THE TEXTUAL TRADITION OF COMPERT CON CULAINN

1. THE MANUSCRIPTS

*Compert Con Culainn (CCC)*, the tale of the conception and birth of Cú Chulainn, has been handed down in two recensions, generally referred to as version I and version II.

(i)

The earliest surviving text of version I occurs in a truncated form in the hand of the principal scribe (M) of Leabhar na hUidhre (LU) and is followed by a fragment of a sequel written over an erasure by the reviser (H) of the manuscript.

Six later manuscripts offer a variant of version I, which has an altogether different ending from that represented by scribe H’s fragment in LU. These six manuscripts are: British Library, Egerton 88; Royal Irish Academy, 23 N 10; Trinity College, Dublin, 1363 (H.4.22) section iv; BL Eg. 1782; RIA D iv 2; National Library of Ireland, G 7.1 These are of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century dates and all have connections with the province of Connacht.

LU’s primary text of CCC (that written by scribe M) now ends where the birth of the boy is related, *Birt mac Birt* mac, LU 10611 (‘She gave birth to a son’), and from this point scribe M’s text has been erased by scribe H in order to make way for his own contribution.

According to a note in H’s hand, added to the title of the primary text, this tale is ‘from the Book of Drumsnat’ (*a Libur Droma Snechta*, LU 10557). This was an Old-Irish manuscript which scholars generally believe to have dated from the first half of the eighth century.

The variant of version I offered by the six later manuscripts was introduced into the scribal tradition of Connacht through a now-lost early-twelfth-century compilation into which, as has recently been shown, a number of Cin Droma Snechta (CDS) texts had been redacted directly

1Editions of version I are: (1) E. Windisch, ‘Die Geburt Cuchulains’ / Compert Conculaind’ (separate editions of the texts of Lebor na hUidre [facsimile] and Eg. 1782), *frische Texte mit Wörterbuch* (Leipzig 1880) 134-42; (2) R. Thurneysen, *Zwischen Handschriften und Litteraturdenkmäler II* (Berlin 1912), gives two editions, (i) a critical text based on LU and three other manuscripts, with translation, and (ii) the text of D iv 2, with translation; (3) R. I. Best and O. Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre* (Dublin 1929) lines 10557-10635; (4) A. G. van Hamel, ‘Compert Con Cuildin’, *Compert Con Culainn and other stories* (Dublin 1933, repr. 1956) 1-8.

2Though D iv 2 was written outside the borders of Connacht, one of its scribes, namely Seán Mac Acbagáin (probably Seán mac Corchobhais, *olamh* to Clann Riocaird, who died in 1487), drew on Connacht sources for this and at least one more of his texts: see my article, ‘Notes on Togail Bruidne Da Derga’, *Celtica* 17 (1988) 73-90, p. 73.

3See S. Mac Mathúna, *Imram Emain: Bran’s voyage to the Land of the Women* (Tübingen 1988) 42-59, for discussion of the literature on the subject and for the author’s own views on the dating of the manuscript.

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The totally different ending presented by the six manuscripts of the Connacht tradition of version I has erroneously been considered to represent the part erased by scribe H from the primary text in LU.

(ii)

Version II survives in two texts contained in Eg. 1782 and Div 2 respectively and in each manuscript the text occurs immediately after that of version I. When Windisch published the two versions together, it was to be seen that the part represented by scribe H’s fragment is to be found in full in the final section of version II. Thurneysen considered the two texts of version II to be descendants of an earlier text which he claimed had been drawn on by scribe H for the section added by him to that part of the primary text in LU which he had allowed to stand.

2. The Two Versions

Not being readily available in print, version II admittedly is not a well-known text, and as it diverges widely in parts from version I, the simplest introduction to the textual history of this complicated tale is to present summaries of the two versions side by side.

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6The ending of the tale in all six manuscripts of the Connacht tradition is clearly an abridgment of an episode from Macgnímartha Con Culainn (‘The boyhood deeds of Cú Chulainn’) in Táín Bó Cúalnge, which recounts the killing of Culann’s hound by Síanta. In this episode the boy then offers to act as watchdog for Culann and thus acquires the new name ‘Cú Chulainn’; cf. C.-J. Guyomarc’h, ‘La conception de Cú Chulainn’, Ogam 17 (1965) 363–91, p. 376.

7Editions of version II are: E. Windisch, Irische Texte (1880), 143–5, (continued on) 140–42, from Eg. 1782; K. Meyer, ‘Feis Tige Becfoltaig’ [sic], Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie 5 (1903) 500–504, from Div 2.

