singular or plural, in the present tense. There is no occurrence in the prose nor in the poetry of the later third singular conjunct ending *-ennl/-ann*. Most compounds in 'Finn and Mac Lesc' are quite common and many did not undergo univerbation in Middle Irish. There is just one example of a compound verb treated as a simple verb, namely 'Táinic sam' 7d *forbrit* (OIr *for-berat*, from *for-beir*), with an absolute ending. There are no deponent verbs, nor do any of the verbs in the text show the spread of deponent endings to simple verbs. In 'Táinic sam', the protonic form *táinic* (1a, 5c, 7d) is used where a deuterotonic form would be expected, but this is a very early development.<sup>123</sup> In the same poem, 5c *ro fáith* is a rare verbal form, but not an archaic one.<sup>124</sup> One will note the use of the proper relative form of the copula in §2 (*ba*, MIr *fa*, though alongside *ba*), but not of the substantive verb in §3 *buī* (OIr *boíe*); this form would have fallen out of regular use quite early, however. The copula forms in this text only occur in the third singular, and there are no instances where a plural subject is used with the singular of the copula, as becomes common in the late Middle Irish period.<sup>125</sup> In 'Táinic sam', I interpret the recurring phrase *día mbi* (or *mbí*) as the preposition with the relative particle and the consuetudinal form of copula; though if one takes *día* as the conjunction which requires the narrative preterite,<sup>126</sup> then *bí* has to be taken as a late Middle Irish preterite form of the substantive verb.<sup>127</sup> However, considering the language of the rest of the poem, I believe this is unlikely.

The language of 'Finn and Mac Lesc' is therefore suggestive of a late Old Irish date. There are no older features such as suffixed pronouns, and too few attestations of diagnostic features such as the neuter gender or infixed pronouns used as such to indicate an earlier date. The orthographical and phonetical features listed above also indicate a small amount of modernisation on the part of the scribe(s), as is expected. There are no characteristic features of late Middle Irish in the poems, nor in the prose, but the latter seems to show confusion between preterite and perfect, and later features such as the petrified infixed pronoun and the use of object independent pronouns, whereas the poetry apparently shows retention of the neuter. Meyer suggests a date towards the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century for the poems, and is convinced that they are Old Irish.<sup>128</sup> Carney dates 'Táinic sam' to c. 800 AD, pointing out that there are no archaisms in the poem and that it is 'suggestive of the eve of the Middle Irish period' although he agrees that it is clearly Old Irish.<sup>129</sup> Other editors have not proposed a date, although Jackson agrees with that suggested by Meyer. It is difficult to give a precise date on linguistic grounds for such a short text; but I would tend to agree with the general dating proposed by Meyer and Carney.

<sup>123</sup> *GOI* §855 (B); see also for other verbs §§837 (B), 852 (B) and Kim McCone, 'Pretonic preverbs and the absolute verbal endings in Old Irish', *Ériu* 30 (1979), 1–34 at 5–6.

<sup>124</sup> *GOI* §692; *eDIL* s.v. *-fáith*, *-fáid*, *-fáid* (<https://dil.ie/21212>, accessed 28 November).

<sup>125</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 12.193–4 and 14.4.

<sup>126</sup> *GOI* §889.

<sup>127</sup> Breatnach, *SnG* 12.65.

<sup>128</sup> Meyer, *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 5.

<sup>129</sup> Carney, 'Three Old Irish accentual poems', 38–39.

As for the added verse in **C** ‘Fuitt co bráth’, it is particularly late and contrasts strongly with the rest of the poem. The adjective *úar* in 1Bb is found with later prosthetic *f*, and *anocht* is a later spelling of the adverbial phrase *in-nocht*. In 1Bc, the adjective *airrde* is the late spelling in *-e* of the comparative used for superlative; it is used with the Middle Irish form *nās* which is fixed metrically as the line would be hypermetrical with OIr *indaas*. The masculine nominative singular definite article is not *in* but the late form *an* in 1Bc. Finally, in 1Bd, ‘nocha’ is the late form of the adverb of negation *nícon* and ‘roichinn’ shows univerbation from *ro-saig*, the enclitic stem *roich-* being used with the common late Middle Irish ending *-enn*.<sup>130</sup> There is no doubt, therefore, that this quatrain is intrusive here, both because of its language and because it is not set in the same geographical location as ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’.

#### EDITORIAL POLICY

As mentioned previously, there are three manuscript witnesses to ‘Finn and Mac Lesc’: the Book of Leinster (**L**), Rawlinson B 502 (**R**), and C iii 2 (**C**). **L** lacks the second poem and the last two prose passages, while **C** contains the rest of the anecdote but shows considerable modernisation of the orthography. **R** preserves the fullest text, containing both poems and all three prose passages, and this twelfth-century manuscript shows older orthography, like **L**. For these reasons, this edition is based on **R**.

I have followed **R** as much as possible. The aim has been to present a coherent text, and the rare incorporation of variants into the edition from the other manuscript witnesses has been explained in the notes. Differences in orthography and spelling in the other manuscript witnesses have not been included in the apparatus but are dealt with in the notes if relevant to the interpretation.

The prose passages in **R** and **C** are close in content, but **L** has significant variants. Since these only concern the first prose paragraph introducing ‘Fuitt co bráth’, I have decided to present a parallel-text edition for this passage only. Though not entirely satisfactory as a methodology within a larger edition, there seems to be little sense in trying to conflate two short passages with such markedly different readings. The other two prose passages are only present in **R** and **C**, and there are variants in **C**.

Some readings from **L** and **C** have been incorporated into the poetry in square brackets, other variants being included in the apparatus. Only when necessitated by metre have variants from **L** and **C** been considered and included in the main text. It is because there is no such guide to help editing the prose that a different approach has been chosen, and that it has been left as in the manuscripts. I believe that this combination of editing techniques best reflects the fluidity of this text.

**C** contains an interpolated quatrain as the initial verse of the first poem. I have left the additional quatrain in the edition but have marked it with square brackets indicating that it is not present in the other manuscripts; it is marked

<sup>130</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *ro-saig* (<https://dil.ie/35557>, accessed 28 November 2023).

as 1B, i.e. an alternative beginning to the poem. As this quatrain also functions as the initial verse of a poem in *Úath Beinne Étair*, some variant readings from the two manuscripts in which this is preserved have been included in the apparatus; London, British Library MS Harleian 5280 (**H**), and Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 N 10 (**N**), both of the sixteenth century.<sup>131</sup> The variants have been added up until 2a (included). The following verses are very different in both poems, so alternative manuscript readings are not relevant and have not been included.

