SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE VERSIFICATION OF THE RHYMELESS 'LEINSTER POEMS'\(^1\)

INTRODUCTION

Despite the comments of Kuno Meyer and James Carney on the versification of the rhymeless poems in the genealogical tract on the pedigrees of Leinster,\(^2\) we are still left with the problem of the principles on which the verse-lines of these poems are to be defined. According to Meyer the boundaries of the verse-lines can be recognized by the application of freer rules of alliteration (\textit{Bindung}) than those in verse-internal position (\textit{Alliteration}).\(^3\) These rules, which on the whole are equivalent to those of \textit{Fidrad freccomail} of rhymed poetry (i.e. alliteration binding the last word of a stanza to the first word of the next stanza\(^4\)), were described by him in \textit{Über die älteste irische Dichtung}.\(^5\) In the poems quoted, however, nearly all the verse-lines are linked by alliteration of the normal type and freer alliteration can hardly have been indicative of the boundary of a verse-line. Although in the title of his monograph Meyer called this poetry 'rhythmic' (\textit{Rhythmishe alliterierende reimlose Strophen}), he remarked that no regular alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, i.e. metrically conditioned rhythm, can be observed.\(^6\) Finally, he made the important observation than in many of the rhymeless poems the long lines end in a disyllable with the exception of proper names, which may be triyllabic.\(^7\) Accordingly, Carney in his remarks on early rhymeless poetry in Appendix 1 to his article 'Three Old Irish accessional poems'\(^8\) developed a rule that '[in verse dating from the sixth century] disyllabic words with a medial cluster of consonants, generally resulting


\(^3\) \textit{AID} II, 3.


\(^5\) \textit{AID} I, 8-10.

\(^6\) \textit{AID} II, 4.

\(^7\) \textit{AID} II, 3-4.

\(^8\) \textit{Ériu} 22 (1971) 23-80, pp. 53-63.
from syncope, are to be treated as trisyllabic. Indeed, the disyllables ending a verse-line always contain a consonant cluster, while, on the other hand, examples of trisyllabic endings with words other than proper names are to be found, e.g. no. 1 muiredach, no. 3 slögídach, no. 5 faithemde, no. 10 aidbhith, and no. 12 croelchlab in the poems quoted below. Further, some of the poems were seen by Carney as realizations of the ochtphoelach pattern, which was attained by breaking up pairs of verse-lines into twice three cola of usually - but not always - two stresses followed by a cadence: e.g. Móen óen | ó ba noed, | nó bud noos | ardriag, | orí riaga, | out án, | hua Luircc | Labraid. But while his analysis seems to work in the example adduced, in others it does not work, and his alternative analysis of these pairs as consisting of four verse-lines - the caesura being considered as the end of a line - gives us a better starting-point in these cases. Still, many of the rhymeless poems in the corpus edited by Meyer cannot be analysed in this way, and a new assessment is necessary.

As the interrelationships between the different versions of the tract in which these poems are transmitted have not yet been investigated, I cannot base this discussion on a full critical edition. Instead, for ease of reference, I shall quote and translate the poems according to the text of the manuscript Rawlinson B 502 [hereafter R] as published in Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae except where otherwise stated. Variant readings affecting the metre will be noted from the diplomatic edition of the Book of Leinster [hereafter LL], the Book of Ballymote [hereafter BB], the Book of Lecan [hereafter Lec.], and the late supplement to the Book of Leinster [hereafter LLfacs.]. The poems will be divided into three groups: `cadenced poetry', `alliterative chain' and `mixed types'. The corpus used in this article consists of the poems in CGH, 17-23, and CGH, 70-73, only. I will not refer to the other rhymeless poems edited by Meyer, i.e. the poem Móen óen, which is preserved in the dindshenches, in the aetiological introduction, as well