8See notes 1 and 7.

9R. Thurneysen, Die irische Helden- und Königeage (Halle 1921) 271.

10For translations of version I see R. I. Best, Bibliography of Irish philology and of printed Irish literature (Dublin 1913) 89; and for those of version II see R. Baumann, Bibliography of Irish linguistics and literature 1942–71 (Dublin 1985) § 5011. A rendering given in T. P. Cross and C. H. Slover, Ancient Irish tales (London 1937, repr. 1969) 134–6, covers only the first half of version II, with a note supplied within brackets to represent (though it does so only partly) the supposedly original ending (as found in the six manuscripts of the Connacht tradition: cf. note 6 above). The extant second half of version II is not touched on at all.
Version I (LU)

(i) A flock of marvellous birds\(^1\) frequently came to graze on a plain at Emain, destroying all the vegetation. Conchobar and the Ulstermen hitch up their chariots and set out in pursuit of the birds. The hunt proceeds southwards over Sliabh Fuait. Conchobar’s sister, Deichtine, is his charioteer on this trip.\(^1\)

(ii) Night comes and there is a heavy snowfall. The men of Ulster unhitch their chariots. Conall and Bricriu go to look for a house and they find a small one occupied by a man and a woman, who bid them welcome. There is, however, room in the house for only some of the Ulstermen.

Version II (Eg. 1782)

(i) Deichtire and fifty maidens of Ulster departed secretly from Emain and were being sought in vain for three years. They return in the form of a flock of birds and graze on a plain at Emain, destroying all the vegetation. The Ulstermen, as is their custom, set out in pursuit of the birds.

(ii) At nightfall the birds escape from their pursuers. The Ulstermen unhitch their chariots and Fergus goes to reconnoitre. He locates a small house. There, a man and a woman greet him and tell him to bring his companions into the house.\(^1\) Bricriu then goes out and he hears strange music. He finds himself at a big house. The man of the house invites him in, addressing him by name. The man’s wife also welcomes Bricriu. The man then reveals that his wife and the other women in the house are Deichtire and her fifty maidens. Bricriu returns and tells all this to his companions, but not to Conchobar. When Conchobar asks Bricriu for news, Bricriu again relates his adventure but does not

\(^1\) The birds are joined in pairs by ornamental chains on their necks. This motif of magic birds chained in pairs is found also in *Ser glige Con Culainn* (‘The wasting sickness of Cú Chulainn’) – see M. Dillon, *Ser glige Con Culainn* (Dublin 1983, repr. 1978) lines 59–60 – and may have been inspired by this passage in *CCC* (see Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, 418 n. 2)

\(^1\) De(ich)tine is the form used in the LU primary text, but Dec[A]tire in scribe H’s text. Variant spellings, Deicht(e)(i)ən, are found in the two versions in both Eg. 1782 and D iv 2.

\(^1\) The rest of this item, printed in italic, constitutes a major divergence in this version, in which Deichtire is equated with the Otherworld woman who in version I gives birth to a boy, whom the Ulstermen then take back to Emain and who later ‘dies’ there (only to be reborn as Óstánla). In other words, version II simplifies the mythology of the conception and birth of Cú Chulainn from the threefold one recounted in Version I to the single origin in the Otherworld, where he is begotten by a god on a mortal woman.
(iii) The man of the house then tells them that his wife is in labour. Deichtine goes to attend the woman, who gives birth to a son. At the same time, a mare in the doorway drops twin foals and the man gives them as a present to the boy.¹⁴

(iv) The Ulstermen adopt the boy and Deichtine takes charge of him. At daybreak the house has vanished and the Ulstermen find only their horses, chariots, the boy and the foals. They return to Emain but some time later the boy dies.

tell Conchobar that the beautiful woman in the house is Deichtire. Conchobar says that the man is a subject of his and sends for the woman to spend the night with himself. Only Fergus dares go on this errand.

(iii) The woman returns with Fergus but announces that she is about to give birth. Conchobar is told and the woman is granted a respite. They all settle down for the night. When they wake in the morning they see a strange thing — a small child in Conchobar's bosom.¹⁵

¹⁴For examples of the motif of the 'congenital friendly animal' see T. P. Cross, Motif-Index of early Irish literature (Bloomington [1952], repr. 1959) § B311 seq. On this instance of the motif K. Jackson, The international popular tale and early Welsh tradition (Cardiff 1961) 91, writes: 'It is usually held that the very old Irish tale of the Conception of Cú Chulainn contains a corrupt version of this, and that in the uncorrupted original Cú Chulainn was born at the same time as a mare foaled in the house, and the twin foals were given him and grew up to be his famous chariot horses, the Liath Macha and the Dubh Saingheann'. The touching association of the deaths of these horses with Cú Chulainn's tragic end is described in Aided Con Culainn ('The Death of Cú Chulainn'); see 'Aided Con Culainn', §§ 24, 40-41, 44, 46, in van Hamel's Compert Con Culainn and other stories.

