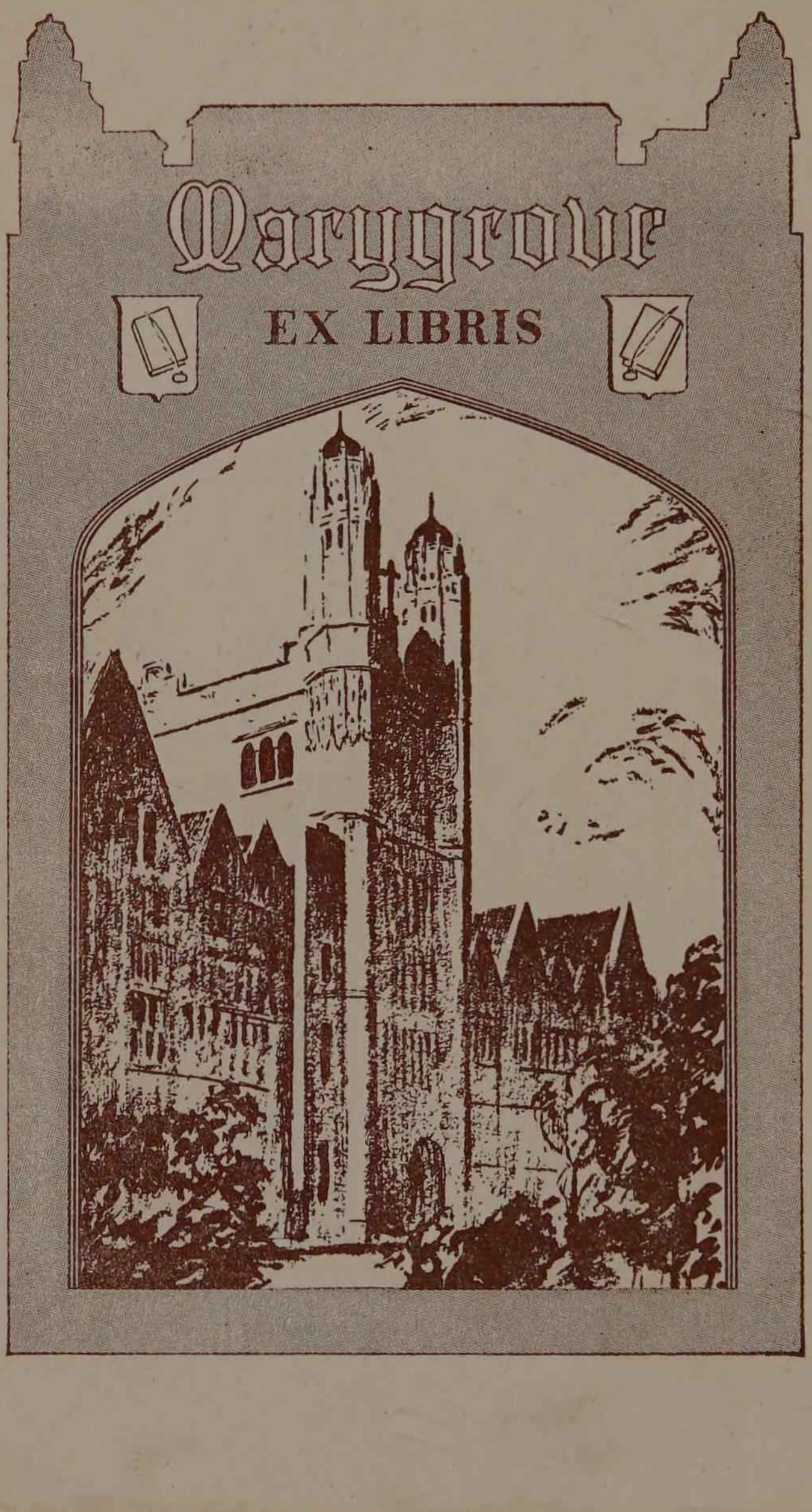
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EARLY IRISH LITERATURE

Early Irish

LITERATURE

By

MYLES DILLON

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Preface

O'CURRY'S *Manuscript Materials*, Hyde's *Literary History of Ireland*, and Eleanor Hull's *Textbook of Irish Literature* are out of print, and De Blacam's *Gaelic Literature Surveyed* deals mainly with the later period. No adequate account of Irish literature is now available. This little book is an attempt in that direction. It is not my purpose to provide a history of the literature, nor have I done much in the way of criticism. I have sought merely to present the imaginative literature of Ireland in a coherent order, choosing only the best that has survived, so that a wider public may become familiar with its content and with its forms.

The Ulster Cycle has been fully analyzed by Thurneysen in his admirable book, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage* (Halle, 1921); and both the heroic cycles have been discussed by the Chadwicks in the larger framework of their great study, *The Growth of Literature* (Cambridge, 1932). The Adventures, Voyages, and Visions were studied long ago by Alfred Nutt in the first volume of *The Voyage of Bran* (London, 1897); and the Visions are the object of a separate study by St. John D. Seymour, *Irish Visions of the Otherworld* (London, 1920). There has been no attempt at a history of Irish poetry, and I have therefore supplied references in chapter viii more freely than elsewhere. The early nature poetry has been well discussed by Kenneth Jackson in his *Early Celtic Nature Poetry* (Cambridge, 1936).

Many of the sagas have been examined by T. F. O'Rahilly in his *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), where he applies his great knowledge to the tasks of bringing order into the mythology and of sifting history from legend; and the little book by the late Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, *Dieux et héros celtiques* (Paris, 1940) is well written and full of ideas. Those who

wish to know something about the men who composed and handed down the stories and poems here described should read Robin Flower's last book, *The Irish Tradition* (Oxford, 1947).

In the Introduction I have drawn freely upon Thurneysen's *Irische Helden- und Königsage*. Chapter iv has been taken from my *Cycles of the Kings* (London, 1946). Some parts of the book have appeared already in J. T. Shipley, *Encyclopedia of Literature* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), and my thanks are due to the editor and the publisher for permission to reprint them here. My thanks are due also to my friend Osborn Bergin and to the editor of *Studies* for permission to use his editions and translations of bardic poems, and to Messrs. Constable for the use of the translations by Kuno Meyer. References to editions and translations of the texts discussed have been given only where they seemed to be of special interest, since all this information will be found in the excellent bibliographies by R. I. Best.

For advice and help I am indebted to my friends, Blanche Boyer, George Bobrinskoy, Benedict Einarson, and Gerard Murphy, and to Professors M. L. W. Laistner and Theodore Silverstein.

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UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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List of Abbreviations

AID Kuno Meyer, *Über die älteste irische Dichtung* (*Abhandl. der kgl. Preuss. Akad. der Wissensch.* I [Jahrgang 1913], No. 6; II [Jahrgang 1914], No. 10)

AKSGW *Abhandlungen der königlichen sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*

AL *The Ancient Laws of Ireland*

AS W. Stokes, *Acallam na Senórech* ("Irische Texte," Vol. IV)

AU *The Annals of Ulster*

BB *The Book of Ballymote*

BR J. O'Donovan, *The Book of Rights* (Dublin, 1847)

FM *The Annals of the Four Masters*

IHS *Irish Historical Studies*

IT Whitley Stokes and E. Windisch, *Irische Texte* (Leipzig, 1880–1909)

ITS *Irish Texts Society*

JTS *Journal of the Theological Society*

KZ *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung*

LB *The Lebor Brecc* (facsimile edition)

LL *The Book of Leinster* (facsimile edition)

LU *Lebor na Huidre* (*The Book of the Dun Cow*)

MP *Modern Philology*

O'Curry, *MS. Mat.* E. O'Curry, *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History* (Dublin, 1861)

PMLA *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*

PRIA *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*

RC *Revue celtique*

SG S. H. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*

TBC E. Windisch, *Táin Bó Cualnge* (Leipzig, 1905)

VSH *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* (ed. Plummer)

WB *The White Book of Rhydderch* (ed. Evans)

YBL *The Yellow Book of Lecan* (facsimile edition)

ZCP *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*

ZfDA *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*

ZRP *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*

Zu ir. *Hdschr.* R. Thurneysen, *Zu irischen Handschriften und Literaturdenkmälern* (*Abhandl. der kgl. Ges. der Wissensch. zu Göttingen*. Phil.-hist. Kl., XIV, I [No. 2] and II [No. 3] [1913])

Introduction

THE Celtic invasion of Ireland is probably to be identified by the appearance there of late Bronze age culture, which has been dated *ca.* 900 B.C. This late Bronze age migration came from the northern Rhineland and eastern and northern France and was apparently a sequel to the disturbance which led to the first migrations of the Celts from their ancient settlements north of the Alps. The evidence of archeology suggests that the Celts came to Ireland by way of Britain; and their route has been traced through Cumberland and Wigtownshire into northeastern Ulster. This has, indeed, been the place of entry for most invaders in prehistoric as in historic times. It has long been held that the first Celtic speakers to come to Ireland spoke the dialect of Celtic which is characterized by the preservation of IE q^u whence they are known as Q-Celts in contrast to the P-Celts of Gaul, who later invaded Britain. But Professor O'Rahilly has completely reversed this judgment and maintains that the earliest Celtic inhabitants spoke a Brittannic dialect and that the Q-Celts came directly from Gaul sometime between 150 and 50 B.C. O'Rahilly's theory would account for the fact that the language of the ogam inscriptions and the Old British forms that have been preserved diverge so little. But the evidence of archeology must be reckoned with, and the linguistic evidence used by O'Rahilly is not convincing. The whole question now awaits further study.