Abbreviations have been expanded. Common abbreviations such as the *ar* and *us* compendia are italicised. Expansions of less frequent abbreviations and of any abbreviation requiring editorial interpretation, such as suspension strokes, have been underlined. Lenition and nasalisation not present in the manuscripts have not been added and the orthography has not been normalised. Macrons have been inserted on long vowels when no length mark occurs in the manuscripts, and with diphthongs they are placed on the first vowel. No macrons have been placed over ligatures or in the variant readings provided in the apparatus. Punctuation and capitalisation are largely editorial.

## EDITION

## §1

**L**

- 1 Aithech mith ro buí i féin *Fhinn*  
 huí Baiscni .i. Mac Lesc mac  
 Lodáin é-sside.  
 Adaig dos-rála 7 Find for leith ōnd  
 5 *fhéin* hi Sléib *Chulind*. Ro *chart*  
 Find é-seom for *īarraid uscī*, is and  
 at-bert int aithech:

**R**<sup>132</sup>

Mac Lesc mac Ladáin aithech  
 meith buí hi tegluch Finn; is ē ro  
 gab na runnu-sa sīs.  
 Adaig dos-rála 7 Find fo leith ōnd  
 fēin i Coirthi Chuilt hi Sléib  
 Chuilind, coro *chart* Find ē-seom  
 for *īarair uscī* dōib. *Conid* ann  
 as-bert-som *arnā tēssed immach*  
 do *īarair ind uscī*:

## TRANSLATION

## §1

**L**

There was a weak churl in Finn úa  
 Báiscne's *fīan*, namely Mac Lesc mac  
 Lodáin.  
 One night he and Finn were separated  
 from the *fīan* in Slíab Cuilinn. Finn  
 sent him in search of water; it is then  
 that the churl sang:

**R**

Mac Lesc mac Ladáin, a weak churl,  
 was in the household of Finn; it is he  
 who recited the following verses.  
 One night he and Finn were separated  
 from the *fīan* in Coirthe Cuilt in Slíab  
 Cuilinn, and Finn sent him in search of  
 water for them. And then he told him  
 that he would not go out to seek the  
 water.

<sup>131</sup>**N**, p. 13.16–19; **H**, fol. 35rb32–6. I would like to thank the British Library for allowing me to consult MS Harleian 5280.

<sup>132</sup>**C** is identical to **R** except for modernised orthography.

## [ 1B. Fuid fuid!

fuair *anocht* Magh *lethan* Luirc,  
 airrde an *snechta* nās in slíab,  
 noch a roichinn fíadh a cuid. ]

## 1. Fuitt co bráth!

is mō<sup>133</sup> in donenn ar cāch,  
 is ab<sup>134</sup> cach etrice án,<sup>135</sup>  
 [ɾ]<sup>136</sup> is loch<sup>137</sup> lān cach āth.<sup>138</sup>

2. [Is]<sup>139</sup> méit<sup>140</sup> muir mór cech loch<sup>141</sup> lonn<sup>142</sup>,  
 is droíng cech cuiri gúr gann,  
 mēt taul<sup>143</sup> scēith banna dond linn,  
 mét moltchrocann find cech slam.

## [ 1B. Cold, cold!

wide Mag Luirg is cold tonight,  
 the snow is higher than the mountain,  
 deer cannot reach their food. ]

## 1. Forever cold!

the storm is growing stronger,  
 every swift furrow is a river,  
 and every ford is a full lake.

2. Every raging lake is as big as a great sea,  
 every starved suffering troop is a huddle,  
 drops of the downpour are as big as the boss of a shield,  
 every snowflake is as big as a white wether's fleece.

<sup>133</sup>R, C is mo: L ro dáil, N, H *rus* dail

<sup>134</sup>R, C is ab: L is áth, N, H *aponn*

<sup>135</sup>R, C etrice án: L n-ettrigi n-án, N, H *eittride* a fān

<sup>136</sup>L, C, H ɾ: R, N om.

<sup>137</sup>R, C loch: L, N, H *lind*

<sup>138</sup>R, C cach āth: L, N, H *cach* n-áth

<sup>139</sup>L, N, H is: R, C om.

<sup>140</sup>R, C, L méit: N, H om.

<sup>141</sup>R, C loch: L om., N loch bis, H loch *phís*

<sup>142</sup>R, C, L lonn: N, H lan

<sup>143</sup>R, C taul: L tuil

3. Mēit cuithi cach lattrach<sup>144</sup> léig,  
coirthe cach rēid, caill cach mōin,  
na helta [nocus]-tá<sup>145</sup> dín,  
snechta finn fír do-roich<sup>146</sup> tóin.

4. Ro iad reōd rota [cu]<sup>147</sup> gribb,  
īar gleō<sup>148</sup> glicc im Choirthi Cuilt;  
con-gab donenn dar<sup>149</sup> cach leth,  
connā abbair nech *acht* 'fuit'! .F.

§2. As-rubart Find ba brēc dó 7 ro gab formalad na sín 7 na seón 7 na  
n-amser 7 ro cháchain inso síis.

1. Tānic *sam* slān sōer,  
dīa mbi clōen caill cīar,  
lingid<sup>150</sup> ag seṅg snéid,  
dīa mbi rēid rón rían.

3. Every [...] puddle as big as a pit,  
every clearing a standing stone, every bog a wood,  
the flocks of birds have no shelter,  
white snow truly reaches [one's] bottom.

4. Frost has sealed the bog water swiftly,  
after a skilled fight around Coirthe Cuilt;  
the storm has taken hold on every side,  
so that no one says anything but 'cold!'

§2. Finn said that he lied, and he sang the praises of the storms and the  
favourable signs and the seasons and he sang this below:

1. Summer has come, healthy, free,  
from which the dark wood is stooping,  
a swift, slender stag leaps,  
and the seals' course is smooth.

<sup>144</sup>R, L lattrach: C lat/rach

<sup>145</sup>L nocus-tá: R, C nís-ta

<sup>146</sup>R, C do-roich: L co roich

<sup>147</sup>L cu: R, C om.

<sup>148</sup>R īar gleō: L, C īar ṅgleō

<sup>149</sup>R, C con-gab donenn dar: L ro iad corrthi for

<sup>150</sup>R lingid: C lingi

2. Canaid cuy<sup>151</sup> cēol mbind mbláith  
 dīa mbí sūan sāim snēid,  
 lengait eōin ciūin crūaich,  
 7 daim lūaith lēith.<sup>152</sup>

3. Foss n-oss ro gab tess,  
 gāir dess cass cūan,  
 tibid<sup>153</sup> trācht, find<sup>154</sup> fonn,  
 dīa mbi lonn ler lūath.