¹⁵MS ind úlbroic Concobair. The reading of D iv 2 (f. 47 v a 2–3) i mbroic Concobair is confirmed by a reference in the Book of Leinster (see section 6 below). This point is noted by Guionvær's, Ogam 17 (1968) 385. For úlbroic 'bosom, breast' see Dictionary of the Irish language [DIL] U-77.8-10, where the Book of Leinster reading is also noted.

There are two traditions to be found in different texts of CCC regarding Cú Chulainn's kinship with Conchobar: the boy is either a nephew or a grandson of the king. It has been argued in a section (pp. 27–30) of the article referred to in note 5 above that some late medieval copyist misinterpreted a certain reading in the LU recension of the tale and thereby initiated the tradition which, in some texts of version I, represents Deichtine as Conchobar's daughter (and not as his sister). On this tradition (generally claimed to be the older one and alleged to derive from Cinn Dromma Snéchta) see Thurneysen, Heldenage, 268 (who is followed by van Hamel, Compert Con Culainn, 3 § 1 n. 5). See also the discussion by T. Ó Cathasaigh, 'The sister's son in early Irish literature', Fenélia 5 (1986) 128-50, pp. 135-7.
(v) After lamenting the boy's death, Deichtine feels thirsty and is given a drink in a copper bowl. There is a small magical creature in the drink which tries to jump into her mouth; eventually it does, and goes down with her breath. That night Lug mac Ethnenn\textsuperscript{16} appears to her in a dream and tells her that she is pregnant by him — that the boy whom she reared was his child and that this child has now entered her womb\textsuperscript{17} and [when born again] will be Séantá. (vi) The pregnancy of Conchobar's unmarried sister causes some worry to the Ulstermen, who suspect that the king himself, when drunk, has been responsible, since it was with him that she used to sleep. Conchobar then has her married to one of the Ulstermen, Suiladain mac Róig. (vii) Deichtine's mysterious pregnancy somehow disappears as she is about to become Suiladain's wife. In due course she gives birth to a son /\textit{Here the hand of scribe H begins over an emsure} and he is given the name Séantá. (viii) Conchobar commands his sister Finnchoem to adopt the boy and he himself chants an obscure lay over him, referring to him by name. There is a dispute among the Ulstermen as to who should rear the boy. First Sencha, (viii) Conchobar commands his sister Finnchoem to adopt Deichtine's child and he himself chants a lay [as in version I]. Then a dispute arises among the Ulstermen as to who should rear the boy. Those involved are Sencha, Blai Briga,\textsuperscript{18} Lug mac Céin (his patronymic) or Lug mac Ethnenn/Ethleann (his matronymic), a leader of Tuatha Dé Danann, is master of all arts. He is the leader of the Tuatha in their preparations for the battle of Mag Tuired against the Fomóire; see E. A. Gray, \textit{Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired} (BR. Texts Soc. LIII, [London] 1982) 126–7. \textsuperscript{17}On the theme of conception through swallowing a small creature in a drink see A. Rees and B. Rees, \textit{Celtic heritage} (London 1961) 216-9, 228-30, 273; cf. T. P. Cross, \textit{Motif-index}, § TS11.5.2; see also F. Le Roux, 'La conception divine', in Ch.-J. Guyonvarc'h, \textit{La Conception de Cúchulainn}, \\textit{Ogam} 17 (1965) 363-410 (pp. 401-5 in 'Commentaire du texte par F. Le Roux', 393-410).
and then Blai Briuga, make their claims... [Rest of text is lost in a lacuna].

Fergus and Amargin. Sendha proposes that Finnchoem take charge of the boy until they return to Emain, when [the judge] Morann should decide the issue. They return to Emain. Morann declares that the warriors and sages of Ulster should all equally apply their talents to the upbringing and education of the boy. He is fostered by Finnchoem and her husband Amargin; and thus Cú Chulainn is Conall Cernach’s foster-brother.