The Celts found before them in Ireland a non-Indo-European people, of whose language we know nothing. Of their culture we know only what archeology can tell, for they have left no written documents. They built the megalithic monuments and for tresses which remain in various parts of Ireland, a cause of wonder and admiration; and they were skilled in the use of metals and in the engraving of ornament on stone and metal objects. The culture that they practiced came to Ireland from the Iberian peninsula, apparently by way of Brittany and Cornwall. The

Celts came, therefore, as the first Indo-Europeans to reach Ireland, bringing with them an aristocratic tradition and a highly organized society. The description which Caesar and Polybius have given of Gaulish customs well fits the old Irish world as we know it from the sagas, and there are points of resemblance between Hindu and Irish tradition in language and custom which suggest that the first Celtic invaders of Ireland brought with them a social system that had its roots in Indo-European times.[1] But for the first nine centuries or more they are beyond the range of historian or linguist, for the art of writing was unknown to them when they came, and they acquired it only in the first centuries of the Christian era.

From the heroic sagas, however, we get a picture of pre-Christian Ireland which seems genuine. It is not historical, for the record is not in the form of history, and the texts of the earliest sagas are not earlier than the eighth century. But they have evidently a long oral tradition behind them and probably reflect the social and political conditions of the time which they claim to describe, namely, the first century before Christ. In addition to the sagas, the law tracts are an important source of evidence. The earliest of them are much older than the sagas and may have been written in their extant form in the sixth or seventh century; and they, too, are clearly based on ancient oral tradition and reflect, in some respects, a pre-Christian society. But the work of editing and interpreting them is still incomplete, and there is no satisfactory account of the evidence which they contain.[2] For the early Christian period we can learn something, too, from the lives of the saints, which Stokes and Plummer have interpreted.

Irish society was based upon monarchy. The king (*rí*) reigned over his people (*tuath*) as judge in peace and leader in war, but he was not the lawgiver. Laws were adopted by the people in assembly (*oenach*), only the freemen having franchise. It was a

1. 'The Hindu Act of Truth in Celtic Tradition,' *Modern Philology*, XLIV (1947), 137; 'Celtic and the Other Indo-European Languages,' *Transactions of the Philological Society*, X (1947), 15; G. Dumézil, *Servius et la fortune* (Paris, 1943), p. 243.

2. There is a lot of information in the excellent notes to his edition of *Críth Gablach* by D. A. Binchy (Dublin, 1941).

hierarchical society, divided into many degrees which were based partly upon nobility, partly upon learning, partly upon wealth. Society is often presented as consisting of nobles (*flaith*) and churls (*aithech*). A general term for the privileged class is *aire* (g. *airech*), and the *aire* was not necessarily a *flaith:* he was a freeman and enjoyed the rights of franchise, witness, contract, and legacy. If he possessed large herds and many plows, he was a *briugu* (g. *briugad*, Eng. 'brewy') and enjoyed almost the same dignity as a *flaith*. Also inferior to the *flaith* was the *óc-thigerna* ('young lord'). The lower grades of *aire* included a class of clients who rented cattle from members of the wealthier classes and were distinguished as *soerchéle* 'free client' or *doerchéle* ('unfree client'), according to the terms of their contract. A more general classification of society divides the people into *soer* ('free') and *doer* ('unfree'), the latter class including, besides the *aithech*, the slave (m. *mug*, g. *moga;* f. *cumal*, g. *cumaile*) and the household servant (m. *gilla;* f. *inailt*).

Above the petty king (*rí tuaithe*), whose territory was in some cases approximately that of one of the modern counties, stood the provincial king (*rí cóicid*); and in the Christian period at least, perhaps even from the time of Cormac mac Airt (third century), there was a High King of Ireland (*ardrí*) over all.

Pre-Christian Ireland was divided into five provinces (*cóiced*, lit. 'fifth'). The northeastern province is called by the name of its people, *Ulaid*. The name is preserved in the modern 'Ulster,' which covers a wider territory. The second syllable of the modern form derives from ON *staðir* 'steadings,' as in 'Leinster' and 'Munster.' The southeastern province is also named from its people *Laigin* (Eng. 'Leinster'), and so is the western province *Connachta*, sometimes *na teora Connachta* 'the three Connachts.' The southwestern province is *Mumu* (g. *Muman*, Eng. 'Munster'). The fifth province is *Mide* ('The Middle One,' called *Media* by Giraldus Cambrensis, Eng. 'Meath'). But in the Christian period this province of Meath drops out of the reckoning, and two provinces are recognized in Munster, *Urmumu* ('East Munster,' Eng. 'Ormond') and *Desmumu*

('South Munster,' Eng. 'Desmond').[2a] The *cóiced* is divided into *tuatha* ('peoples'); and the term *tuath* is used both for the people and for their territory. The *tuath* comprises smaller units known as *trícha cét* ('thirty hundreds'), which Giraldus identifies with the Welsh *cantref*, an area comprising a hundred dwellings. He tells us that there were in his time one hundred and seventy-six *trícha cét* in Ireland. Thurneysen has therefore suggested that the Irish term, in its common use as a military unit, means not three thousand men but the force that a population of approximately three thousand could raise. This would mean that thirty persons were reckoned for each dwelling (*les*).[3]

The kings and the greater nobles dwelt in fortified inclosures (*dún* or *ráith*) of earthwork, within which were a number of wooden buildings. Beside the inclosure was a lawn (*faithche*), which served perhaps as a home pasture. The cow provided the main supply of food (milk, butter, cheese, curds); but bread and porridge (*litiu*) were also important items. At a banquet beef and pork were served, and beer (*coirm*) was drunk. Wine (*fín*) was a luxury. The cow was also the unit of value in affairs of business, for there was no coinage.

Warriors were armed with shield (*sciath*), sword (*claideb*), and spear (*gae*) and sometimes with two javelins (*sleg*). They wore beards and went bareheaded[4] into battle. At least the greater heroes went in a chariot (*carpat*). Victory in battle was completed by bringing home the heads of the slain enemies. The challenge to single combat is a prominent feature of the heroic tradition.[5]

Life was spent largely in warfare, and the raiding of a neighboring territory for cattle was a favorite adventure. One such raid is the theme of the chief saga of the Ulster Cycle, 'The Cat-

2a. O'Rahilly maintains that this division of Munster was a learned invention (*Early Irish History and Mythology* [Dublin, 1946], p. 175).

3. *Die irische Helden- und Königsage* (Halle, 1921), p. 77.

4. The helmet (*cathbarr*) seems to be a later fashion; and Windisch suggests that it may have been a cap worn only by princes as a badge of rank (*TBC*, Introd., p. xviii).

5. The use of the war-chariot, the taking of heads, and the challenge to single combat were all practiced among the Gauls (see G. Dottin, *Manuel d'irlandais moyen* [Paris, 1913], pp. 262, 270, 275).

tle-Raid of Cooley' (*Táin Bó Cualnge*). A favorite pastime of the nobles was *fidchell* (Welsh *gwyddbwyll*, lit. 'wood-skill'), some board-game ordinarily rendered 'chess' by the translators of the sagas. The boys played hurley, and in the Ulster sagas the king took pleasure in watching them at play.

Some features of primitive magic play a large part in early tradition. The practice of fasting against an enemy was common in Ireland, as it was in India, and it was even a recognized procedure under Irish law in order to compel a defendant to make atonement or to consent to arbitration. Another powerful influence on conduct was the notion of *geis*,[6] an absolute prohibition from doing certain things. These *gessa* may be quite arbitrary, and they vary with individuals. Sometimes they seem related to the totem cult, as when Cú Chulainn ('Hound of Culann') may not eat the flesh of a dog, or Diarmait, whose life-span was united with that of a boar, may not join in a boar-hunt,[7] or Conaire, whose father was a bird, may not hunt birds.[8] But Conaire was subject to many other *gessa*, and by transgressing them he went to his death. Sometimes they are apparently the result of a desire to avoid a set of circumstances which had once led to disaster, as when the king of Connacht is under *geis* not to sit in autumn on the mounds of Maine's wife.[9] (Maine, son of Medb of Connacht, was killed by Conchobar, and his wife Ferbe died of grief.)[10] In some cases a *geis* is imposed by one man upon another, often by means of a successful exploit, as when Cú Chulainn lays a *geis* upon the Connachtmen, binding them not to pass the ford until someone has removed the branch which he has thrust into the ground.[11]

The Irish often raided the neighboring coasts of Britain, and it was from one such raid, about the end of the fourth century,

6. Lit. 'prayer, request,' the verbal noun of *guidid* 'prays' (Gk. $\pi o\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omega$).