4. Fūam ngæth, bāeth barr  
 dairi<sup>155</sup> duib druin<sup>156</sup> daill,  
 rethid graig mæl<sup>157</sup> mūad,  
 dīa mbi<sup>158</sup> dīn cūan caill.

2. A cuckoo sings a soft melodious song,  
 which makes sleep swift and peaceful,  
 birds hop on a quiet hill  
 with swift grey stags.
3. Heat has affected the deer's tranquility,  
 the sweet cry of litters of curly-haired pups,  
 a white stretch, the strand smiles,  
 so the swift sea is strong.
4. Sound of winds, wild is the top  
 of the strong, shadowy black grove,  
 a clipped noble stud of horses runs,  
 for whom the harbour of hazel is a haven.

<sup>151</sup>R cuy: C cui

<sup>152</sup>R lēith: C léim

<sup>153</sup>R tibid: C tibe

<sup>154</sup>R find: C om.

<sup>155</sup>R puncta delentia below the second *i*.

<sup>156</sup>R puncta delentia below the *d*. The minims at the end of the word have been corrected from *m* to *in*.

<sup>157</sup>R lengthmark over the *æ* ligature.

<sup>158</sup>R mbi: C ma

5. Maidid<sup>159</sup> glass for cach lus,  
 bilech doss daire glaiss,  
 t̃anic sam ro f̃aith gaim,  
 gonit<sup>160</sup> coin cuilinn caiss.<sup>161</sup>
6. Canaid<sup>162</sup> lon dron<sup>163</sup> dord,  
 d̃ia mbi forbb caill<sup>164</sup> cerb,  
 s̃ūanaid ler lonn l̃iac,  
 fo-l̃iṅg iach brec bedc.
7. Tibid gr̃ian dar<sup>165</sup> cach t̃ir,  
 dedlaid<sup>166</sup> lim fri s̃il snon,<sup>167</sup>  
 garit coin dáilit daim,  
 forbrit brain, t̃anic sam. T.
- §3. At-berat-som tr̃a ropo ēcen dō-som techt do īarair ind usci 7 ro  
 cengalt Find lomnocht co matain<sup>168</sup> do Choirthi Chuilt connād buī  
 i f̃ein Find bad áiniu 7 bad ēscaidiu ō sain 'mach.
5. Green breaks out on every plant,  
 the copse of the green oakwood is bushy,  
 summer has come, winter has gone,  
 tangled hollies wound a hound.
6. A vigorous blackbird sings a song,  
 for whom the thorny wood is a patrimony,  
 the strong, grim sea sleeps,  
 a speckled salmon leaps.
7. The sun smiles over every land,  
 the elm's bark separates from [its] source(?),<sup>169</sup>  
 dogs bark, stags scatter,  
 ravens increase(?), summer has come.
- §3. They say therefore that he had to go to seek the water, and Finn tied him  
 naked until morning to Coirthe Cuilt, so that nobody in Finn's *fian* was  
 more swift and more willing from then on.

<sup>159</sup>R Maidid: C Muidhe

<sup>160</sup>R gonit: C goinidh

<sup>161</sup>R caiss: C kis

<sup>162</sup>R Canaid: C Canait

<sup>163</sup>R dron: C om.

<sup>164</sup>R caill: C caille

<sup>165</sup>R dar: C da

<sup>166</sup>R dedlaid: C dedlai

<sup>167</sup>R snon: C snom nó son

<sup>168</sup>C é: R om.

<sup>169</sup>The translation of this line is from Hull, 'Four Old-Irish songs', 201.

## NOTES ON THE TEXT

**Lines 1–3:** The expression *aithech mith* also appears in a poem uttered by Fer Diad in *TBC*: ‘ní thecat dá fúapairt acht mad athig mith’ ‘None come to attack him save cowardly churls’ (‘aigith meith’ in the *LU* version).<sup>170</sup> O’Rahilly follows Windisch in reading a genitive singular of *meth* ‘decay, failure’, which can be inflected as an o-stem.<sup>171</sup> *eDIL* also notes: ‘feeble (spiritless) churls?’ the object of Fer Diad is to belittle his opponent. The reading *mith* is supported by the beginning of poem: is mithig’, and the dictionary then refers to our text ‘where the sense seems similar’.<sup>172</sup> I follow this interpretation.<sup>173</sup> **L** specifies that Mac Lesc is part of Finn’s *fian*, while **R** and **C** use the word *teglach* ‘household’, a term which is also used to refer to *fian*-members in *Áirem Muintire Finn* ‘The Enumeration of Finn’s Household’.<sup>174</sup>

**1B.** As already mentioned, this is also the first quatrain of a poem that the old woman who hides Diarmait and Gráinne on the Hill of Howth in *ÚBÉ* recites to make them believe that the weather is too bad to go outside, in order to allow Finn to catch them, a ruse which is ultimately unsuccessful.

**1Ba.** *Fuit* is an interjection most often used to express cold.<sup>175</sup> The English ‘brrr’ seems unsatisfactory as a translation, so it has been rendered simply as ‘cold’.

**1Bd.** **C** has a suspension stroke over the *h* of *noch*, which is followed by an *a*. This is probably a scribal slip as it is not found in **N** nor **H**.

**1a.** For ‘fuit’, see 1Ba.

**1b.** ‘*ar cāch*’: *cāch*, ‘each, everyone, all’ is often used with comparatives to indicate an increase in the quality of the adjective.<sup>176</sup> **L** differs from **R** and **C**, using the simple verb *dáilid* in a metaphorical sense ‘spreads, expands’. The line in *ÚBÉ* is closer to **L**: *rus dail in doinenn ar cach* (**N**). Both Meyer and Ní Shéaghda have translated this line as ‘the storm has spread over all’.

**1c.** The reading in **L** *áth* ‘ford’ makes little sense (‘every swift furrow is a ford’); it seems likely that it is simply a scribal slip, as *áth* is found again in

<sup>170</sup> Cecile O’Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *Táin Bó Cúalgne from the Book of Leinster*, ITS 49 (Dublin, 1967), 80 (l. 2913) and 218. O’Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *TBC: Recension I*, 91 (l. 3006) and 205.

<sup>171</sup> O’Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *Táin Bó Cúalgne from the Book of Leinster*, 323.

<sup>172</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *meth* (<https://dil.ie/32096>, accessed 10 November 2023).

<sup>173</sup> Meyer, *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 19, evidently understood *méth* ‘fat’; *eDIL* s.v. *méth* (<https://dil.ie/32097>, accessed 10 November 2023).

<sup>174</sup> The term only appears in the version of the text found in Cork, University College, The Book of Lismore. See Whitley Stokes (ed. and trans.), *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore*, Anecdota Oxoniensia, Medieval and Modern Series 5 (Oxford, 1890), xl. Other versions of this text survive in BL MSS Egerton 1782 (fol. 25rb–vb) and Harley 5280 (fol. 49r).