3. THE SOURCE OF SCRIBE H’S CONTRIBUTION

The surviving fragment of scribe H’s interpolation in the primary text in LU corresponds to the beginning in version II of the dispute which follows the birth of Deichtire’s child in the Otherworld, with several of the Ulstermen contending for the honour of rearing the boy. In LU too, it is to be noted, scribe H’s text (beginning 7 doberar Setanta fir, lines 10611-12) follows the statement in M’s text that Deichtine gave birth to a son (at Emain).

Zimmer was the first to indicate the composite nature of the LU text (= scribe M’s part + scribe H’s interpolation, as we know the text today) and its correspondence to version II in Eg. 1782 (as published by Windisch some time before).18 This was followed up by Thurneysen, who claimed that the source of H’s text was a redaction of version II of eightth- to ninth-century date,19 i.e. of somewhat later date than the CDS text (represented by scribe M’s text in LU). However, a new thesis is being put forward in this paper: that the source of H’s contribution is virtually certain to be the account of Cú Chulainn’s education as given in a section of a large interpolation by scribe H himself in Tochmarc Emire (TE) (‘The Wooing of Emer’), the text which immediately precedes CCC in LU.20

One set of extracts will suffice to exemplify the close agreement between, on the one hand, the account (in both versions of CCC) of

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19 H. Hessen, Heldensage, 271.
20 LU, lines 10113-556. As regards the relationship of CCC and TE, the traditional view is that the latter has borrowed from the former. This view was formed by H. Hessen in R. Thurneysen, H. Hessen and G. O’Nolan, ‘Zu Tochmarc Emire’, ZCP 8 (1910-12) 498-524 (see pp. 509-514), before R. I. Best published his important article on the scribal hands of Leabhar na hUidhre, ‘Notes on the script of Lebor na hUidre’, Ériu 6 (1912) 161-74 (with plates), and has been accepted by van Hamel, Compert Con Culainn and other stories, 29 § 22 n. 8 (see note 21 below); cf. Thurneysen, Heldensage, 381-2.
the contention of several Ulstermen for the fostering of the boy and, on the other, the account of Cú Chulainn’s education as related by himself to Emer in TE.

(The verbal agreement between the three extracts is shown in bold type.)

\section*{CCC}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{LU} 10626-31 & \textit{Eg.} 1782 (IT 141.17-22) \\
\end{tabular}

Geib duit in mac ol Conchobar beos fría faír. Niba si nod n-ebela em ol Sencha. acht is mese nod n-ailea. \textit{ar am tren am tre-}\textit{bar}. am an am athlom athargai. am ollom. am gáeth. nidam dermatach. Adgdur\footnote{OIr. \textit{adgair} (later form \textit{adgairim}) ‘I prosecute, accuse’, etc.; see DIL \textit{A}-55.60. On the form \textit{adgadur} (clearly influenced by \textit{adgládair}, ‘I address’) van Hamel, loc. cit., writes: ‘This scribal error is already found in the version of Compert Con C. that was the source of this portion of \textit{Techm. Em.}, cf. Z.C.P. 8, 510’ (see note 20 above). This scribal error was first pointed out by Thurneysen, \textit{Heldensage}, 361 n. 1. \footnote{When scriber H was writing, in the late Middle Irish period, the first element in the verb \textit{concertaim} was just a nasalizing ɕ, as the spelling in his hand in LU 10287 \textit{concertaim} indicates. Right through the later Middle Ages, however, scribes generally (as in this case) employ the compendium for ɕ, i.e. turned ɕ (a symbol borrowed from Latin script), to indicate nasalizing ɕ (in compounds or as a conjunction) before consonants. The Eg. reading \textit{concertuim} cited in the first paragraph of section 5 below shows confusion of \textit{co} n-\textit{aco} and \textit{co facca}.} \textit{náchri rig}. Arfochlim a inse \ldots \textit{concertaim}\footnote{Adgládathur is, more correctly, the 3 sg. form. The expected form here would be \textit{Adgládair ‘I address, speak to’, see DIL \textit{A}-57.33.} \textit{bretha Ulad} \textit{7 nís n-innsurg.}} & Geib duit in mac, a Finnchoem, ol Concabra fría fhair. Niba si nod n-ebelaim, ol \textit{Sencho}, is misi nod n-ebela. \textit{ar am tren, am an, am athlum allus athargui}. am oll-\textit{um, am gaeth, niodam dermatich. Adgládathur} \textit{rig ríach lium}. \textit{Armoichlimm} \footnote{The scribal confusion in evidence here (the correct form being \textit{arfoichlimn} may be due to the influence of the copula \textit{am} in several preceding sentences. Eg. 1782 was written in 1517 and the impossible form \textit{amroichlimn} clearly derives from an earlier manuscript, for the intruded \textit{m} (between \textit{a} and \textit{r}) must have contributed to the confusion which resulted in the erroneous re-formation \textit{droykhlimn} of D iv 2 (f. 47 v a 18), a manuscript which was probably written before 1487 (see note 2 above).} \textit{Amroichlimm} \textit{a innsci} \ldots \textit{Concertuim} \textit{bretha hUlad} \textit{7 nís n-innsurg.}}