10Éigse 22 (1971) 56.
11ibid., 61.
12Capitalization and division of lines, however, are not always followed. The cadence is marked by spacing, the caesura by a vertical stroke. Round brackets indicate omissions and square brackets indicate additions supported by the other manuscript texts.
14Royal Irish Academy facsimile, introduction by Robert Atkinson (Dublin 1887).
15Irish Manuscripts Commission facsimile, introduction by Kathleen Mulchene (Dublin 1937).
16Royal Irish Academy facsimile, introduction by Robert Atkinson (Dublin 1880).
17CGH, 1; ÁID II, 10-12.
18Cf. R. Thurneysen, 'A. Zu irischen Texten', Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie 11 (1917) 30-34, p. 34.
as in the body of the tract, the poem Na tri Fothaid,\textsuperscript{19} which describes the position of the three Fothaid in the pedigree of Núadu Necht, and the three poetic texts concerning the story of Énnae Cennselach and his son Eochu.\textsuperscript{20} Textual difficulties and the intricacy of their transmission complicate an analysis of their metre, and they will be reserved for a separate treatment.

I. CADENED VERSE

The poems of the first group have one feature in common: at more or less regular intervals one finds trisyllabic or, according to Carney's rule (see above), equivalent disyllabic words alliterating with the following and – with one exception (no. 6 máirris ár-choin) – with the preceding word. The equivalence between trisyllables and disyllables with an internal consonant group, while not necessarily implying a pre-syncop date for the poems, could be explained by a pre-syncop date of the metrical feature of a trisyllabic cadence, which, after the introduction of syncop, applied not only to trisyllables, but also to such disyllables as were – or could have been – created through syncop. In a later publication, Carney made the observation that in Verba Scáthaire, a poem with a metrical structure based on trisyllabic line-endings, OTHARLIGE 'sick-lying' etc. functions as a trisyllable, and explained this feature by the secondary development of the vowel in -ar.\textsuperscript{21} Again, for the Old Irish period, this rule can be slated to mean that, after the development of the svarabhakti vowel, it could in this type of poetry be disregarded for metrical reasons. An example of this rule is to be found in no. 5 Fedelmithé (< féd*mlithé). The fragment no. 7 deviates from the other poems in showing not a trisyllabic, but a disyllabic cadence. It is interesting to note that Bresual\textsuperscript{22} here functions as a disyllable (: Bèolach), while in no. 6 it may function as the equivalent of a trisyllable (: ár-choin).

The length of the lines demarcated by the cadence ranges in some poems (nos. 1, 2, 3) from 6 to 10/11 syllables, in others (nos. 4, 5, 6, 7) from 10 to 13/14 syllables. All verse-lines show consistent internal alliteration. The alliteration can, however, be interrupted at the caesura: e.g. no. 1 nairech fo bhrón and no. 2 corodar for slíagh, coibnius | eter. In some cases the two cola of the longer lines can be further subdivided – in accordance with Carney's first analysis of this metre (see above) – into two shorter cola each, the last colon constituting the cadence. But in other cases such an analysis would lead to awkward subdivisions: e.g. no. 5 fri fíledu | fáth | fiu dá mac fíala | Fedelmithé. So it seems better to

\textsuperscript{19} CGH, 99; ÁID II, 14 (cf. K. Meyer, 'Find mac Umsal', Revue Celtique 32 (1911) 391–5); LL VI 25033–25046.

\textsuperscript{20} ÁID II, 19 and 21–2. These texts are not preserved in R owing to a gap (CGH, 78). In Lec., which is not referred to by Meyer, they are to be found on f. 92 v 4-14. See also note 41.

\textsuperscript{21} Eigse 17 (1977–9) 426; cf. GOI, 70–71 § 112.

\textsuperscript{22} See note 39.
accept that the basic structure of the verse-lines in this poetry consisted of two, and not of four, cola.

The lines consisting of two cola often constitute a syntactic unit, but do not necessarily do so. See the possible case of enjambment in no. 2 Morial / mac dacht Morca. After every two lines, however, a sentence boundary is obligatory and even the shortest fragments, except the special case of no. 8, consist of two lines. We can thus regard these poems with Meyer as stanzaic, each stanza consisting of two lines.