<sup>175</sup> Fergus Kelly, ‘Onomatopoeic interjections in Early Irish’, *Celtica* 25 (2007), 107–24, at 96–7.

<sup>176</sup> *GOI* §377, *eDIL* s.v. *cāch* (g) (<https://dil.ie/7529>, accessed 22 January 2024).

the following line. In **N** and **H**, the line ends with *fan* (*án C*). Meyer and Ní Shéaghda took this as *fán* ‘slope’ (Ní Shéaghda: ‘a river is each furrow upon a slope’).

**2a.** Originally a feminine noun, *mét* is used adverbially as the equivalent of the equative *métithir* and is followed by a substantive in the accusative singular (*muir mór*).

**2b.** It is unclear if *cúiri* refers to humans or animals. I understand here that animals huddle together in winter because of cold weather.

**2c.** I take *linn* as referring to a body of water, thus most probably falling rain; this sense is attested in *In Tenga Bithnua* ‘The ever-new tongue’.<sup>177</sup> The use of *mēt* is similar to that found in line *a* with the copula understood. Meyer translated ‘When big as the face of a shield each drop of rain’, probably to give a concluding sense to line *d* after *c*, but there is nothing indicating ‘when’ in the Irish.<sup>178</sup>

**2d.** The syntax is as in line *c* with *molt* referring to a wether, a castrated ram. The form *slamm* is not followed by a dependent genitive so its translation may be fluid. The context suggests it may refer to a snowflake and not to a flock of wool or a lock of hair.

This line seems to echo a set phrase found elsewhere in the literature. In the version of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* preserved in the eleventh-century *Lebor na hUidre* (RIA MS 23 E 25), during Cú Chulainn’s third *ríastrad*, or distortion, it is said that ‘comba métithir moltchracand cech slamsrúam thened doniged ina bél asa brágit’ ‘every stream of fiery flakes which came into his mouth from his throat was as wide as a ram’s skin’.<sup>179</sup> In *Immram Curaig Úa Corra* ‘The voyage of the Uí Corra’, the description of a giant reads ‘ba métithir moltcroicinn gach slam tenedh ticeadh asa braguit’ ‘as big as a wether’s fleece was every flake of fire that came out of his gullet’.<sup>180</sup> These two phrases contain the comparison found in line *d* of our poem, but they both extend it into a description of a fire-breathing warrior using similar wording (with the verb *do-icc* and noun *brága*). As in *Immram Curaig Úa Corra*, I understand ‘moltchrocann’ here as ‘fleece’, which makes the imagery better.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>177</sup> *eDIL* s.v. 1 *linn* (a) (<https://dil.ie/30274>, accessed 23 January 2024).

<sup>178</sup> Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 19.

<sup>179</sup> O’Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *TBC: Recension I*, 69 and 187.

<sup>180</sup> W. Stokes (ed. and trans.), ‘The voyage of the Huí Corra’, *RC* 14 (1893), 22–69, at 54–5. See also A. G. van Hamel (ed.), *Immrama*, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series 10 (Dublin, 1941), 107. This text only survives in manuscripts dated to the fifteenth century and later, though it is probably based on an eleventh- or twelfth-century version (Hamel, *Immrama*, 93–5; see also Caoimhín Breatnach, ‘The transmission and structure of *Immram curaig Ua Corra*’, *Ériu* 53 (2003), 91–107, at 91–9).

<sup>181</sup> The term *croiccenn* is also used for the ‘Golden Fleece’; see *eDIL* s.v. *croiccenn* (<https://dil.ie/13073>, accessed 23 January 2024).

**3a.** The use of *méit* is similar to the previous verse. The term *léig* is probably an adjective, but its meaning is unclear. It is suggested in *eDIL* that this may be the same word which is attested in ‘Cétamon’.<sup>182</sup> Meyer translated it as ‘peat’ in ‘Cétamon’ but did not translate it in ‘Fuitt co bráth’.<sup>183</sup> Murphy suggested the meaning ‘lovely’ in ‘Cétamon’, which was accepted by Carney for this same poem in 1971, although he had previously translated it as ‘dirty’ in ‘Fuitt co bráth’ in 1967.<sup>184</sup> Jackson had suggested a meaning ‘black’ in 1935, and pointed out it is used to describe a king in the poem ‘Cú cen máthair, maith cland’, also preserved in **R**.<sup>185</sup> This reading would suit here, but as it is hypothetical, it has not been introduced into the translation.

**3b.** This line repeats the same syntax of the previous line using *cach*; the copula is understood. The adjective *réid* is used substantively to refer to an open plain.<sup>186</sup> I understand this line as a metaphor for the difficulty of traversing plains and bogs in bad, freezing weather; the ground is so frozen it is like a rock, and the reeds of the bog are so frozen they are as hard as trees.<sup>187</sup>

**3c.** This line is problematic: *elta* can refer to flocks of birds or animals, and is taken here in the first sense, as nominative plural with the article; *dín* means ‘protection, defence, shelter’. **R** and **C** read *nísta*, which can be understood as *nís-tā*, i.e. the negative conjunct particle with an infixed pronoun Class A, third plural, and the substantive verb, meaning literally ‘there is not to them’, i.e. ‘they do not have’.<sup>188</sup> However, the line is hypometrical in **R** and **C**. **L** reads ‘*nocus-tá*’, giving the extra syllable needed for the metre; Meyer took this as *ní costá* and translated ‘No shelter find the flocks of birds’.<sup>189</sup> He did not discuss the verbal form; he may have considered it to be a form of *con-suidi*, ‘sets up, establishes’, which has a verbal noun *costud* and which might be related to the poorly attested *coistide* (noun), *cosaiti* (adjective) and *costaigid* (verb). On the other hand, one can understand ‘*nocus-tá*’ as a later variant of *nícos-tá* ‘there is not to them, they do not have’, thus equating the meaning in **R** and **C** but providing the syllable count needed for the metre.<sup>190</sup> I have thus chosen to incorporate the **L** reading into my edition.

<sup>182</sup> *eDIL* s.v. 3 *léig* (<https://dil.ie/29775>, accessed 18 October 2023).

<sup>183</sup> Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 10–11 and 18–19.

<sup>184</sup> Murphy (ed. and trans.), ‘Finn’s poem on May-day’, 95; Carney (ed. and trans.), ‘Three Old Irish Accentual Poems’, 50; J. Carney (trans.), *Medieval Irish Lyrics* (Dublin, 1967), 25.