\footnote{In regard to translations throughout I wish to make acknowledgement to van Hamel’s edition of \textit{CCC} and to \textit{DIL}.}
Rom ebail Sencha sobéiríadh con-
idam trén trebar án athlum
atharbaigh am gáeth imbretai.b
nídám dermatach. Adgar dor
nech ríu túaith trebar arfochlim
a n-insce. Cocertaim27 bretha
Ulad uli. 7 nis n-insorg.

‘Sencha the eloquent has reared
me, so that I am strong, wise,
swift, deft in the use of arms. I
am intelligent in judgements. I am
not forgetful. I summon a per-
son before a wise assembly. I pro-
vide for their address. I correct
the judgements of all the Ulster-
men and I do not rouse them [to
anger].’

The preceding extracts show the close relationship of (a) both scribe
H’s fragment and the earlier part of the ending of version II to (b) the
earlier part of the TE section.

The rest of the ending of version II and the later passages in the
TE section exhibit an agreement which admits of no doubt that the lost
part of H’s text contained the remainder of the dispute, and the decision
of the Ulstermen about the rearing of the boy (as given in version II).
Three sets of extracts will illustrate this point (with the use of bold type
as in the passages cited above):

(i)

CCC

Eg. 1782 (IT 141.28–142.4)

Is an ble sin, ol Fergus . . . is
missi noem-eblo28 . . . Am ammus
ar gail 7 gaisced . . . Am
ntualuing . . . Am din gach
dochruit. Do gniu dochur
ach truin, do gniu sòdhor
ach lobuir.

‘That is a shame’, said Fergus,
‘. . . it is I who shall rear him. . .
I am impetuous in deeds of val-
our and prowess . . . I am capable
of . . . I am a protection against
every ignominy. I inflict injury on
every warrior. I give advantage to
every wretched person’.

27 The spelling in the Middle Irish period; cf. notes 22, 25, above.
28 For no n-éllo (= nod n-éllo, LU 10627–8). The -m- is due to scribal confusion;
cf. note 24 above.
TE

LU 10293–7


‘Fergus has reared me . . . I am impetuous in deeds of valour and prowess and am capable of . . . I am a protection against every ignominy. I give advantage to every wretched person. I inflict injury on every warrior.’

(ii)

CCC

Eg. 1782 (IT 142.4–9)

. . . ol Amorgeni . . . Ro moltar ar gach feib as mo gail 7 as mo gaisced . . . as mo gais . . . ar aine 7 calmatus . . . am fili . . . Arurg gach n-eirrid, ni tullim budi di nech acht do Conchobar.

. . . said Amargin . . . ‘I am praised in every respect for my valour and for my prowess, for my wisdom . . . for speed and boldness. I am a poet . . . I slay every (chariot-)warrior. I do not owe thanks to anyone but Conchobar’.

TE

LU 10298–301

Rosiachtus ghin Amargin filed coro molaim rig as cach feib . . . co ndingbaim cenfer ar gail ar gaisced ar gais ar aine . . . ar calmatus. Dingbaim cach n-eirrid ni tullim budi do neoch acht do Conchobar cach.

‘I came [for instruction] to the knee of Amargin the poet, so that I can praise a king in each of his qualities, and am more than a match for any man in valour, in prowess, in wisdom, in speed . . . in boldness. I beat off every (chariot-)warrior. I do not owe thanks to anyone but Conchobar.’
(iii)

**CCC**

Eg. 1782 (IT 142.14–21)

Fuigillsit Morann . . . Ba cummo no ndomnaigetar⁴⁹ huill eter ar(aid) 7 eirrid, eter rig 7 ollum, ol bid caro sochuidi in mac so. Is cuma do fich uar n-inechgreso huill. Morann pronounced . . . 'It will be equally that he will be instructed by all, by charioteer and (chariot-) warrior, by king and poet, for this boy will be a friend of a multitude. He will avenge equally all affronts to your honour.'