7. See p. 48.

8. See p. 27.

9. *BR*, pp. 4, 21.

10. *IT*, III, 516, 756; Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 359.

11. See p. 6. This form of *geis* is a commonplace of modern Irish folk tales, often imposed by the winner of a card game.

that the boy Patrick was brought to Ireland as a slave. Later he returned to convert the people to Christianity, and with Christian learning the Irish acquired the art of writing.

Latin learning came to Ireland in the fifth century not as a discipline imposed by conquerors but as the medium of a new religion of peace and holiness. The Irish already had a long tradition of native learning, which had grown up in the druidic schools and was preserved by the *filid* by oral transmission, as in the Brahman schools of India. They practiced writing in a cryptographic script called "ogam," which is preserved in many inscriptions on stones and is based on the Latin alphabet; but there is no evidence that the alphabet itself was used in pre-Christian times or that there was any writing on parchment. With the coming of Christianity, however, the use of the Latin alphabet was applied to the native language, and religious and secular learning flourished side by side. Thus it is that we have in Irish the oldest vernacular literature in western Europe. The manuscript tradition of the Irish language goes back to the sixth century, within a hundred years or so of the death of St. Patrick, although the earliest surviving manuscript containing Irish material, the Würzburg Codex, is not earlier than A.D. 700. The oldest Irish documents, except the ogam inscriptions, are in verse and are largely encomiastic or satirical poems. Apart from their linguistic importance, they sometimes contain fragments of historical tradition of considerable value, for example, the stanzas attributed to Lugair Lánfili, whom Meyer placed in the sixth century, and those of Colmán mac Lénéni, edited by Thurneysen (*ZCP*, XIX, 193). The most remarkable of these early poems is the famous *Amra Choluim Chille*, preserved in the *Liber hymnorum*, which is said to have been composed by Dallán Forgaill in honor of St. Colmcille, who successfully defended the order of *filid* at the Assembly of Druim Cett (A.D. 575) against the charge of abusing their privileges.[12] It may be that the rhythmical texts in the great legal compilation known as the *Senchas Már* go back also to this early date (see *ZCP*, XVIII,

12. See p. 172. Thurneysen expressed himself in favor of the genuineness of this tradition (*ZCP*, XX, 373).

102), and we should then have a considerable amount of material; but the detailed study of these texts from the linguistic point of view has yet to be made. The written tradition has lasted for almost fourteen centuries, and the material is of great extent. We shall confine ourselves to an account of the imaginative literature in prose and verse, to the exclusion of history, grammar, law, and other learned writings. Hagiography and purely devotional literature will also be disregarded.

Irish literature is preserved partly in great folio vellum manuscripts, of which the earliest surviving was written about the end of the eleventh century.[13] The vellums of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are of smaller size, and in the seventeenth century the use of paper became common in Ireland. These manuscripts are, for the most part, miscellaneous collections of prose and verse, sacred and profane. We find legend, history and hagiography, bardic poetry and lyric poetry, medical and legal tracts, Old, Middle, and Modern Irish side by side. The manuscripts are miniature libraries.

Three manuscripts are of special interest on account of their early date and the importance of their contents. *The Book of the Dun Cow* (*Lebor na Huidre*, *LU*), written before 1106 and now preserved in the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, contains many of the heroic sagas. *The Book of Leinster* (*Lebor Laigen*, *LL*), written before 1160 and now preserved in Trinity College, Dublin, contains history, genealogy, saga, and poetry. Rawlinson B 502 (*Rawl.*), contains twelve leaves written in the eleventh century in which the Annals of Tigernach are recorded, and seventy leaves written in the twelfth century which are devoted to historical matter, law tracts, *dinnshenchas*,[14] and copies of *Saltair na Rann* and the famous glossary of Cormac mac Cuilennáin († 908). It is preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. There are four great vellums which are closely associated in

13. A few poems and fragments of prose, besides the glosses, are contained in Latin manuscripts of earlier date. There is a brief account of the chief collections of manuscripts in J. F. Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland* (New York, 1929), p. 64.

14. 'History of Places.' This is a collection of legends in prose and verse, purporting to explain the names of famous places, rivers, lakes, or hills (see Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 36).

place and time, all written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century and all in the west of Ireland—*The Yellow Book of Lecan* (*YBL*), *The Great Book of Lecan* (*Lec.*), *The Book of Hy Many* (*HM*), and *The Book of Ballymote* (*BB*). Of these, the first is of special importance, as it contains the earliest extant form of *Táin Bó Cualnge*, the central saga of the Ulster Cycle. The other three have many texts in common, and there is some reason to believe that *BB* derives in part from the same source as *Lec.* Their contents are largely historical. *YBL* is in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, and the other three are in the Royal Irish Academy. Three other folios may be mentioned—*The Lebor Brecc* or 'Speckled Book of Mac Egan' (*LB*), written in the late fourteenth century; *The Book of Fermoy* (*F*), written in the fifteenth century, both now preserved in the Royal Irish Academy; and *The Book of Lismore*, written in the fifteenth century, which is in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire. For sacred texts *Lismore* and *LB* are important sources. All these manuscripts, except *The Book of Fermoy*, have been published in facsimile editions. Approximately a hundred vellums have survived, of which some sixty are now in the Royal Irish Academy. The whole collection of the Academy amounts to more than thirteen hundred manuscripts. There are probably as many as two thousand Irish manuscripts now in existence; but some of these are mere transcripts of no independent value, and a great many were written in the late eighteenth and even in the nineteenth century and contain nothing that is not available in earlier and better copies. The practice of copying manuscripts continued in Ireland until recent times, for the printing of books in Irish began late and was not common until the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the last of the professional scribes, Joseph O'Longan, died only in 1880. Keating's *History of Ireland*, written *ca.* 1640, was the last important book in western Europe to circulate in manuscript. It was first printed in an English translation by Dermod O'Connor (1723); but manuscript copies in Irish were being made for a hundred years after

that. The complete Irish text was not available in print until 1908.

So far as the kinds of literature are concerned, it may be said that there are no drama and no rhetoric and that, although there is plenty of historical material, there is nothing in Irish that one can set beside Herodotus or Thucydides or Livy or Caesar until Geoffrey Keating compiled his great narrative. In Ireland, as in Wales, poetry and legend are the substance of literature.

I

The Ulster Cycle

EPIC and romance go hand in hand in Irish literature, for the two great cycles of heroic tales express sometimes one mood, sometimes the other. The association of sorrow with beauty is the motif of one of the oldest stories; and it has, indeed, been shown that the legend of Tristan and Isolt derives from Irish originals.[1] The classification into cycles is modern. The native tradition classified the stories by types, and we have two old lists of sagas so arranged. The types there recognized are Destructions, Cattle-Raids, Courtships, Battles, Cave Stories, Voyages, Tragedies, Adventures, Banquets, Sieges, Plunderings, Elopements, Eruptions, Visions, Love Stories, Hostings, and Invasions. A story was just a story, whether the matter was legend or history, and the boundary between these two was of less interest in medieval times than it is today. The title of a story about Gormflaith, a well-known historical person of the tenth century, appears beside that of the love of the legendary Hag of Beare for Fothad Canainne.[2]

The Ulster Cycle is so called because its heroes belong to the Ulaid, a people of northeastern Ireland. Their king, when the events narrated are supposed to have taken place, was Conchobar, and his palace was at Emain Macha, close to the city of Armagh. Its site is marked by the remains now called 'Navan Fort,' about two miles west of the city. The central figure of the cycle is Cú Chulainn, an Irish Achilles, whose father, according to one tradition, was the god Lug of the Long Arm; and many of the stories celebrate his valor and his might. Conall Cernach

1. See p. 43.

2. O'Curry, *MS. Mat.*, 584.

and Loegaire Buadach are warriors who sometimes challenge the primacy of Cú Chulainn. Bricriu Nemthenga ('of the poisonous tongue') is a troublemaker who delights in provoking quarrels. Fergus is a rather mysterious figure. He is abnormally virile. (His name means 'manly force.') He was once king of Ulster but was persuaded by his wife Ness to resign the kingdom to her son Conchobar.[3] Ailill and Medb are king and queen of Connacht, and their daughter is Findabair (Gwenivere).