<sup>185</sup> Jackson, *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry*, 42, 44. ‘Cú cen máthair, maith cland’ can be found on fol. 80vb32, and *léic* is in l. 38; see Kuno Meyer (ed.), *Über die älteste irische Dichtung I. Rhythmische alliterierende Reimstrophien* (Berlin, 1913), 54.

<sup>186</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *réid* (<https://dil.ie/34942>, accessed 18 October 2023).

<sup>187</sup> There is a very similar image in the first stanza of the Welsh poem ‘Llym awel’ ‘Sharp is the wind’; discussed by Ifor Williams, *Canu Llywarch Hen* (Caerdydd, 1935), 176. The poem is translated into English in Rowland (trans.), *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, 501–3.

<sup>188</sup> *GOI* §777.

<sup>189</sup> Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 18.

<sup>190</sup> *GOI* §420.

**3d.** **L** reads ‘co roich’. This might be the third singular present indicative of *ro-saig* ‘reaches, comes to’, which is attested in this construction in the subjunctive *co roa* ‘till (one) reaches; as far as, up to’, and similar to *co ricci*, second singular present indicative of *ro-icc* with petrified preposition, translated as ‘till thou reachest’.<sup>191</sup> It does not change the meaning of the line compared to **R** and **C**. I understand this line in the same way as the following in *TBC (LU)*: ‘ferais snechta mór forru co fernnu fer 7 co drochu carpat’ ‘heavy snow fell on them, reaching to the girdles of the men and the wheels of the chariots’.<sup>192</sup>

**4a.** The addition ‘cu’ from **L** makes sense both for the metre and for the grammatical structure of the line; the preposition *co* may be used with an adjective to form an adverb, thus giving the sense ‘swiftly, quickly’.<sup>193</sup> Meyer, Jackson and Carney understood *róta* ‘roads’, taking it to be *rót* in accusative plural, but I prefer to read *rota* ‘bog-water’,<sup>194</sup> as *íadaid* can be used with water as ‘dams, seals, blocks’.<sup>195</sup>

**4b.** I read this line as a metaphor for the frost slowly taking over the whole bog, and freezing over the whole landscape around the standing stone.

**4c.** **L** has an almost completely different line at this point: ‘ro *īad* corrthi for cach leth’, ‘it has bound a stone on every side’. The line remains 7<sup>1</sup>, and makes anaphora of *ro īad* with *a*. The unexpressed subject of *ro īad* in *c* seems to be *reōd* in *a*, and the repetition of *corrthi* obviously refers to the standing stone, Coirthe Cuilt, mentioned in *b* and in the prose introduction.

**§2.** I understand ‘*formalad*’ as a single word, but one may also take it as two words with *gaibid* for ‘begins’, thus translating the phrase ‘he commenced the praise’.<sup>196</sup>

### ‘Táinic sam’

**1b.** The beginning of this line, *día mbi*, recurs frequently in the poem (1*d*, 2*b*, 3*d*, 4*d*, 6*b*). Though the sense of the conjunction *día*<sup>N</sup> ‘when’ would suit in all instances in the poem, this conjunction is followed by the preterite (or the subjunctive when it means ‘if’), and the form *bi* is the consuetudinal present of the

<sup>191</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *ro-saig* (<https://dil.ie/35557>, accessed 18 October 2023), *eDIL* s.v. *ro-icc* (<https://dil.ie/35459>, accessed 18 October 2023).

<sup>192</sup> Cecile O’Rahilly (ed. and trans.), *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I* (Dublin, 1976), 10 and 133 (ll. 310–12).

<sup>193</sup> *GOI* §381.

<sup>194</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *rota* (<https://dil.ie/35581>, accessed 18 October 2023).

<sup>195</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *íadaid* (<https://dil.ie/26916>, accessed 18 October 2023).

<sup>196</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *formolad* (<https://dil.ie/23786>, accessed 9 September 2024); s.v. *gaibid* (V(e)2) (<https://dil.ie/25119>, accessed 9 September 2024); s.v. *molad* (<https://dil.ie/32490>, accessed 9 September 2024).

substantive verb and the copula.<sup>197</sup> Thus, I take *día* as a combination of the preposition *dí<sup>L</sup>* or *do<sup>L</sup>* and the relative particle *a<sup>N</sup>*. In this line, the relative pronoun refers to the coming of summer (*dí* ‘in consequence of, for that reason’).<sup>198</sup> As for the meaning of *clóen*, I understand it as meaning that the trees are bending from the weight of fruit and leaves in summer; ‘aslant, bending, stooped’.<sup>199</sup>

**1c.** The verb is third singular absolute present indicative in **R** but **C** reads *lingi*; this loss of final *-d* in the present indicative third singular seems to be characteristic of the scribe and it occurs elsewhere in this poem.<sup>200</sup>

**1d.** The same phrase as *1b* occurs here, with *rían* as subject of the sentence, and *réid* as predicate. I take *ron* as a preposed genitive plural, with *rían* required in final position to make end-rhyme with *b* (*cīar* : *rían*). Despite the lengthmark on *bí* in the manuscript, this must be the copula (consuetudinal present, third singular), so I have omitted the lengthmark. The repetition of ‘*dīa mbi*’ in this line probably still refers to the coming of summer, as the poem enumerates all the things that have come with summer; I have rendered it as ‘and’ here. Meyer suggests that *ron rían* is a kenning for the sea.<sup>201</sup> This would not be surprising as the primary meaning of *rían* is ‘sea’.

**2b.** In this line, the phrase ‘*dīa mbi*’ may be the same construction as the previous verse with the copula, and *súan* with two following attributive adjectives. However, there is a clear length mark in the manuscript, suggesting that the phrase contains the substantive verb instead (consuetudinal present, third singular), thus taking *súan* as the subject standing between the predicate and the verb.<sup>202</sup> The meaning is similar in both cases; I have translated as the substantive verb to keep the length mark. I understand *día* again as the preposition and the relative particle *a<sup>N</sup>*. This line can be directly linked to the preceding line: sleep would be the consequence of the soft song of the cuckoo. The adjective *snéid* has often a vague sense in poetry, and is found in the preceding verse to qualify a stag leaping (*1c*), so I have kept the same translation, ‘swift’, in order to maintain the repetition.<sup>203</sup> The letters *sn* in **R** are almost erased, though still legible, and **C** has the same reading; the erasure in **R** may have been accidental as there is also a stain in this place, and *snéid* is clearly the word intended here.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>197</sup> *GOI* §§784 and 800.

<sup>198</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *1 de, di* (XLVa) (<https://dil.ie/14787>, accessed 20 October 2023).

<sup>199</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *cláen* (<https://dil.ie/9306>, accessed 23 January 2024).

<sup>200</sup> Hull, ‘Four Old-Irish songs’, 201.

<sup>201</sup> Meyer, *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 21 n. 1.