**LU** 10305–7

Bád chumma rom alsat Ulaid uli eter araid 7 errid. eter rig 7 ollomain conidam cara slúaig 7 sochaide conid cumma dofichim a n-enechgressa uill. 'It was equally that all the Ulstermen reared me, both charioteer and (chariot-) warrior, both king and poet, so that I am a friend of host and multitude, so that I avenge equally all affronts to their honour.'

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from the evidence of the textual agreement revealed in the extracts presented above in (i), (ii), and (iii) is that scribe H in supplying his contribution to **CCC** in **LU**, which replaces the erased section of scribe M’s text, drew on his own interpolation in **TE** containing the description of Cú Chulainn’s education, for it would be a far-fetched idea to imagine that H borrowed his contribution to **CCC** from version II and also used that same source for composing, or redacting, the description of Cú Chulainn’s education in **TE**.

4. VERSION I’S PRIMARY TEXT AND VERSION II

We now come to the question of the relationship of the primary text in **LU** (that written by scribe M) and version II, namely, the part of the story up to the birth of Deichtine’s child (at Emain, in version I; in the Otherworld, according to version II). The argument put forward in this paper in regard to the relationship of the two versions of **CCC** is the same for both halves of the tale: that the first half of version II is, like the second half (already discussed), derived from the **LU** text.

One set of extracts will suffice to reveal an agreement which is so close that it must preclude any suggestion of the descent of the first half of version II from any source other than the **LU** primary text.

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⁴⁹van Hamel, *Compert Con Culainn*, 8, edits as no ndomnaigetar ('for no- dn-.ndomnaigetar') and renders as 'that all will instruct him (?)', p. 154.
(The flock of marvellous birds described in version I (LU) are of unknown provenance, while those in version II (Eg. 1782) are stated to be in reality Deichtire and her fifty maidens, who (as related further on in the tale) have come to lure the Ulstermen thither [into the Bruig].)

(i)

Version I (primary text)

LU 10559–62

No thathigtis énlaith mag ar Emain. Ná gélthís cónaí facabtais cid mechu na féir na lossa i talam. Ba lochomracht la hUltu a n-aisiú oc collud a n-hirend. Inmlaet. i.x. cairpiú dia tofúin laa n-and ar ba bés léusom forim en.

Birds frequented a plain at Emain. They grazed it so that they did not leave even roots or grass or herbs in the soil. It was annoying for the Ulstermen to see them destroying their land. One day they hitched up nine chariots in order to hunt them, for it was their custom to go to hunt birds.

(ii)

Version II

Eg. 1782 (IT 143.4–8)

Taithigtis iaram hi ríct énlaith hi maig ar Emain, có gélthís iaram hi maig, cónaí facabtais gid luisni hi talmuin ann. Ba mor soth dono la hUltu inni sin. Innil Úlaid dono noi gcairpiú di tofúin ina n-en ar ba bés leosiuin foram for énlaith.

They then used to come back in the form of birds to a plain at Emain and they grazed the plain so that they did not leave even a herb in the soil there. That was indeed a great distress to the Ulstermen and they hitched up nine chariots in order to hunt the birds, for it was their custom to go to hunt birds.

30 Deichtre a hainm àe òs a dochatar hi ríct na henlaithi do Emain Macha do thchuirid h'Ulad, gu tuideadis suin ille: Írische Texte (1880) 144 lines 26–7 ('Deichtire is her name and it is they who went in the form of a flock of birds to Emain Macha in order to entice the Ulstermen to come hither'). Bruig (Brug) na Bòinne is one of the locations of the Otherworld: see T. F. O'Rahilly, Early Irish history and mythology (Dublin 1946) 122, 283, 516. The rationalization of the Otherworld birds as Deichtire and her maidens is the starting-point of version II, leading to the simplification of the mythology of the origin of Cú Chulainn and to the elimination of the reference to incest; cf. note 13 above. The motif of incest, however, like that of divine procreation, frequently marks the birth of the hero: cf. P. Mac Cana, Celtic mythology (London and New York 1970) 101.
It seems clear, then, from the textual correspondence shown above in 3 (i), (ii), (iii), and the close agreement in 4 (i), (ii), that the Egerton text (regarded as the better representative of version II) is not simply 'a retouched rendering of the Cin Dromma Snaega version' but, more specifically, is descended from the composite text (by scribes M and H) of LU.