The form of the stories is a combination of prose and verse, the main narrative in prose, while any heightening of the mood may be marked by the use of verse, ordinarily so that the poems are spoken by one of the characters. This literary form appears first in ancient India, and Oldenberg has suggested that it is the earliest form of literature known to the Indo-Europeans.[4] These Irish sagas appear to preserve the primitive form of epic tradition in which the verse is only incidental.[5] It was later perfected in the Icelandic sagas, and it is generally believed that the Norse acquired it in Ireland. Most of the stories are quite short and describe a single episode; but there is one long text, the subject of which is a raid by the Connachtmen against the Ulaid, and which may be classified as a prose epic, *Táin Bó Cualnge*, 'The Cattle-Raid of Cooley.' The theme is epic, for it is the defense of Ulster by one man, who stands alone against a whole army. The conflict of loyalties so dear to epic literature is present here, too; for in the army of Connacht there are exiles from Ulster, chief among them Fergus, who is the foster-father of Cú Chulainn, and Fer Diad, who is his dearest friend.

The traditional date of the heroes of these stories is the century before Christ, and the state of civilization which they present accords well with the tradition. The Ulster Cycle reflects, therefore, an older world than that of any other vernacular literature in western Europe, earlier than the German tradition of Huns and Burgundians, which is the only other early cycle. It

3. Kaikeyī persuaded her husband, Daśaratha, to bestow the kingdom upon her son Bharata and deprive Rāma, who was his eldest son (*Rāmāyaṇa* i. 22–23).

4. Hermann Oldenberg, *Die Literatur des alten Indien* (Stuttgart, 1903), p. 45.

5. See Windisch, *Táin Bó Cualnge*, pp. xlviii–xlix; *Geschichte der Sanskritphilologie* (Strassburg, 1920), II, 404.

shows us a society which is still pagan, and a life much like the life of the Gauls as the ancients have described it.[6] Naturally, then, the stories are more primitive in form and in the manners that they reveal than are the medieval sagas of Iceland or the French romances. The authors delight in what is marvelous. Magic is still potent, and gods interfere in the affairs of men. We are impressed not by the nearness to life, the dignity, the experience of the Norse sagas but by quite other qualities—richness of imagination, delight in color, and a remarkable sense of beauty. This sensitiveness is most often expressed with regard to the beauty of nature, and, indeed, the early nature poetry makes one of the finest chapters of Irish literature.

TÁIN BÓ CUALNGE

The Cattle-Raid of Cooley

In the earliest form in which we have it, the great *Táin* is far from perfect. It is a conflation of two recensions and dates probably from the ninth century. The earliest manuscript is *LU* (*ca.* A.D. 1100); but here the text has been heavily interpolated by a later hand, and much has been erased and re-written.[7] The other manuscript, *YBL*, is of the fourteenth century. It is believed that the story was committed to writing in the middle of the seventh century[8] by a *fili* who was acquainted with the Latin learning of the monasteries and wished to record the native heroic tradition in a worthy form. There are signs which show that he knew the *Aeneid:* The fury Allecto (vi. 313) appears as *Allechtu;* and it has been suggested that the narrative of the boyhood feats of Cú Chulainn, which interrupts the story, was intended to match the recital of Aeneas in Books ii and iii. In the twelfth century an unknown author composed from the mangled version preserved in *LU* a harmonized text of the great epic, and his work is preserved in the *Book of Leinster* and in a

6. See W. Ridgeway, 'The Date of the First Shaping of the Cuchulain Saga,' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, II (1905–6), 135. Windisch demonstrates this well in the Introduction to his edition of the *Táin.*

7. The source of the interpolations is represented by the text of the *Táin* in BM Eg. 1782 (fifteenth century), which has been edited by Windisch (*ZCP*, IX, 121).

8. Thurneysen, *ZCP*, XIX, 209.

sixteenth-century manuscript in the Royal Irish Academy. This recension presents, of course, a later stage of the language and is of less interest to linguists. The sterner form of the oldest tales has given way to a more flowing style, and there is a free use of alliterative epithet, well suited to the oral recitation for which these stories were intended. It is a fine achievement, and if the style of the 'Composer,' as he is called, later gave rise to excesses of bombast and turgid repetition, that takes nothing from the merit of his work. The later manuscript of the Composer's text, which is much better than *LL*, to judge from the variants in Windisch's edition, is still unpublished.

> 'Once when their royal bed had been made ready for Ailill and Medb they conversed as they lay on the pillows. "It is a true saying, girl," said Ailill, "that the wife of a good man is well off." "It is true," said the girl. "Why do you say so?" "Because," said Ailill, "you are better off today than the day I wed you." "I was well off without you," said Medb. "I had not heard or known it," said Ailill, "but that you were an heiress and that your nearest neighbors were robbing and plundering you." "That was not so," said Medb, "for my father, Eochu Feidlech son of Finn, was high king of Ireland."' And she went on to boast of her riches, and he of his.

Their treasures were brought before them, and it appeared that Medb had possessions equal to those of Ailill, save for a splendid bull, Whitehorn, which had belonged to Medb's herd but had wandered into the herd of Ailill because it would not remain in a woman's possession. All her wealth seemed to Medb not worth a penny, since she had no bull equal to that of Ailill. She learned that there was one as good in the province of Ulster in the cantred of Cualnge, and she sent messengers to ask a loan of it for a year, promising a rich reward. If the reward was not enough, she would even grant the owner the enjoyment of her love. The messengers returned without the bull and reported the owner's refusal. 'There is no need to smooth over difficulties,' said Medb, 'for I knew that it would not be given freely until it was taken by force, and so it will be taken.'

Medb summoned the armies of Connacht and Cormac son of Conchobar and Fergus son of Roech, who were in exile from Ulster at the time, and set out to carry off the precious bull. Before the expedition started, she consulted her druid for a prophecy.[9] He told her that she at least would return alive. Then she met a mysterious prophetess who rode on the shaft of a chariot, weaving a fringe with a gold staff, and she asked her to prophesy. The woman answered: 'I see crimson upon them, I see red.' Four times Medb appealed against this oracle, but each time the answer was the same; and the prophetess then chanted a poem in which she foretold the deeds of Cú Chulainn.

On the first day the army advanced from Cruachain as far as Cúil Silinni,[10] and the tents were pitched. Ailill's tent was on the right wing of the army. The tent of Fergus was next, and beside it was the tent of Cormac son of Conchobar. To the left of Ailill was the tent of Medb and next to hers that of Findabair, her daughter. Medb drove through the camp to see which troops were most eager and which most negligent, and she observed that the Gálióin (Leinstermen) excelled all the others. She returned to Ailill with this report and proposed that the Gálióin should be massacred before they advanced further, lest they should turn against Connacht in the battle. But she was persuaded merely to distribute them among the other troops, so that they could not combine against her. Fergus was appointed to guide the army, for the expedition was a revenge for him. He had been king of Ulster for seven years and had gone into exile when the sons of Uisliu were killed in violation of his guaranty and protection. And so he marched in front. But he felt a pang of longing for Ulster and led the army astray northward and southward while he sent warnings to the Ulstermen. But the Ulstermen had been stricken with a mysterious sickness which afflicted them in times of danger, the result of a curse laid upon them by Macha, a fairy whom they had wronged.[11] Cú Chulainn

9. So the Greeks consulted the oracle at Aulis. 10. Near Tulsk, County Roscommon.

11. This *noínden Ulad* ('sickness of the Ulstermen') has been most recently discussed by M.-L. Sjoestedt (*Dieux et héros des celtes* [Paris, 1941], p. 39), who regards it as a survival of the practice of the *couvade*, here as a propitiatory rite in honor of the Mother-Goddess who was also goddess of war.

and his father, Sualtam, were exempt from the curse, and they set out to oppose the enemy. They arrived at Ard Cuillenn,[12] and Cú Chulainn told his father to go back and warn the Ulstermen to depart from the open plains into the woods and valleys. He cut an oak sapling with a single stroke, and, using one arm, one leg, and one eye, he made it into a hoop, wrote an ogam on it, and fixed it around a stone pillar. Then he departed to keep a tryst with a girl southward at Tara.

The Connacht army reached Ard Cuillenn and saw the ogam. Fergus interpreted it for them. (His interpretation is in verse.) Any man who advanced farther that night, unless he made a hoop in the same way, would be slain by Cú Chulainn before morning. Ailill decided to turn aside into the forest for the night. In the morning Cú Chulainn returned from his tryst and found the army at Turloch Caille Móire, north of Cnogba na Ríg.[13] There he cut off the fork of a tree with a single stroke and cast it into the earth from his chariot, so that two-thirds of the stem was buried in the earth. He came upon two Connacht warriors and beheaded them and their charioteers. He set their heads upon branches of the tree-fork and turned their horses back toward the camp, the chariots bearing the headless bodies of the men.[14] The Connachtmen decided that the army of Ulster must be before them, and they sent Cormac son of Conchobar to reconnoitre, for they knew that the Ulstermen would not harm the son of their own king. Cormac advanced with three thousand men, but he found only the tree-fork and the four bleeding heads. When the rest of the army came up, they wondered at the sight. (Fergus chants a poem in which he bids the druids explain this marvel, and they answer in verse.) Fergus declared that it was *geis* for them to cross the ford at which the tree-fork stood until some one of them had removed it with one arm, standing in a chariot, as it had been cast. Medb bade him

12. Crossakeel, County Westmeath.

13. Knowth, County Meath.

14. This may be an instance of 'publication of slaying,' as practiced by the Germans (see F. Mezger, 'The Publication of Slaying in the Saga and in the Nibelungenlied,' *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi*, LXI [1946], 208).

do it himself. Seventeen times Fergus tried, and each time the chariot broke asunder, until his own chariot was brought him and he drew the tree-fork out of the ground.