The rhythm of the cola on either side of the caesura is not fixed, at least if we apply the rules of natural word-stress in Old and Middle Irish: e.g. no. 4 Mál ad-rualaid iáth [k] u márb with four stresses, sélaig snithu Fómairí with three stresses, and Di uachtr Álinne with two stresses. Carney accounted for such irregularities in the accentual pattern by a special set of rules which would apply to early, non-syllabic poetry. But the strict application of his rules to the poems cited below does not always lead to regular stress pattern: e.g. no. 4 Di uachtr Álinne ('A trisyllabic word may be regarded as having a stress on the last as well as on the first syllable') with three stresses, but trebann trén tuathmar ('An accented syllable standing immediately before another may be de-stressed') with two stresses. J. Kuryłowicz criticized Carney's rules and substituted another set of rules based on the principle that syntactic groups connected by (morphologial) sandhi had only one main stress (substantive + attribute, verb + subject, but verb + subject + attribute). His rules, however, do not lead to a regular pattern either: e.g. no. 4 Mál ad-rualaid iáth [k] u márb with three stresses, sélaig snithu Fómairí with two stresses, and Di uachtr Álinne with one main stress. For the present it seems better not to ascribe to the rhythm of this type of versification a constitutive role in the definition of the verse-lines, although rhythm may be relevant as a stylistic feature of its individual realizations. Indeed, if a tendency toward a subdivision of the verse-lines into cola with two stresses can be observed in some cases (e.g. no. 1 and Móen [k] en above), this may be due to the influence of the type here called 'alliterative chain'; cf. the 'mixed types' below. Thus, the term 'cadenced verse', used by Charles W. Dunn with regard to the poetry studied by Calvert Watkins, very aptly applies to the poems of our first group too.

28 AID II, 3.
24 See Murphy, Early Irish metrics, 41.
26 Metrik und Sprachgeschichte (Wroclaw 1975) 158-71, esp. 160: 'Alles dies befindet sich im Widerspruch zu der auf den bisherigen Analysen gegründeten Erfahrung, nämlich der allgemeinen Tendenz der Stärkung der metrischen Fugen, nicht zu ihrer Lockerung'.
28 Celtica 6 (1963) 134-240.
No. 8 deviates from the other poems in that only part of the text follows the metrical structure described above. In this text one verse-line is combined with a text in poetic style with no apparent metrical structure.

Examples of this kind of versification are also found in the story of Conchobar’s death and, in connection with apparently non-metrical poetic style, in a roscaé from Tain Bó Cuailnge. It has a rhymed counterpart in two of the genealogical poems edited by Meyer: Nida dir dermaid and Nádú Necht, ní dáimair anfasaith. In these poems the cadence of the two lines of every stanza is connected by rhyme. Carney suggested that the distribution of rhyme in the rannóghecht metres of syllabic poetry (ab cd) originated in the rhymed counterparts of what is here called ‘cadenced poetry’, the non-rhyming lines being originally those parts of the verse-lines that preceded the caesura.

1. CGH, 18; AID II, 7–833

Dind Ríg | ruaid Tuaim Tenbad,
trícha[í] nairech | fo brón bebsait.

Brúisius, brósuis | hár niad lónn Labraid,
láth Elga | húa Luirc Léagaire.

Lugaid lóeg | lónn sanb Sétma
sochla Céel | Cóbthach mál muireadh.

Mandrais armu | [athair] athar Ollomon
ort Móen | maccó inn Augaine.

‘Dind Ríg (was) red Tuaim Tenbad. Thirty nobles (?) died sorrowfully. He crushed (and) burnt them, the bold wise champion Labraid, the warrior of Elg, the grandson of Loegaire Loir: the calf (= the beloved) Lugaid, the bold, ... Sétma, the renowned Coel, Cobthach the chief (and) lord. He destroyed (their) weapons, the father of the father of (Oengus) Ollam. Móen of the family of glorious Augaine slew (them).’