5. THE TITLE OF CCC IN DIV 2

In this RIA manuscript the title of the tale is *Féis Tige Béicholtacht*, which has been translated as 'das Übersnachten im Haus von Becfholtach' and 'Le festin de la maison à la petite richesse'. The title clearly refers to the small bare dwelling which (in both versions) the Ulstermen at first locate. In version II they abandon this small house and spend the night comfortably in a much larger house which Bricriu has come upon: *con facto in tech mor coin cumbachtlo ar a chinn* (IT 144.12–13) 'and he saw a large well-constructed house in front of him'. Thus, the first inconsistency in version II is its title; and other defects in this version might be noted, such as the unexplained presence of Finnchoen in the Otherworld when Deichtire's child is born there. The word *beicholtach* of the title in *Div 2* is clearly a ghost-word, based on a misunderstanding of the adjective *becaltach* which occurs in the first line of Conchobar's lay in scribe H's text: *Sochla becholtach* ('Renowned, speckled, small-jointed'). In version II (Eg. 1782) this line reads *Sochla brig becfoltach* and has been translated as 'Glorieuse est la puissance [de la maison] à la petite richesse'.

According to the prevailing view of the textual tradition of *CCC* the fragment by scribe H in *LU* is derived from version II; and accordingly the first line of the lay in *H*'s text is understood to refer to the small bare house, and has been translated as 'Glorieuse est [la maison] bariolée à la petite richesse'.

In version II the adjective *becholtach* (as if derived from the old word *bechola* 'small stock, cattle') refers to the poverty of the owner of the small bare house, i.e. 'having little substance'. A more obvious

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32. The copy of version I in *Div 2* 'is a modernized form of the Egerton text with an addition at the end' (Flower, *Catalogue*, 268). This addition, which deals primarily with the name *Stanta*, or rather *Sídana*, is published by Thurneysen, *Zu irischen Handschriften und Literaturdenkmälern* I (Berlin 1912) 41; see also his translation in *Heldensage*, 270–71. It does not, however, seem that the piece in question was ever intended as part of the text; see MS at f. 47 v b 16 and the text proper as printed by Meyer, *ZCP* 5 (1908) 500–504, p. 504.
33. Thurneysen, e.g. in *Heldensage*, 271; cf. van Hamel, *Compert Con Culainn*, 1, 'The passing of the night in Becfholtach's house'.
34. Guyonvarc'h, *Ogam* 17 (1968) 378.
36. Thurneysen, *ibid.*, 368.
interpretation of the form becḥollach would seem to be 'having little hair',\(^{38}\) and in this sense the word would aptly apply to a new-born child. It might be suggested that this interpretation of the word could have formed an intermediate stage in the proposed development of becallach into *becḥollach, thus: becallach ('small-jointed') > becḥollach \(\ldots\)  > *becḥollach [as if from bechola] ('having little substance').\(^{39}\)

6. A POEM IN THE BOOK OF LEINSTER

A form of *CCC* which apparently corresponded in part to version II was known to the author of a long poem, *A rí réidig déid am* ('O king of heaven, clarify for me'), contained in the Book of Leinster (LL). This poem, which recounts some universal and Irish literary history, devotes four quatrains (LL 17983–98) to the tale of the birth of Cú Chulainn. Of these four quatrains, the second refers to the stay of the Ulstermen overnight in the Brug and the finding of a beautiful child 'in fair Conchobar’s bosom' in the morning:

\[
\text{Cotlait aidc hi i n-oen a mbrug,}
\text{frith ar matalain, derb in d lug,}
\text{i mbrolluch Conchobuir chaim}
\text{noedenan bec bulidc hain.}\]

In H’s interpolation in the LU text Conchobar’s lay ends with the line *donnuc for set Sétanta*, LU 10825, which probably is generally understood to mean 'she [Deichtire] has given us, on a journey [sét], Sétanta’,\(^{41}\) the journey in question being that to the Brug, from which the Ulstermen had returned a long time before.

The fourth line of the third quatrain on *CCC* in the LL poem echoes the final line of Conchobar’s lay, but in LL the reference is to the journey which they have just made from Emain:

\[
\text{Asb ert c/ach frith sund sét}
\text{i cnad anta dun glangéc;}
\text{albert Conchobar tren tra}
\text{dannal for sét Setanta.}
\]

(Everyone said ‘a treasure has been found here’ / the bright branch could not wait . . . [?]; / mighty Conchobar then said / ‘she has given us, on a journey, Sétanta’ [?].)

The D iv 2 text of version II reflects LU *donnuc for set Sétanta* more clearly, for it reads (f. 47 v a 12–13) *doniec for set Sédana [sic]*, whereas

\(^{38}\) For examples of bec- in adjectival compounds (e.g. bec-cosach) see DIL B–48.39–57.

\(^{39}\) DIL B–48.46.