Ailill decided to camp in the forest, southwest of Kells, and ordered a feast to be prepared and music provided. And when they had feasted and listened to music, Ailill asked Fergus who it could be that had killed four men so suddenly, and he named many of the famous warriors of Ulster. Fergus answered that it was none of these, but the boy Cú Chulainn, his own foster-son and foster-son also to Conchobar, king of Ulster. (Here follows a long account of the boyhood feats of Cú Chulainn.)

On the next day the army moved eastward, and Cú Chulainn went to meet them. He surprised Orlam son of Ailill and Medb and killed him, and the next day he killed three more with their charioteers. The army advanced and devastated the plains of Bregia[15] and Muirthemne,[16] and Fergus warned them to beware of Cú Chulainn's vengeance. (His warning is in verse.) They went on into Cualnge and reached the river Glaiss Cruind, but it rose against them so that they could not cross.[17] A hundred chariots were swept into the sea. Cú Chulainn followed hard upon them seeking battle, and he killed a hundred men. Medb called upon her people to oppose him in equal combat. 'Not I, not I!' said each one from where he stood. 'My people owe no victim, and if one were owing I would not go against Cú Chulainn, for it is not easy to fight with him.' That night a hundred warriors died of fright at the sound of Cú Chulainn's weapons.

Medb sent a messenger to summon Cú Chulainn to a parley with her and Fergus, but he would accept no conditions; and for the next three nights the army lay without pitching their tents and without feasting or music, and Cú Chulainn killed a hundred men each night. The messenger was sent again to ask for terms, and he refused all that were proposed. There was one condition that he would accept, but he would not himself declare it. Fergus was able to tell that Cú Chulainn would agree to

15. In southern County Meath.
16. The country around Dundalk, County Louth.
17. The Scamander rose against Achilles (*Iliad* xi. 305 ff.).

single combat with a warrior each day, if the army would advance only while the combat lasted and would halt when the warrior had been killed until another was found. Medb decided to accept the proposal, because it would be better to lose one man every day than a hundred every night.

(There follows a long series of single combats at a ford, with Cú Chulainn always the victor. Medb sometimes breaks faith and sends many warriors together. Once she sends six, and he kills them, and another time she sends a hundred, but Cú Chulainn overcomes them all.)

Meanwhile Medb turned northward to Dún Sobairche,[18] and Cú Chulainn followed her. He turned back to protect his own territory and found Buide son of Bán Blai, with twenty-four followers, driving the Brown Bull of Cualnge, which they had found in Glenn na Samaisce in Sliab Cuilinn. The bull was accompanied by twenty-four of his cows. Cú Chulainn challenged Buide and killed him, but, while they were exchanging casts of their spears, the great bull was driven off, 'and that was the greatest grief and dismay and confusion that Cú Chulainn suffered on that hosting.' Medb plundered Dún Sobairche, and then after six weeks the four provinces of Ireland with Ailill and Medb and those who had captured the bull came into camp together.

Lug then came to help Cú Chulainn (for he was his father) and told him to sleep for three days and nights and that he would stand before the army. While Cú Chulainn slept, Lug put herbs into his wounds so that he was healed in his sleep. Meanwhile, the boys of Ulster came and fought three battles against the army. They killed three times their own number, but all the hundred and fifty boys were killed. Then Cú Chulainn awoke, 'and his spirit was strong within him, and he could have gone to an assembly or a foray or a tryst or an ale-house or to one of the chief assemblies of Ireland. "How long have I slept now, warrior?" said Cú Chulainn. "Three days and three nights," said the warrior. "Alas for that!" said Cú Chulainn. "Why so?" said the warrior. "The hosts have been all that time without at-

18. Dunseverick, County Antrim.

tack," said Cú Chulainn. "Indeed they have not," said the war rior. "Who has attacked them?" said Cú Chulainn. "The boys came south from Emain Macha, a hundred and fifty kings' sons of Ulster, and they fought three battles against the hosts in the three days and three nights that you have slept, and three times their number fell by them, and the boys fell." '

(Now the story tells at length of the vengeance of Cú Chulainn for the boys of Ulster. This is a rhetorical passage to which the 'runs' of modern folk tales correspond. The dressing of the charioteer and the arming of the hero are described in many words. The distortion of Cú Chulainn in his frenzy is presented in a long passage. His war-chariot is armed with scythes. A list of his victims is given.) 'Cú Chulainn killed a hundred and thirty kings in the Great Slaughter of Mag Muirthemne, and great numbers of dogs and horses and women and children and lesser people and mere rabble, for not one man out of every three of the Men of Ireland escaped without an injury to his leg or his head or his eye, or some lasting blemish.'

After his fury and his great distortion, Cú Chulainn showed himself in all his beauty to the women and girls and poets, for he did not think honorable the frightful shape he had worn the night before. 'Beautiful was the lad who came then to show himself to the hosts, Cú Chulainn son of Sualtam.' (Here his beauty is described in a long rhetorical passage.) Medb hid her face behind a fence of shields lest he should cast at her, but the girls asked the Men of Ireland to raise them on their shields to their shoulders to see the beauty of Cú Chulainn. At last Medb called upon Fer Diad to oppose Cú Chulainn. Fer Diad was foster-brother of the hero. (This is the climax of the series of single combats. The dialogue between Medb and Fer Diad is set in ten stanzas of eight lines, *aaabcccb*, six lines of six syllables ending in a disyllable, the two *b*-lines having five syllables ending in a monosyllable.) Fer Diad has been threatened with disgrace if he refuses and is offered rich rewards if he consents. He laments his misfortune but cannot suffer dishonor. Fergus goes out to warn Cú Chulainn that the terrible Fer Diad is coming against him, and again the dialogue is in verse (eleven quatrains). Fer Diad

bids his charioteer harness his chariot, and the charioteer begs him not to go. (Here the eight-line stanza is used again.) He sets out, and Cú Chulainn goes to meet him. (The language here is highly rhetorical, and the dialogues are repeated in verse after the prose. The whole episode makes 1,200 lines of the text.)

For three days Fer Diad and Cú Chulainn fought, and neither gained any advantage over the other. Each night Cú Chulainn sent leeches and herbs to heal the wounds of Fer Diad, and Fer Diad sent a share of his food to Cú Chulainn. On the fourth day the choice of weapons lay with Cú Chulainn, and he chose the 'play of the ford.' Then Fer Diad was afraid, for he knew that it was in the ford that Cú Chulainn used to defeat every enemy. For a long time they fought equally, and at last Cú Chulainn called for the *gae bolga*, the mysterious weapon whose use he alone had learned from Scáthach, the woman-warrior. (It was a spear which entered the wound as one point but made thirty points within.) Loeg set the *gae bolga* on the water, and Cú Chulainn sent it against Fer Diad, and so Fer Diad was killed. Cú Chulainn lamented the death of his friend. (There is a fine poem here.)[19] He was himself prostrate from his wounds.

While Cú Chulainn lay exhausted, single champions from Ulster came out to oppose the Men of Ireland (the Connacht army). But Sualtam, Cú Chulainn's human father, had heard in the distance the clamor of battle and said: 'Either the sky is bursting or the sea is ebbing away or the earth is breaking asunder, or it is the clamor of my son fighting against unequal odds.' He came to where Cú Chulainn was and began to lament and pity him. And Cú Chulainn sent him to Emain Macha to arouse the Ulstermen. Sualtam came to the palace and cried out: 'Men are being killed, women are being carried off, cattle are being driven away!' Three times he called, but there was no answer; for it was a *geis* for the Ulstermen to speak before their king, and it was a *geis* for the king to speak before his druids. At last Cathbad the druid asked who was killing men and carrying off women and driving cattle away, and Sualtam told the news of Cú Chulainn's long defense of Ulster. The druid answered mere-

19. It has been finely rendered by Sigerson in his *Bards of the Gael and Gall* (London, 1907).

ly that the man who had so insulted the king by speaking unbidden deserved to die. As Sualtam went away in anger, his shield turned against him, and the edge of the shield cut off his head. Conchobar said that there was too much noise. 'The sky is above us and the earth below and the sea all about us. Unless the firmament with its showers of stars falls down upon the earth or the earth bursts asunder in an earthquake or the blue-bordered furrowy sea flows over the hair of the earth, I shall bring back every cow to her byre and yard and every woman to her home and dwelling, after victory in the battle.'