30 AID I, 16 = CGH, 8.
31 AID I, 39 = CGH, 1
32 Ériu 22 (1971) 58.
33 R 118 a 9–14, BB 119 b 25–31, Lec. 84 r a 21–5, LLfac. 377 b 15–19. See also H. Wagner, ‘The archaic Dind Ríg poem and related problems’, Ériu 28 (1977) 1–16. The corresponding text in the story Orgain Denna Ríg (ed. D. Greene, Fingal Rómáin and other stories (Dublin 1985) lines 453–63) differs in many points from the text in the genealogical text, and the two versions should not be conflated. Its metrical structure, however, is basically the same. The reading náirech in the second line is supported by the genealogical text (except Lec.: aircé) as well as by the text in the story (except LL: fairech): náirech ‘diffident, modest’, here ‘noble’ in the positive sense of the basic word máir ‘noble, modest’ > náire ‘nobility, modesty’? R macc (v.l. mac(c)s), BB macás ‘of the family’ (cd) rather than acc. pl. of mac?
2. CGH, 18; ÂID II, 9

Ni ce()l t ceis | ceol de chruitk | Chraptini
coro star | for sluagu | suanbas.
consert coibnus | eter seeo | Main | Moriath
macdacht | Morca | mœcchluag | Labraid

'The ceis did not conceal the music from Craptine's harp, so that it
covered the hosts with a sleep-death. It strewed affection between Main
and Moriath, the marriagable girl of Muirc (Morc, Morca): Labraid
surpasses any price.'

3. CGH, 72; ÂID II, 18

Lámair lergga | lána sló(i)g | slógidach
scéo láthaib | Laigniu | Labraid

'Labraid (son of Bressal Beolach) defied battle-fields full of warlike
hosts and warriors: (he defied) the Leinstermen.'

4. CGH, 20; ÂID II, 6–7

Mál ad-rua laild int[h]u marb | mac sœer | Sét nai,
selaig srathu Fomaire | fo dœene | domnaib.
Di uachtur Alinne | oirt tréun| talman,
trebunn trén tuathmar | Mis-Telmann (v.l. Del-) | Domna(in)n.

'A chief has entered the territories of the dead, the noble son of
Sét nai. He cleared the meadows of the Fomaire under (or: throughout)
the worlds of men. From the summit of Ailenn he slew the leaders of the
world. A strong mighty tribune (was) Mis-Delmann of the Domnainn.'

24 R 118 a 17, LL VI 30608–612, BB 119 b 34–7, Lec. 84 r a 33 – b 3, LLfacs. 377 b 24–6. R quotes the first line only. Accordingly, I quote the text of LL. Like
the foregoing text it appears in the story Or gan Denna Rig (see Greene, Fingal
Rótnin, lines 384–7) and it is quoted in the commentary on Am ra Cholainm Chítte as
well (LU 622–5; W. Stokes, 'The Bodleian Am ra Chokimb Chítte', Revue Celtique
third verse-line is rightly placed after Moriath, implying enjambment between this
and the fourth verse-line, the metrical structure is the same as that of the foregoing
verse-together with which it is attributed to Ferchertne in the story. In accordance
with the story, coíbnes, literally 'relationship', may have the more recent meaning
'affection' ([DL] C 290.61 as [coíbne], and T. F. O'Rahilly, 'Varia II', Cultics 1 (1930)
328–86, p. 369 [Sc.Gael. caibhnes 'kindness']). R. Thurneysen's emendation of eter
seeo M. M. to etirr seeo M. M. ('Zur keltischen Literatur und Grammatik', ZCP 12
(1918) 271–89, p. 285) is not necessary; compare in roscad-style Táin Bó Cúilnge 1
(ed. C. O'Rahilly, Dublin 1976) line 1187: seeo Ailli Medba for Ailli seeo Medba?
26 R 118 a 32–5, LL VI 39535–9, Lec. 84 r b 28–31, LLfacs. 378 a 10–22.
Cathaír cōem Conn | comfeabaí fallnatar | fláithemdai
fri filedus féth | fiu dá mac fíala | Fedelmithe.