<sup>202</sup> *GOI* §774.2.

<sup>203</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *snéid* (<https://dil.ie/38155>, accessed 20 October 2023).

<sup>204</sup> Note that several other editors mistakenly read *réid* in **R**: Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 20, Greene and O’Connor (ed. and trans.), *A Golden Treasury of Irish Poetry*, 137, Hull, ‘Four Old-Irish songs’, 201. Carney reads *snéid* but emends to *séim* (Carney (ed. and trans.), ‘Three Old Irish accentual poems’, 51).

**2d.** This line seems to be a direct continuation of line *c*, and I follow most editors in understanding that the birds and the deer leap over hills. **C** has *léim* instead of *léith* in **R**. This is the verbal noun of *lingid*; its inclusion might be influenced by the phrase *lingid léim* 'jumps a jump', though the syntax would still be difficult to understand and it does not give good end-rhyme with *snéid*.

**3a.** I take *foss n-oss* as object antecedent to the relative *ro gab*, with following nasalisation after accusative *foss*. *Foss* refers to a state of rest as opposed to movement, so the noun *fossad* 'station, halting-place, abode' may provide a better meaning here; however it is not supported by the manuscripts and would make the line hypermetrical. I understand *foss* as 'a state of rest or quietude', and translate 'tranquility'.<sup>205</sup>

**3b.** The relation of this line to the preceding is unclear. I have understood *cúan* as a litter of pups and not a pack of dogs, as their cry is said to be *dess* 'agreeable', and because in the context of a poem about the coming of summer it seems more fitting to have pups that have just been born.<sup>206</sup> The adjective *cass* is preposed, to facilitate imperfect end-rhyme between *cúan* and *lúath*. Meyer translated as 'curly' though he had given another meaning for a word with the same spelling in *Contributions to Irish Lexicography*, 'smart, nimble, active, rash, hasty, abrupt, passionate'; Jackson prefers the latter.<sup>207</sup> Carney notes that *cass* may be an attribute of music and takes it to qualify *gáir* rather than *cúan*. I have followed Meyer's interpretation, which is the most commonly attested meaning of the word.<sup>208</sup>

Alternatively, one may read *cúan* as a stretch of water, and thus take *cas* as used of sea and rivers to mean 'eddyding';<sup>209</sup> the line would translate as 'the agreeable sound of eddyding water'. As most couplets run together in sense, I have not followed this interpretation, although it is a possible alternative.

**3c.** The verb *tibid* comes to mean 'smiles, laughs' though its primary sense is 'breaks, beats', and it is often used with *tonn* and in the lexical field of sea and wind.<sup>210</sup> As is usual in its occurrences, it is unclear which meaning is to be understood here. *Tibid* does not seem to take direct objects, and tends to be utilised with following preposition (*fri*), but there is none here.<sup>211</sup> The primary meaning of *fonn* is 'land, territory', but it may also refer to an expanse of land or sea. Consequently, I understand 'find fonn' as a phrase in apposition to *trácht* in the nominative singular, with the preposed adjective *find* allowing for *aicill* rhyme between *fonn:lonn*. **C** omits *find* but it is required for the metre.

<sup>205</sup> *eDIL* s.v. 1 *foss*, *fos* (a) (<https://dil.ie/24107>, accessed 23 January 2024).

<sup>206</sup> *eDIL* s.v. 1 *cúan* (<https://dil.ie/13334>, accessed 19 October 2023).

<sup>207</sup> Meyer, *Contributions to Irish Lexicography*, i:i (Halle, 1906), 323; Jackson, *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry*, 43–4.

<sup>208</sup> *eDIL* s.v. 1 *cas* (<https://dil.ie/8289>, accessed 20 October 2023).

<sup>209</sup> *eDIL* s.v. 2 *cúan* (<https://dil.ie/13335>, accessed 23 January 2024); *eDIL* s.v. 1 *cas* (a).

<sup>210</sup> Joseph Vendryes, 'L'expression du "rire" en Celtique', *EC* 3 (1938), 38–45, at 43.

<sup>211</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *tibid* (<https://dil.ie/40693>, accessed 19 October 2023).

Carney interprets *c* and *d* as ‘the strand smiles, fair land that is wont to anger the swift sea’, taking ‘*find fonn*’ as an example of enjambment. This may be justified by the occurrence of similar syntax in *4ab*, though these lines are problematic (see below).

**3d.** I have rendered ‘*dīa mbi*’ as ‘so’ here which fits better in English.

**4a.** This and the following line are problematic. I have taken ‘*Fūam*’ as nominative singular with following neuter nasalisation on ‘*ngæth*’ (genitive plural). The grammatical relation between ‘*Fūam ngæth*’, ‘*bæth*’ and ‘*barr*’ is unclear, however. If the adjective *báeth* goes with *gæth*, then the expected nasalisation is absent. Alternatively, *báeth* could be taken as qualifying ‘*barr*’ (nominative singular), but I see no reason why it would be preposed to the noun, unless the second part of the line is understood as a copula phrase with *báeth* as predicate. There is one less syllable in the first line of this verse (4<sup>1</sup>) compared to the others (5<sup>1</sup>), suggesting something may have been omitted. **C** offers no alternative readings. Because of the following line (for which see below), and as *barr* is used to mean the top part of trees, I understand ‘*bæth barr*’ as a copula phrase.

Meyer and Jackson see a prepositional phrase, translating ‘in the top(s)’.<sup>212</sup> Carney reads the adjective *gáeth* ‘wise’ as an antithesis to *báeth* and sees the whole line as a copula sentence meaning literally ‘the wanton top is a wise noise’, a comparison of wild winds of winter and the calmer sounds it makes in the woods in the summer.<sup>213</sup> Indeed, the line may play on the double meaning of *gáeth* and *báeth* as ‘wise’ and ‘foolish’. Greene and O’Connor have emended *barr* to *i mbruig*, but this is not supported by any of the manuscripts and is unwarranted.<sup>214</sup>

**4b.** The scribe of **R** appears to have had difficulties with this line. He wrote ‘*dairi duib drumdaill*’ but then added *puncta delentia* under the second *i* of *dairi* and under the *d* of *drum*. He also rectified the minims on this latter word, lengthening the top of the second minim of the *m* to make *in*.<sup>215</sup> If one incorporates these corrections, the line thus reads ‘*dair duib ruin daill*’ ‘oak of gall, dark secrets’(?). Even if taking ‘*duib*’ as the substantivised form of *dub* in the genitive singular, and interpreting ‘*dair duib*’ as a phrase (otherwise unattested) for ‘oak-gall’, this makes little sense. Though there are lots of dot-like stains on this page of **R**, the *puncta delentia* are inked and appear deliberate. However, **C** reads ‘*daire duibh druin daill*’, suggesting that the *puncta delentia* in **R** be disregarded but the correction of *m* to *in* be incorporated. The line remains difficult even without the *puncta delentia*. The adjective ‘*duib*’ is in the genitive

<sup>212</sup> Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 21; Jackson (trans.), *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry*, 25.