Then Conchobar sent out a summons to the Ulstermen, and they came from east and west and north and advanced that same night as far as Iraird Cuillenn. Conchobar went ahead and brought in a hundred and sixty heads and a hundred and sixty women whom he had rescued.

Meanwhile, Ailill announced that he had now plundered Ulster from Samain until spring and that he would wait no longer for the Ulstermen. They must come to Mag Ai and fight him there if they would. But, before departing, he sent out a scout to see whether the Ulstermen were coming into the plain of Meath. (Now the story gives a description of the approaching enemy as reported by the observer, in the manner beloved to these sagas.[20] It makes more than five hundred lines of prose.)

That night the Morrígu,[21] daughter of Ernmass, came to incite the armies against each other. (Her incantation is in archaic alliterative verse, the sense of which is obscure. It is followed by exhortations in the same meter by Loeg, Cú Chulainn's charioteer, and by Sencha the druid, addressed to the Ulstermen.)

In the morning, when the sun was up, the Ulstermen attacked, and the Men of Ireland came to meet them. Three times the Men of Ireland broke through northward, and each time they were driven back. Then Conchobar himself went into the field, where the enemy had been advancing, and found Fergus

20. This feature is doubtless borrowed from Homer *Iliad* iii (τειχοσκοπία). It recurs in 'Bricriu's Feast' (see below, p. 22) and in 'The Destruction of Ua Derga's Hostel' (p. 30).

21. She was an evil spirit who took delight in the deaths of men (see M.-L. Sjoestedt, *Dieux et héros des celtes*, pp. 44–45).

opposed to him. They fought shield to shield, and Fergus struck three mighty blows upon the shield of Conchobar so that it screamed aloud. But, remembering that he was an Ulsterman, he turned his anger against the hills, and three hills were shorn of their tops by his sword.

Cú Chulainn heard the scream of Conchobar's magic shield where he lay prostrate from his wounds. He rose up in a heroic frenzy and seized no mere weapons but his war-chariot, body and wheels, to wield against the enemy. Fergus had promised, if ever he and Cú Chulainn should meet in the battle, that he would retreat before him. When Cú Chulainn now came against him, he led his company out of the fight, and the Leinstermen and Munstermen followed them, so that only Ailill and Medb and their sons with nine battalions remained in the field. At noon Cú Chulainn came into the battle. At sunset he had defeated the last battalion, and of his chariot there remained a few ribs of the body and a few spokes of the wheels.

Meanwhile, Medb had sent the Brown Bull of Cualnge to Cruachain, so that he at least should come there, whoever else might fail to come. Then she appealed to Cú Chulainn to spare her army until it should go westward past Áth Mór,[22] and he consented.

Fergus watched the army as it went west from Áth Mór. When Medb lamented the disaster, he said that a drove of horses led by a mare could have no luck.

When the Brown Bull came to Cruachain, he uttered three mighty bellows, and the Whitehorned Bull heard that and came to fight him. All who had returned from the battle came to watch the bull-fight. They watched until night fell, and when night fell they could only listen to the great noise of the fight. The bulls traveled all over Ireland during the night, and in the morning the Brown Bull was seen going past Cruachain with the Whitehorned Bull on his horns. He galloped back to Ulster, scattering fragments of the dead bull's flesh from his horns on the way, and when he came to the border of Cualnge, his heart broke, and he died.

22. Athlone, County Westmeath, where they would cross the Shannon into Connacht.

The finest of all the Ulster stories is that of the 'Exile of the Sons of Usnech.' It is the earliest form of the love motif in Irish literature, the motif which later became famous in the story of Tristan, apparently a French adaptation of Irish tradition. The text as we have it may date from the eighth or ninth century. It is preserved in the *Book of Leinster* and in the *Yellow Book of Lecan* and is one of the 'prefatory tales' (*remscéla*) of the *Táin*.

LONGES MAC NUSNIG

The Exile of the Sons of Usnech

The Ulaid feasted one day in the house of Fedlimid, the chronicler of King Conchobar, and as the feast came to an end, a girl-child was born to the wife of Fedlimid; and a druid prophesied about her future. (The prophecy is pronounced in two long poems, parts of which have not yet been satisfactorily explained. Most of the text is clear. Her name is to be Derdriu. The child will grow to be a woman of wonderful beauty and will cause enmity and trouble and will depart out of the kingdom. Many will die on account of her.)

The Ulaid proposed to kill the child at once and so avoid the curse. But Conchobar ordered that she be spared and reared apart, hidden from men's eyes; and that he himself would take her for his wife. So Derdriu was intrusted to foster-parents and was reared in a dwelling apart. A wise woman, Leborcham, was the only other person allowed to see her.

'Once the girl's foster-father was flaying a calf outside in the snow in winter to cook it for her; and she saw a raven drinking the blood in the snow. Then she said to Leborcham: "Fair would be a man upon whom those three colors should be: his hair like the raven, and his cheek like the blood, and his body like the snow." "Grace and prosperity to you!" said Leborcham. "He is not far from you, inside close by: Noisi the son of Usnech." "I shall not be well," said she, "until I see him."

'Once that same Noisi was on the rampart of the fort sounding his cry. And sweet was the cry of the sons of Usnech.

Every cow and every beast that would hear it used to give two-thirds excess of milk. For every man who heard it, it was enough of peace and entertainment. Good was their valor too. Though the whole province of the Ulaid should be around them in one place, if the three of them stood back to back, they would not overcome them, for the excellence of their defense. They were as swift as hounds at the hunt. They used to kill deer by their speed.

'When Noisi was there outside, soon she went out to him, as though to go past him, and did not recognize him. "Fair is the heifer that goes past me," said he. "Heifers must grow big where there are no bulls," said she. "You have the bull of the province," said he, "the king of the Ulaid." "I would choose between you," said she, "and I would take a young bull like you." "No!" said he. Then she sprang toward him and caught his ears. "Here are two ears of shame(?) and mockery," said she, "unless you take me with you." '

Noisi sounded his cry, and the Ulstermen sprang up as they heard it, and the sons of Usnech, his two brothers, went out to restrain and warn him. But his honor was challenged. 'We shall go into another country,' said he. 'There is not a king in Ireland that will not make us welcome.' That night they set out with 150 warriors and 150 women and 150 hounds, and Derdriu was with them.

Conchobar pursued them with plots and treachery, and they fled to Scotland. And they took service with the king of Scotland and built a house around Derdriu so that they should not be killed on account of her. One day the steward saw her and told the king of her beauty, so that he demanded her for wife; and the sons of Usnech had to flee and take refuge on an island in the sea.

Then Conchobar invited them back and sent Fergus as a surety; but when they came to Emain, Noisi and his followers were killed, and Derdriu was brought to Conchobar, and her hands were bound behind her back.

When Fergus and Cormac heard of this treachery, they came

and did great deeds: three hundred of the Ulaid were killed, and women were killed, and Emain was burnt by Fergus. And Fergus and Cormac went to the court of Ailill and Medb, and for sixteen years the Ulaid had no peace.

But Derdriu was for a year with Conchobar, and she never smiled or raised her head from her knee.

'And when the musicians came to her, she used to say:

"Though you think the fierce warriors fair, who march proudly over Emain, more proudly used they to march to their house, the brave sons of Usnech. . . . .

Sweet to Conchobar, your king, are the pipers and horn-blowers, sweeter to me the cry of the sons of Uisliu. . . . .

Dear was the gray eye which women loved. It was fierce against an enemy. After a visit to the woods, noble course, delightful was his cry through the black forest.

I do not sleep; and I put no purple on my nails. Joy comes not into my mind, since the sons of Usnech do not come. . . . .

Joy is not for me in the assembly of Emain which nobles fill, nor peace nor happiness nor comfort, nor a big house nor fair ornament."

'And when Conchobar was comforting her she used to say:

"Conchobar, what are you doing? You have caused me sorrow and tears. As long as I live, I shall not love you.

What was dearest to me under heaven, and what was most beloved, you have taken him from me,—a great wrong—so that I shall not see him till I die. . . . .

Two bright cheeks, red lips, eyebrows black as a chafer, pearly teeth bright with the noble color of snow. . . . .

Do not break my heart. Soon I shall die. Grief is stronger than the sea, if you could understand it, Conchobar."

'"What do you hate most of what you see?" said Conchobar. "You," she said, "and Eogan son of Durthacht." "You shall be a year with Eogan," said Conchobar. He gave her to Eogan. They went next day to the assembly of Macha. She was behind Eogan in the chariot. She had prophesied that she would not see two husbands on earth together. "Well, Derdriu," said Conchobar. "You look like a sheep between two rams, between Eogan and me." There was a big rock in front of her. She thrust her head against the rock, so that it shattered her head, and she died.