‘Beloved Cathair (and) Conn (Céchtachach), (these) princes rule with equal excellence. They (are) worthy (to be) subject-matter of poets, the two noble sons of the (two) Fedelmid.’

Línais Nia níthach sab | slógaib cach máirrig ár-choin
co mbaig doráid ndian | dá mac buadaí | Bresuail.

‘The combative champion Nia filled the slaughter-hound with the hosts of every great king, until a vehement battle struck the two sons of victorious Bresual.’

Ān grian gríosach | goires brēoda | Bresuail(i)l
bres Elgá hūa Luirc | láthras bith | Bēolach.

‘A bright fiery sun that burns (is) flaming Bresual. A blow on Elg (Ireland) (is) the descendant of Lorc who has power of disposition over the world, Bēolach.’

Cōeca fichet filed | fiu bid n-airc fri drauc | Fiachaich
Fiachu fri ñen | ërl mbráithre | Baccedo.

5. *CGH*, 70; *AID* II, 14

Cathaír cōem Conn | comfeabaí fallnatar | fláithemdai
fri filedus féth | fiu dá mac fíala | Fedelmithe.

‘Beloved Cathair (and) Conn (Céchtachach), (these) princes rule with equal excellence. They (are) worthy (to be) subject-matter of poets, the two noble sons of the (two) Fedelmid.’

6. *CGH*, 73; *AID* II, 18

Línais Nia níthach sab | slógaib cach máirrig ár-choin
co mbaig doráid ndian | dá mac buadaí | Bresuail.

‘The combative champion Nia filled the slaughter-hound with the hosts of every great king, until a vehement battle struck the two sons of victorious Bresual.’

7. *CGH*, 71; *AID* II, 15

Ān grian gríosach | goires brēoda | Bresuail(i)l
bres Elgá hūa Luirc | láthras bith | Bēolach.

‘A bright fiery sun that burns (is) flaming Bresual. A blow on Elg (Ireland) (is) the descendant of Lorc who has power of disposition over the world, Bēolach.’

8. *CGH*, 71; *AID* II, 16

Cōeca fichet filed | fiu bid n-airc fri drauc | Fiachaich
Fiachu fri ñen | ërl mbráithre | Baccedo.

37R 124 a 29–30, BB 131 b 36–8, Lec. 90 v 4 d 7–9. On the construction of fri filedus (= a) fēth (acc. + acc. for gen. + acc.) see H. Wagner, ‘A syntactical feature of archaic OIr. poetry’, *ZCP* 39 (1982) 78–83. As fiu is a predicative adjective, fēth fiu ‘ein würdiger Gegenstand’ (K. Meyer) is impossible. In R. fiu is a Mid.Ir. nom. du./pl. masc.; BB and Lec. read fēl, but do (mac) seems corrupt. Cathair Már is the son of Fedelmid Fer Aurglas, whereas Conn Céchtachach is the son of Fedelmid Rechtad.


40R 124 a 46–8, BB 131 b 50–51, Lec. 90 v 4 d 37–41, LL.facs. 387 a 8–10. R is supported by Lec. only. LL. and the other manuscripts read: *Fiche filed fir* (recte *fia*, v.II.) *nath nairec fordarc Fiachaig* (recte *-cheig*, v.II.) ‘Twenty poets, they (are) worthy of inventing poems (on) the famous (?) Fiachu’. On *fiu bid* (pred. + cop.l.) compare no. 12 (note 53).
A thousand poets, they would have been worthy of inventing poems on the dragon Fiachu: Fiachu is better than (any) one of the many brothers of Baccid (=himself).