\(^{40}\) See note 15 above.

\(^{41}\) Contrast Guyonvarc’h, *Ogam* 17 (1965) 368: ‘elle nous a donné un trésor, Sétanta’.
the allegedly superior text of Eg. 1782 introduces a new verb in the line, _donanic for set Setanta_ 'Sétanta has come, on a journey, to us'\(^{42}\) (i.e. 'We have, on a journey [sél], acquired Sétanta').

The fourth quatrains on CCC in the LL poem recalls the scene from version I (LU 10599–603) in which Lug mac Ethnend appears to Deichtline (at Emain) and tells her

(a) that the departed foster-child has now entered her womb;\(^{43}\)

(b) that this child's name will be Sétanta (\(7 \text{bid Sétanta a aínm}, \text{LU 10602–3}\)).

The author of the LL poem (or the author of his source) appears to have mistakenly connected Lug's statement about the child's name (\(7 \text{bid Sétanta a aínm} \text{and his name will be Sétanta}\)) and the next sentence, in which Lug identifies himself to Deichtline (\(7 \text{bá héisse Lug Lug mac Ethnend, LU 10603, \text{and he [himself] was Lug mac Ethnend}\)) for this fourth quatrains states that Cú Chulainn was Lug:

\[
\text{Lug mac Ethlenn do beirn Breg}
\]
\[
\text{ra bui i ndeib na noeden;}
\]
\[
\text{ba hé in lórbladach ra raidind,}
\]
\[
\text{ba Cú comramach Culaind.}
\]

('Lug mac Ethlenn from the pass of Brega / was in the form of the child / he was the most famous . . . [?] / he was the victorious Cú Chulainn.')\(^{45}\)

It would seem, from both the foregoing quatrains and the reference to the child being found 'in Conchobar's bosom' in the morning at the Brug, that a form of CCC which corresponded in parts to the two versions was known to the author of the LL poem. This otherwise unrecorded form of CCC cannot have been a fully developed recension of the extant version II, for the statement that Cú Chulainn is Lug derives from a misunderstanding of the wording of the part of Lug's announcement to Deichtline in version I in which he identifies himself, \(7 \text{bá héisse Lug mac Ethnend (LU 10603)}\).

\(^{42}\) The reductor of this text of version II understood the word _Sétanta_ (though separated from the verb) to be the subject in the sentence. If this is the correct syntax, both the LU reading, _donamic for set Sétanta_, and that of LL, _donan for set Sétanta_, should be translated as 'he, Sétanta, has brought us on a journey'. The rendering by Guyonvarc'h, p. 379, 'il nous est venu un trésor, Sétan', is clearly impossible.

\(^{43}\) See note 17 above.

\(^{44}\) _Sic_; ditography at beginning of line, as indicated in Best and Bergin, _Lebor na hUidre_, 321 n. 5.

\(^{45}\) In this connection a statement by O'Rahilly, _Early Irish history and mythology_, 271, is of some interest: 'Cú Chulainn, who in the Táin is assigned the role of defender of the Ulaid against their invaders, can be shown to be in origin Lug or Lugaid, a deity whom we may conveniently call the Hero . . . ' The LL poem is ascribed to Gilla in Choimded ua Cormaic, who is also credited with another poem, which begins _Aimir gin glúasgh tuird tend_ see K. Mulchrone, _Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy XXVI_ (Dublin 1942) 3342. This author is otherwise unknown. Cf. Thurneysen, _Heldensage_, 270 n. 1.
The nearest inferior limit yet established for the dating of scribe H is AD 1135, viz. the date of the death of another scribe, one Gilla Commáin Ó Congalláin, a lector of Ros Commáin and compiler of a now-lost selection of CDS texts, who used a section of H’s interpolation in TE as the exemplar of an extract (Verba Scáthaige) which he took from a poem addressed by Scáthach to Cú Chulainn (LU 10350–430). Scribe H’s contribution to CCC in LU is clearly based on a section of his own interpolation in TE, and in this form can date only from the time of its insertion in the manuscript (before 1135).

The compilation of the Book of Leinster was begun about the middle of the twelfth century, so that the confused version of CCC known to the author of this undated poem in that manuscript may already have been in existence in the first half of the century. That rendering of CCC could have been the first stage in the development of version II, which is ultimately derived from the composite text in LU.

Tomás Ó Concheanainn

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48 See R. I. Best et al., The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála I (Dublin 1984) xvii.
49 I wish to express my thanks to Professor P. de Brún for some important corrections and a number of useful suggestions.