'That is the exile of the Sons of Usnech, and the exile of Fergus and the Tragic Death of the sons of Usnech and of Derdriu. Finit. Amen. Finit.'

This story is preserved in a modern version, composed, perhaps, in the fifteenth century, which has great merit. It has been the victim of rather fastidious censure by scholars who had acquired a taste for the Cistercian bareness of the early sagas and could not appreciate the baroque in literature. It is this second version which is the source of Lady Gregory's modernization and so of the works of Yeats, James Stephens, and Æ. Synge too, probably used this adaptation, but his great play is very much his own creation.

Another story excels in its restrained emotion. When Cú Chulainn was in the east, learning feats of arms from Scáthach so that he might win the hand of Emer, he fought against another woman-warrior, Aife, an enemy of Scáthach; and he overcame her and had a son by her. All this is told in a long saga called 'The Wooing of Emer.' The boy is to come to Ireland when he grows to manhood, and he is not to tell his name on the demand of a single warrior. 'The Tragic Death of Aife's Only Son' tells of the boy's coming to Ireland and of his death by the hand of his own father. It is the story of Sohrab and Rustum, the theme also of the Hildebrandslied, evidently an ancient Indo-European motif. The Irish text is very short, so short that we must suppose that the manuscript versions of these stories served merely as an outline which the reciter could develop as he went along. It is preserved in *YBL* and is of the ninth century.

AIDED OENḞIR AIFE

The Tragic Death of Aife's Only Son

The men of Ulster were assembled at Trácht Éisi, when they saw a boy coming on the sea in a boat of bronze with gilded oars. He was performing strange feats, bringing down birds alive with his sling and then releasing them. He would scatter them out of sight by a trick of his hands and then sing to them so that they flew back to him. The Ulstermen were alarmed and sent a champion to meet him and prevent his landing or discover his name. Condere goes first, but the boy defies him. Then the mighty Conall Cernach goes down, the boy hurls a stone from his sling, and Conall falls. The boy binds his arms with the strap of his own shield. 'Let someone else oppose him!' says Conall Cernach.

'Cú Chulainn was practicing his feats as he approached the youth, and the arm of Emer daughter of Forgall was around his neck. "Do not go down!" said she. "It is a son of yours that is down there. Do not murder your only son! Refrain, O eager son of Soailte. It is not brave or wise to oppose your valiant son. . . . . Turn toward me. Listen. My advice is good. Let Cú Chulainn hear! I know what name he will tell, if the boy down there is Conla, Aife's only son."

'Then Cú Chulainn said: "Forbear, woman! I heed not a woman's advice. . . . . Make not your womanish talk of gentle conduct. . . . . The good spear drinks good liquor. Though it were he, indeed, woman," said he, "I would kill him for the honor of Ulster."

'Then he went down himself. "You play well, boy," said he. "But your play is cruel," said the little boy, "that two of you do not come so that I might tell my name to them." "Should I then have taken a child along with me?" said Cú Chulainn. "You shall die, if you do not tell your name." "Be it so," said the lad.

'The boy came toward him. They smote each other. The boy shaved his head with his sword by a measured stroke. "This is enough of insolence," said Cú Chulainn. "Let us

wrestle then!" "I shall not be able to reach up to your belt," said the boy. The boy got upon two stones, and he thrust Cú Chulainn between the stones three times. And the boy did not move either of his feet from the stones, and his feet went into the stones up to his ankles. The mark of his feet is there still. Hence is named The Strand of the Track in Ulster.

'Then they went into the sea to drown each other, and the boy put him under twice. He went against the boy in shallow water and played him false with the *gae bolga*. For Scáthach had taught the use of that weapon to none but Cú Chulainn alone. He cast it at the boy through the water so that his entrails were about his feet. "That is what Scáthach did not teach me!" said he. "Woe to you who have wounded me!"

' "It is true," said Cú Chulainn. He took the boy in his arms and bore him away, and he carried him up and cast him before the Ulstermen. "Here is my son for you, men of Ulster!" said he.'

Two other stories of this cycle deserve special mention: 'The Feast of Bricriu' and 'The Story of Mac Da Thó's Pig.' The first is, after the great *Táin*, the longest and perhaps the most finished of the Ulster sagas. The central motif is that of the Hero's Portion (*curad-mír*) at a feast, an echo of what Poseidonius tells about the ancient Gauls (*Athenaeus* iv. 40). Here, too, occurs the Champion's Ordeal, in which the hero is invited to cut off a giant's head on condition that he will lay his own head on the block at the end of a year. Kittredge has shown that it is the source of the episode in *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*. The second story is motivated also by the competition for the Hero's Portion and is notable for its lively dialogue. Both these tales are pure comedy, and they provide a contrast to the noble tragedy of Deirdre and the story of Conla's death, the purely heroic temper of the *Táin*, and the gentle romance of *Táin Bó Fraich* or *Serglige Con Culainn*. Only the first will be considered here. It is preserved in *LU* and dates from the eighth century.

FLED BRICRENN

Bricriu's Feast

Bricriu of the Poisonous Tongue made a great feast for Conchobar mac Nessa and for all the Ulstermen. For a whole year he was gathering food, and he built a splendid house at Dún Rudraige in which to serve it. The house was built in imitation of the Craebruad at Emain Macha, but it was even grander in material and style and ornament. The arrangement within was like that of the Banquet Hall at Tara, nine couches from the hearth to the wall, and in front, above them all, a royal couch for Conchobar, which was decorated with precious stones and ornaments of gold and silver, making night as bright as day. Around the royal couch were twelve couches for the twelve champions of Ulster. For himself Bricriu built a sunroom outside with glass windows all around, so that he could look into the big house, for he knew that the Ulstermen would not let him join them.

Then Bricriu went to Emain Macha to invite the Ulstermen to his feast. 'We will not go,' said Fergus and the others, 'for more of us would be dead than living after Bricriu had set us against each other.' Bricriu said it would be worse for them if they failed to come, for he would set kings and chieftains and warriors and lords against each other so that they would all be killed. Conchobar refused to go. Then Bricriu threatened to set father against son and mother against daughter[23] and to set the two breasts of every woman in Ulster in conflict so that they would strike against each other and rot away. 'It is better to go,' said Fergus, 'or it will happen as he says.' 'Let a few of the chief men of Ulster discuss it, if you wish,' said Sencha son of Ailill. 'Evil will come of it,' said Conchobar, 'if we do not take counsel.'

The Ulstermen decided to go to the feast on condition that Bricriu would not enter the house, and they set out from Emain Macha, each king and chieftain with his retinue in splendid

23. Father and son, mother and daughter, are two of the eight 'unions' recognized by Irish law (R. Thurneysen and Others, *Studies in Irish Law* [Dublin, 1936], p. 129).

array. Bricriu set to work at once. He came to Loegaire Buadach and praised his valor and fame and asked why he had not claimed the Hero's Portion of Emain forever. 'If I wished it,' said Loegaire, 'I should have it.' Bricriu promised him the headship of the warriors of Ireland if he would take his advice, and Loegaire consented. Then Bricriu described the Hero's Portion of the feast that he had prepared: a milk-fed hog; an ox that had been fed only on milk, grass, and corn; and a hundred wheaten loaves baked in honey. ' "Since you are the greatest warrior of Ulster," said Bricriu, "it is to you it should be given, and it is for you I have appointed it. When the feast is ready to be displayed at the end of the day, let your charioteer rise up, and the Hero's Portion will be given to him." "There will be dead men there, or it will be done," said Loegaire. Bricriu laughed at that, and he was content in mind.' Then he went to Conall Cernach and to Cú Chulainn, in turn, and told them the same thing, and each agreed to claim the Hero's Portion.

When Bricriu had displayed his feast to the Ulstermen, they asked him to leave the hall as he had promised; and, as he went out, he bade them give the Hero's Portion to the greatest warrior among them. The carvers arose to divide the food, and at once Loegaire's charioteer claimed the prize for his master. The charioteers of Conall and Cú Chulainn claimed it, too. The three warriors sprang up and seized their weapons and began to fight, Loegaire and Conall against Cú Chulainn, so that one side of the house was like a blaze of fire from the clash of swords and spears and the other was like a flock of white birds from the dust of the shields. The house was in a tumult, and Conchobar was angry at the unfairness and untruth[24] of two men attacking one. But none dared to hinder them until Sencha, the druid, told Conchobar to separate the men. 'For Conchobar was the earthly god of the Ulstermen at that time.'