II. ALLITERATIVE CHAIN

We have in our corpus only one example to illustrate the second type of versification. It is important for the understanding of the third type. This poem consists of a chain of cola, each colon containing two stressed words, the second of which alliterates with the first of the next colon. The chain ends in a somewhat longer sentence. Thus, this kind of versification is defined by both alliteration and rhythm. It is, of course, amply attested in Old Irish literature and it will suffice to give three examples: *Fochen Conall*, /críde lice/ etc., from *Séile muce Mcis Dathó* in narrative literature; *Col as fogailsi do duinú? Ní anse*. *Foss oc etlai* /anbatae mbriathar* etc., from *Appgitir Chrábaí* in didactic literature; and *Mad be rí rofesser / rechd flatho* etc. (with many deviations) from a legal text. This type has a rhymed counterpart in *Énna, Labraid*, /súad cáích, / comarc Bressaíl | báin bláith etc.* and *Cú cen málair, | maith cland etc.*, as well as in some of the fragments ascribed to Colmán mac Lénéni. In these rhymed poems the last word of every second colon rhymes with the last word of every fourth colon. The rhymed poems are thus organized in lines of two cola and stanzas of two lines each, and a combination of two such stanzas to a new, four-lined stanza in syllabic poetry may well underlie the *deibhidhe* pattern of rhyme (ab cd) as Carney suggested. If, however, we try to apply such a subdivision to our poem, then the lines *bárcsiáb di thonnaitb* and *Trí húr Bascnai* – which seem to be divided by a sentence-boundary – would have to constitute one verse-line. This is rather improbable and it seems better to accept that the basic structure of this poem was a mere chain of short cola defined by alliteration and rhythm.

41 The poem *Eochu art arachridethar cathraí* (AID II, 22; see note 20) may belong to this type as well.
45 AID I, 27 = CGH, 4.
46 AID I, 53 = CGH, 199.
'Find Taulcha, an evil band; (and) Caille caused warlike brandishing from ships/strongholds (and) waves/land. The three descendants of Baíscne, a victorious company; they turned on doglike wrath (= warriors), the three descendants of Núadu Necht.'

III. MIXED TYPES

The versification of some of the poems is based on a combination of the first two types. In nos. 10 and 11, the first line of the first stanza is not a cadenced line, but the beginning of an alliterative chain which, from the second line on, develops to a line of the cadenced type. With the lack of alliteration in no. 11 cēscat bhianae, compare no. 6 máirig aíc-chaos. This gradual development is especially clear in no. 12, which, until the cadence of the third line (machla), could be considered an alliterative chain. No. 13 could even be taken as such in its entirety. But Lergnaid would have to take the place of a colon, and it would be impossible to account for the consonance between Lergnaid and Aurgnaid. If, on the other hand, we regard Lergnaid as the cadence of a long line, the poem seems to develop from an alliterative chain to a stanza representing an intermediate stage between cadenced poetry and its rhymed counterpart (see above).

The type represented by nos. 14 and 15 (if read according to R) is more complicated. In both poems not only the first, but also the second stanza begins with an alliterative chain which develops to a line with a ‘trisyllabic’ cadence. Again, no. 15 could be read nearly in its entirety as an alliterative chain, were it not for the clear semantic and syntactic break after Corpre and the occurrence of a ‘trisyllabic’ cadence at the expected places.

No. 16 is wholly adapted to the rhythm of an alliterative chain, but the alliterative pattern is interrupted. Like the rhymed counterpart of the alliterative chain (see above), and unlike no. 9, it is organized in
lines of two cola each. Each line, except the first, ends in a trisyllable or its equivalent. The lines in which its cola are organized have thus partly been adapted to the line endings of cadenced poetry. Finally, the last stanza offers an example of imperfect unstressed rhyme.\footnote{See D. Sproule, ‘Complex alliteration, full and unstressed rhyme, and the origin of deibide’, Ériu 38 (1987) 185–200, pp. 195–200.}

10. \textit{CGH}, 19; \textit{A\textsc{id} II}, 23\footnote{R 118 a 20–23, LL VI 39620–23, BB 119 b 42–3, Lec. 85 \textsc{r} b 8–10, LLfacs. 377 b 39–40. On gablach ‘javelin’ see \textit{iddle}, G 5, 23–5.}

\begin{verbatim}
Lug scéith seál fínn
fo nimib ní raibe | bid mac [n]Áine aidblither
Airdiu deib døen | dron daur-gráinne
glan gablach | húi Luircc Løegaire.
\end{verbatim}

‘Lynx of the shield, handsome superhuman being: under the heavens nobody has existed who was as mighty as the son of (Ailill) Áine. A man (who was) higher than gods, a hard acorn, a pure javelin (was) the grandson of Loegaire Lorc.’