<sup>213</sup> Carney (ed. and trans.), ‘Three Old Irish accentual poems’, 51–2.

<sup>214</sup> Greene and O’Connor (ed. and trans.), *A Golden Treasury*, 138.

<sup>215</sup> See **R**, fol. 60ra10 (<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/ea96c258-35fa-4d52-949c-5a0ef99ce659/surfaces/d987a5f7-5a01-4a91-b337-57c92cbb32b/>, accessed 10 November 2023).

singular, as is *daire* 'oak-wood, grove' in **R**, suggesting they are dependent on 'barr' in the previous line.<sup>216</sup> Though this is the first instance in 'Táinic sam' and 'Fuitt co bráth' of a genitive phrase linking two lines together, I follow this interpretation for lack of another, better one. As for 'druin daill' (or 'drum daill' if refusing the correction in **R**), it is unclear. Meyer and Jackson take it as a place-name, albeit unattested.<sup>217</sup> I follow Carney in taking *druin daill* as adjectives in the genitive singular qualifying *dairi*;<sup>218</sup> here *dall* 'dark' may perhaps refer to the darkness of woods in the summer when the leafage is most dense, so I translate 'shadowy'.

**4c.** I have followed Greene and O'Connor who translated *mæl* as 'clipped'. Meyer and Jackson give 'hornless' which does not really fit with horses.

**4d.** There could be a place-name in this line, Cúan Caill, literally 'Harbour of Hazel'. Meyer suggests that the mention of 'coin Coildi Cuan' 'the hounds of the wood of Cuan' in *ÚBÉ* refers to the same place, but there are no other attestations of the name as far as I am aware, so I have not followed this.<sup>219</sup> **C** gives *ma* for *mbi* (**R**), probably the present subjunctive of the copula.

**5a.** **C** reads 'Muidhe' instead of third singular present indicative of *maidid* in **R**. It is the same verb, probably still meant to be third singular.

**5b.** All editors have understood this line as a zero copula sentence, with the copula probably being omitted for reasons of metre. I follow this interpretation. I have understood '*daire glaiss*' as a genitive phrase dependent on *doss*. One could also understand Daire Glaiss as another place-name ('the copse of Daire Glaiss is bushy'); I have not pursued this interpretation here as the place-name is (again) unattested elsewhere.

**5d.** I take 'cuilinn caiss' as nominative plural placed after the accusative singular *coin* to facilitate end-rhyme between *glaiss* and *caiss*. The phrase *coin cuilinn* is also present in *Echtra Airt meic Cuind ocus Tochmarc Delbchaíme ingine Morgáin* 'The adventure of Art mac Cuinn and the wooing of Delbcháem ingen Morgáin', a text which only survives in the fifteenth-century Book of Fermoy (RIA MS 23 E 29). The text reads: 'iarsin rainic gusan *fhidh fhásaigh* a rabhadar na coin cuilind ⁊ na cailleacha colacha clænbrethacha' 'after that he came to the forest wild where the Coincuilind and the wicked, perverse hags were' (§22); 'an fidh dorchá *cona conaibh cuilind*' 'the dark forest with the

<sup>216</sup>The reading 'daire' in **C** may also be understood as genitive singular, taking into account the falling together of final unstressed vowels during the Middle Irish period.

<sup>217</sup>Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 21; Jackson (trans.), *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry*, 25.

<sup>218</sup>Carney (ed. and trans.), 'Three Old Irish accentual poems', 51–2.

<sup>219</sup>Ní Shéaghdha (ed.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, 134; my translation.

Coincuilind' (§24).<sup>220</sup> Best has not translated the phrase, taking it as a personal name; he suggests a literal meaning in his notes, 'Coincuilind "dogs of holly" (?)'.<sup>221</sup> One may tentatively suggest that this phrase referred to a harmful animal living in the woods, but I have found no other evidence supporting this reading.<sup>222</sup> Though hollies are evergreen, their flowers bloom in the spring and summer and they are toxic to dogs. The line may be a reference to hunting in the summer, and hounds getting scratched in the undergrowth in the process (see 'Táinic sam' 7c, dáilit daim 'stags scatter').<sup>223</sup> Greene and O'Connor have emended *coin* to *dam*; their reasoning is unclear to me.<sup>224</sup> For **R** 'caiss', **C** reads 'kis'; *k* normally stands for the letters *ca* so this is the same word. Hull read 'fas' but this is incorrect.<sup>225</sup>

**6a.** **C** gives *Canait*, which is third plural and not the third singular form found in **R**; *lon* is nominative singular, so this must be a slip. The adjective *dron* is omitted in **C**, but it is needed for the metre and it alliterates with *dord*. I have taken it as qualifying *lon*, according to the normal word-order in Old Irish. Jackson also took it as qualifying *lon*, but all the other editors read it as a preposed adjective qualifying *dord*.

**6b.** The meaning of 'forbb' here is unclear. *eDIL* suggests that *foirb* is a byform of *orb(b)a*, 'patrimony, heritage of land, estate',<sup>226</sup> which has a later spelling *forbbae* attested elsewhere in **L** and **R**.<sup>227</sup> Meyer translates the line as 'to him the live wood is a heritage';<sup>228</sup> other editors have followed suit, as have I. It seems that *cerb* is an adjective of uncertain meaning, often used with *caill*.<sup>229</sup>

**7a.** *Tibid* could be understood as 'smiles' or as 'touches' since it is used as a personification of the sun (see also 3c).

**7b.** This line is problematic, and the translation given is taken from Hull.<sup>230</sup> If *dedlaid* is the verb 'disjoins, severs, parts', it could be either third singular present indicative as in **R** or second singular as in **C**; I have followed **R**.<sup>231</sup> The

<sup>220</sup>R. I. Best (ed. and trans.), 'The adventures of Art son of Con', *Ériu* 3 (1907), 149–72, at 166–7 (§22) and 168–9 (§24).

<sup>221</sup>Best, 'The adventures of Art', 172.

<sup>222</sup>See for example *cú cnámha* 'vermin, louse', *eDIL* s.v. 1 *cú* (e) (<https://dil.ie/13291>, accessed 16 August 2024).

<sup>223</sup>Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming: A Study Based Mainly on the Law-Texts of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD*, Early Irish Law Series 4 (Dublin, 1997), 273–5.