11. \textit{CGH}, 70; \textit{A\textsc{id} II}, 15\footnote{R 124 a 31–5. \textit{díl} and \textit{cèimne} are probably nominatives of apposition (\textit{goi}, 156 \textsc{c} 247c) to the genitives \textit{díl} and \textit{toccaid}. Accented \textsc{i} in the only manuscript preserving this text can stand for long as well as short \textsc{i}: \textit{fíne} ‘vine’ or \textit{fíne} ‘family’ or even an intentional pun based on the similarity of both? Compare \textsc{doss díl} ‘a tree of bestowing’ (food and drink) – the bestowing of Tara –, of prosperous wealth – provision of fifty years. He was the top of the vine (or: the family), the noble hero Cathair Mór. It was agreed that this grave (caused by?) the Luaigne was a calamity of Elg (=Ireland).’}

\begin{verbatim}
Doss dálí dál Temra
toccaid cain | cèimna cècat bliadnae
ba barr fíne | fial caur Cathair mór
mairg Elgæ | aítmad a lecht Luaigne.
\end{verbatim}

‘A tree of bestowing (food and drink) – the bestowing of Tara –, of prosperous wealth – provision of fifty years. He was the top of the vine (or: the family), the noble hero Cathair Mór. It was agreed that this grave (caused by?) the Luaigne was a calamity of Elg (=Ireland).’
12. *CGH*, 72; *ÃID II*, 17

Mára galgata grith fáséibair
for Cairpri clannaib Chámrois hi lergaib
Léit mára meic húi Chuind | co noí muíb machta
máir meic chuí fine áin ríg | Eochu, Eochuid dil Domplén.
Daith ruire Raiphtine | ropo Fiachu fórderg
fó scéch scuirset lim | látthe húi Chuind crólechtaib.

‘Great calamities, sharp-edged uproar over the children of Cairpre (Liphec har) on the slopes of Chámros. The sons of the descendant of Conn (Cécthatachtach) leave with nine thousand (men) great slaughters behind; great sons of the family of a glorious king (were) Eochu (and) precious Eochaid Domplén; a nimble king was the very red (= warlike) Fiachu Raiphtine. A nice story! It wears me (that) the warriors of Conn’s descendant have unyoked in blood-stained graves.’

13. *CGH*, 20–21; *ÃID II*, 12

 hEðiu . orb . Alb . Rogen
Luad Cuar . caín Másc | meic Augen Aurgnaid.

‘Eochu Ferngen, Finteng, Aucha, Erin the heir, Alb, Rogen, red Donaile, stout-hearted Nár, Noe, Ladrann, Lergnaid, Luad Cuar, fair Másc (are) the sons of Augen Aurgnaid.’

14. *CGH*, 21; *ÃID II*, 13

The identification of the proper names of the thirteen sons of Augen Aurgnaid differs in some points from that in Meyer’s and O’Brien’s editions. It is based on the assumption that the words, which in versions other than R are not used as the basis of a dindshenchas introduced by a quo, are epithets. It is true that *Lergnaid* is so explained in Lec. only and that it is there introduced by a deviating formula (*daítha*). But in the dindshenchas both *Ladrann* and *Luad Cuar* are named as sons of Augen Aurgnaid: LL iii 21619–20; as Augen Aurgnaid is there considered to have only six sons (21615) *Luad Cuar* must be the name of one son. Thus, *Lergnaid* is probably to be taken as a separate proper name.