<sup>224</sup>Greene and O'Connor (ed. and trans.), *A Golden Treasury*, 138.

<sup>225</sup>Hull, 'Four Old-Irish songs', 201.

<sup>226</sup>*eDIL* s.v. *foirb* (<https://dil.ie/22943>, accessed 10 November 2023), *eDIL* s.v. *orb(b)a* (<https://dil.ie/33941>, accessed 10 November 2023).

<sup>227</sup>*eDIL* s.v. *forbbae* (<https://dil.ie/23367>, accessed 10 November 2023).

<sup>228</sup>Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 21.

<sup>229</sup>*eDIL* s.v. 2 *cerb* (<https://dil.ie/8741>, accessed 23 November 2023).

<sup>230</sup>Hull, 'Four Old-Irish songs', 201.

<sup>231</sup>Though note that the scribe of **C** omits the *d* ending in the present, as mentioned above and in Hull, 'Four Old-Irish songs', 201.

phrase *dedlaid fri* 'separates from' is not uncommon, but *lim* is puzzling. It is unlikely to be a prepositional pronoun, as there is no other first-person marker in the poem. Carney seems to take it as being from *lím* 'sharp-' a poorly-attested adjective used in compounds and deriving from *límaid* 'sharpens, grinds, polishes'.<sup>232</sup> I follow Hull who understands *lim* to be the proleptic genitive singular of *lem*, 'elm', dependent on *snom* (C).

The scribe of C, or of his exemplar, seems to have been puzzled by the end of the line since he wrote 'snom nó son'.<sup>233</sup> The interpolation is not very helpful, however; *son* is unlikely to be the anaphoric pronoun;<sup>234</sup> *son* 'sound' or the adjective *son* 'happy' do not fit the context either. Jackson does not give a translation for *snom* (R) but he points in a note to the occurrence of *snomh* in *Buile Suibhne*, left untranslated by O'Keeffe as well.<sup>235</sup> There is little information about *snom* 'bark of a tree' available for us to make sense of the line.<sup>236</sup> Bark seems to have been used in medieval Ireland to make containers for food, to tan leather, or make dye, and possibly rope, but in all these cases the word used to describe the bark is *rúsc*.<sup>237</sup> It seems that the only use of *snomad* is in legal glosses, referring to the illegal removal of bark from a tree.<sup>238</sup> Hull understands *síl* 'seed' to have a metaphorical sense of 'source, origin'; I have adopted his translation. The exact meaning remains obscure, and I have kept the reading in R since *snom* or *snob* 'bark' is so poorly attested.<sup>239</sup>

Meyer reads 'dedlaid lim fri síl snon' and translates 'a parting for me from the brood of \*cares'.<sup>240</sup> He puts a question mark in his glossary under the translation of *snon* 'care, grief'.<sup>241</sup> Carney edits as 'dedlai lím, fri[s]-síl snom' and translates 'the edge will cleave, it will strike the bark', reading *dedlai* as future of *dlongid* 'splits, cuts, cleaves'.<sup>242</sup> He takes *lim* as providing end-rhyme with *tír* according to his presentation of the poem (*dar cach tír/dedlai lím*), and *fri-síl* as third singular future of *fris-slig* 'strikes against, repels (?)' with a query.<sup>243</sup>

<sup>232</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *lím* (<https://dil.ie/30224>, accessed 23 November 2023).

<sup>233</sup> Though the gloss is incorporated into the text, suggesting that the scribe copied it from an exemplar in which it may have been interlinear or marginal, there are other instances of notes in the bulk of the text in this manuscript (see discussion in the introduction above), so the possibility that the scribe of C is responsible for this cannot be ruled out.

<sup>234</sup> *GOI* §479.

<sup>235</sup> Jackson, *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry*, 43. J. G. O'Keeffe (ed. and trans.), *Buile Suibhne: The Frenzy of Suibhne. Being the Adventures of Suibhne Geilt, a Middle Irish Romance*, Irish Texts Society 12 (London, 1913), 56 and 167–8.

<sup>236</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *snom* (<https://dil.ie/38180>, accessed 23 November 2023).

<sup>237</sup> Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 326, 382–4 and Fergus Kelly (ed. and trans.), 'The Old Irish Tree-List', *Celtica* 11 (1976), 107–24, at 113.

<sup>238</sup> Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 386.

<sup>239</sup> Prof. Ó hUiginn suggests to me another way of reading this line, with a verb *\*fris-síl* 'flows, pours' (see *sílid* 'drips, weeps') used here with reference to the sap of a tree 'weeping', or dripping from the bark, in fine weather. The line would then translate 'The bark of the elm separates and weeps' (taking *dedlaid* as intransitive). Though an interesting and plausible interpretation, this verb is unattested, so I have kept Hull's translation.

<sup>240</sup> Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 23.

<sup>241</sup> Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Four Old-Irish Songs*, 26.

<sup>242</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *dlongid* (<https://dil.ie/17061>, accessed 10 November 2023).

<sup>243</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *\*fris-slig* (<https://dil.ie/24386>, accessed 10 November 2023).

He also prefers the reading *snom* ‘bark’, and sees this line as a reference to the cutting of wood in preparation for winter, although he admits he is not quite satisfied with the translation of the line.<sup>244</sup> Greene and O’Connor emend the end of the line to *sín sal* ‘bad weather’.

**7c.** I have taken ‘dáilit’ as from *dáilid*, but it may also be a form of *dálaid* ‘makes a tryst’, which shows influence of *dáilid*.<sup>245</sup> However, since the mating season of deer (rut) happens in the autumn, I have preferred the metaphorical meaning from *dáilid* ‘spreads out’.<sup>246</sup>

**7d.** Carney has emended *forbrit* to *for-berat* (<*for-beir* ‘grows, increases’). I agree with that interpretation although I have not emended the text, as this changes the syllable count to 7<sup>1</sup>. I take *forbrit* as a unverbated form, as no other reading suggests itself to me. I am aware of another instance of this form in *Cath Maige Rath*: ‘forbrit tar a fabradaib’, and O’Donovan takes it as third plural of *for-beir* as well.<sup>247</sup> Ravens usually breed quite early in the year, so this might be a way to underline that summer is here now, as the *dúnad* repeats in the second part of the line.

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<sup>244</sup> Carney, ‘Three Old Irish accentual poems’, 52.

<sup>245</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *dálaid* (<https://dil.ie/14357>, accessed 11 June 2024).

<sup>246</sup> *eDIL* s.v. *dáilid* I(b) (<https://dil.ie/14201>, accessed 11 June 2024).

<sup>247</sup> John O’Donovan (ed. and trans.), *The Banquet of Dun na n-Gedh and the Battle of Magh Rath* (Dublin, 1842), 186, l. 3.