For semantic reasons I take *fírce*
Báeth buide  báin-án drón
dána dil-máin | maicne nAílb  áirme.
Achir b être  brudi deʃirg
Dondobur dōel | Gabrón g[r?]inne fur Findubur.

‘Tender favour; vigorous, bright splendour; stout-hearted, precious treasure: we enumerate the sons of Alb: Acher, (the man) of rage, of red destruction; Dondobur, the (sc. dreadful) beetle; Gabrón, the point (?) against Findubur.’

15. CGH, 23; ĀID II, 2056

Trí meic Ruaid  ruirg flaind,
fiangal Find, Aílll acher, cseim Corpre.
Caíne dind  dem i foat
Alinn criúnd, Cruachu, Temair  tōebglan.

‘The three sons of Ruaid, (they were) blood-red (= warlike) kings: valiant Finn, keen Aílll, precious Corpre. Gentle steeds, the darkness in which they sleep: round Alenn, Cruachu and fair-sided Temair.’

16. CGH, 72; ĀID II, 1857

Mára mairb  mára mairtt
trí meic  trí marrig.
Meic Cairpri  caíne ànríg
Eochu, Eochuid drauc Domplén
Deilm ruire  ruad Raipline
Fiachu fothath  fechair forb-díne.

‘Great (are) the deads, great (are) the slaughters: three sons, three great kings. The sons of Cairpre (Liphechar), the fair glorious king: Eochu (and) Eochuid Domplén, the dragon. A thunder (was) the king, as 1 pl. pres. of Mid.Ir. áirmid with absolute ending [-me = -mí] rather than as 2 sg. pres. protot. of OlIr. adairmi; cf. O. Bergin, ‘On the syntax of the verb in OlIr., Ériu 12 (1934-8) 197-214, p. 201. bōire and bōid (as bōi) may be genitives of bōire and bōid (cf. gen. sg. bōithe, ML 34a26). The reading ginne of R is supported by all manuscripts except LLfacs. (gríne): corruption of the common archetype emended by LLfacs.? 86R 118 b 13-17, LL VI 33679-82, BB 120 b 27-30, Lec. 84 v a 42-8, LLfacs. 380 a 13-14. dind is gen. pl. (cf. GOI, 196 § 309.1) of apposition (GOI, 198-9 § 250), dem i for deme i (LL s.v. deme)? Lec. and LLfacs. (LL here illegible) add olóman after foit: gen. pl. relating to dind? If this reading is original, the poem belongs to the same type as nos. 10 and 11.

87R 124 b 5-7, Lec. 91 r a 13-15. The older nom. pl. masc. mair may be attested in the corrupt version of Lec. (mair mair mair mair). fo[í]r in forb-díne (Lec. foir-díne) is a Mid.Ir. by-form of orb; compare Orb, Mid.Ir. forbá. Fiachu (S)raip(h)line is the ancestor of the Ul Néill and the Connachta.'
CONCLUSION

Two basic types of versification have been identified among the rhymeless 'Leinster poems': verse-lines marked by an alliterating trisyllabic or equivalent disyllabic cadence and alliterative chains based on alliteration and rhythm. Both occur together in different combinations as exemplified in our third type. The rules governing the cadence of the first type and the comparison of both types with their rhymed counterparts suggest that this kind of versification is rooted in an older tradition than rhymed poetry. On the other hand, if we accept that it was still in use after the establishment of rhyme, we can thus best account for examples in other Old Irish texts, as well as for some younger verbal forms in our corpus that cannot easily be explained as scribal innovations.\textsuperscript{58} The types observed in this small corpus are, of course, not the only possible types of rhymeless poetry. As Meyer put it: 'Die Metrik dieser älteren Periode ist aber höchst mannigfacher Art und scheidet sich in viele Gruppen von ganz verschiedenem Bau'.\textsuperscript{59} In this regard it was probably not very different from rhymed syllabic poetry.

\textit{Universität Hamburg}

\textsuperscript{58} See notes 38 (\textit{baisg}), 52 (\textit{afmod}) and 55 (\textit{sírne}).

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{AID} I, 4.