Conchobar and Fergus went between them, and Sencha decided that the Hero's Portion should be divided among the

24. *Fír fer* ('Men's Truth') was a rule of conduct according to which a man who offered single combat should not be opposed by more than one (see Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage* [Halle, 1921], p. 81).

whole company that night, and the dispute referred to Ailill son of Mága, king of Connacht. When they had eaten and drunk and were merry, Fedelm Noichride came out of the house with her fifty women after drinking much wine; and Bricriu saw her go by. Fedelm was the daughter of Conchobar and wife of Loegaire; and Bricriu told her that she should have precedence over all the women of Ulster and the right of first entry into the banquet hall at Tara. If she went first into the house that night, she would have that privilege forever. Then Conall's wife, Findabair, came out, and he praised her twice as much and gave her the same advice. Then Emer came with her fifty women, and Bricriu hailed her as the wife of the greatest man in Ireland. As the sun is to the stars, so was she to the women of the world in beauty and nobility and fame and wisdom and eloquence. He gave Emer the same advice as he had given the other two.

Soon the three women with their retinues began to return to the house. At first they moved in stately fashion, for none knew that the others had been warned. Then they began to hurry, and at last they ran at full speed with their skirts raised to their buttocks, each in haste to be first at the door. Sencha ordered the door to be shut, lest they be killed in the struggle. The three warriors sprang up to open a way for their wives. 'It will be a bad night,' said Conchobar; and he struck the bronze pillar of his couch with his silver rod so that all sat down. Sencha said: 'It will not be a battle with weapons this time but a battle of words.' Each of the women sought the protection of her husband outside, and they made, then, the Word-Battle of the Women of Ulster.

Now each of the women made an elaborate speech in praise of her husband; and when the speeches were finished the husbands were so excited that they were seized with frenzy. Loegaire and Conall tore down pillars of the house and let their wives in; but Cú Chulainn simply lifted his side of the house from the ground so that his wife and all the other women could come in. When he let it fall, the whole fort was shaken, and the sunroom fell down, so that Bricriu and his queen were thrown into the mud among the dogs of the inclosure.

The Ulstermen decided that they should all go, with Conchobar himself, to the house of Ailill and Medb in Cruachain for a settlement of the dispute. The noise of their approach caused a panic in Cruachain, and the weapons fell down from the walls. 'Until this day,' said Medb, 'I never heard thunder without clouds until now.' Findabair, daughter of Ailill and Medb, went to the sunroom over the door of the fort and said: 'I see a charioteer coming into the plain, little mother.' 'Describe him,' said Medb, 'his form and appearance, the stature of his servant, the color of his horses, the course of his chariot.' Findabair described the approach of each of the three heroes, one more splendid and terrible than the other; and Medb recognized them from her description and responded each time with a rhetorical speech celebrating the on-coming warrior. When Cú Chulainn was announced, she said: 'It is a drop before a storm. I recognize that man from his description.' And there follows a long rhetoric, ending with a command that women go out to meet the warriors and that beds be made ready and tubs of cold water prepared, so as to appease their frenzy.

For three days and three nights the Ulstermen were feasted at Cruachain, and then Sencha explained the purpose of their visit. Conchobar and his retinue departed, and the three contesting warriors were left to be judged by Ailill. That night three ferocious cats from the Cave of Cruachain were set loose against the three warriors. Loegaire and Conall fled, and the cats devoured their food. But Cú Chulainn stood his ground and warded off the beast. Conall and Loegaire refused to acknowledge this test, for they fought not against beasts but against men. Ailill was perplexed; and Medb upbraided him for cowardice. If he would not judge the warriors, she would do it herself. As bronze is to white gold, so is Loegaire to Conall; and as white gold is to red gold, so is Conall to Cú Chulainn. She called them in separately and gave to each a trophy—to Loegaire a bronze cup, to Conall a cup of white gold, and to Cú Chulainn a cup of red gold. The warriors departed; and, when they produced their trophies at Emain Macha and Cú Chulainn claimed the verdict, the other two insisted that he had bribed Medb to give him the finest cup.

The Ulstermen decided to refer the matter to Cú Roi, a powerful wizard who lived in the south;[25] and next day the three set out for Cathair Con Roi. Cú Roi was away in the land of the Scythians; but Bláthnat, his wife, made them welcome. When it was night she told them that each, in turn, must keep watch at night until Cú Roi came back. Loegaire kept the first watch, for he was the oldest. Toward the end of the watch a giant came up from the sea, took up Loegaire in one hand and rubbed him between his palms as a chess-piece is turned on a lathe, then threw him over the wall into the mud. The next night Conall met with the same treatment. On the third night Cú Chulainn was attacked, first by nine warriors, then by a monstrous beast, and finally by the giant; but he overcame them all. In the morning he went into the house and uttered a sigh. Bláthnat said: 'It is not a sigh of shame: it is a sigh of victory and triumph.'

Soon afterward they saw Cú Roi come in, carrying the spoils which Cú Chulainn had left outside, and he awarded the Hero's Portion to Cú Chulainn and precedence to his wife over the women of Ulster, and he gave him a reward of gold and silver. But when the warriors arrived back at Emain Macha that night, Loegaire and Conall denied that Cú Roi had awarded the Hero's Portion to one rather than to another. Cú Chulainn said that he had no wish to contend for it, for it would bring no more joy than sorrow. From that time there was no Hero's Portion in Emain Macha until the Strong Man's Bargain.

One evening when Conchobar and Fergus and the best of the warriors of Ulster were together in the Craebruad, a huge and ugly churl came in. He was of terrible appearance, his eyes as big as cauldrons, each of his fingers as thick as a man's fist. In his left hand he carried a block that would have been a load for twenty yokes of oxen, in his right hand an ax. He announced to the company that he had come to challenge any one of them, except Conchobar on account of his kingship and Fergus on account of his equal rank,[26] to make a bargain. The warrior was to

25. Cahirconry, the great prehistoric fortress in Kerry, preserves his name.

26. Fergus had been king before Conchobar, and his wife Ness had persuaded him to yield the kingdom to her son.

let the churl cut off his head that night, and the churl would let the warrior cut off his head the next night. But none took up that challenge, for Loegaire, Conall, and Cú Chulainn were away; so the churl agreed to reverse the bargain. He would give his head the first night and behead his opponent the following night. Munremor son of Gerrcenn agreed to the bargain. He took the mighty ax whose blade was seven feet long and beheaded the churl. The churl got up, took his head and his ax and his block, and departed. But on the following night, when the churl appeared, Munremor was not to be found. Loegaire was there that night and agreed to the bargain, but he, too, was missing on the following night; and Conall was no better. At last, Cú Chulainn made the bargain. He beheaded the churl and shattered the head, but the churl got up as before. On the following night Cú Chulainn was ready to keep his word[27] when the churl appeared. He laid his head on the block. The churl swung his ax to the rafters, and the noise of his cloak and his ax and his arms was like the noise of the forest on a stormy night. He brought it down with the edge uppermost and told Cú Chulainn to rise. 'Stand up, Cú Chulainn,' said he. 'There is not a champion in Ulster or in all Ireland that can claim to be your equal in bravery and skill and honor. You shall have the first place among the warriors of Ireland and the Hero's Portion, and your wife precedence over the other women of Ulster forever.'

The churl disappeared. It was Cú Roi who had come in this disguise to enforce his verdict. And from that day Cú Chulainn had the Hero's Portion.

There is a story about the fairy Étain and Conaire the Great, king of Ireland, which became associated with the Ulster Cycle and may be noticed here, namely, 'The Destruction of Ua Derga's Hostel.[28] The dominant theme is the magic power of *gessa*.

27. 'What is there to be said / when a man with a right to get it / has come to ask for your head?' (Yeats, *The Green Helmet*).

28. According to the historical tradition, Conaire was a son-in-law of Conn of the Hundred Battles (second century) and father of Coirpre Músc, from whom the Múscrige claimed descent. O'Rahilly regards this tale as a record in legendary form of an invasion of Leinster by the 'Laginians' and the overthrow of an 'Ernean' king (*Early Irish History and Mythology* [Dublin, 1946], p. 129).

Conaire was subject to many *gessa*, and the tragedy here is that he is caught between conflicting taboos and is therefore doomed. As the plot develops, he cries out: "All my *gessa* have overtaken me tonight." The tragedy is heightened by the fact that his own foster-brothers are forced to join in bringing about his death.

The story is preserved in *LU* and *YBL* and belongs to the ninth century.

TOGAIL BRUIDNE UI DERGA

The Destruction of Ua Derga's Hostel

Étain was the wife of the fairy king, Midir. She was reborn as a mortal, and became the wife of Eochaid Airem, king of Tara; but she returned to Midir. Her daughter's daughter, another Étain, was a mortal and became the mother of Conaire, son of Etarscéle. In a well-known passage at the beginning of the story of Ua Derga's Hostel, Étain is described:

> 'He saw a woman at the edge of a well, and she had a silver comb with gold ornament. She was washing in a silver basin on which were four birds of gold, and bright little gems of purple carbuncle on the chasing of the basin. She wore a purple cloak of good fleece, held with silver brooches chased with gold, and a smock of green silk with gold embroidery. There were wonderful ornaments of animal design in gold and silver on her breast and shoulders. The sun shone upon her, so that the men saw the gold gleaming in the sunshine against the green silk. There were two golden tresses on her head, plaited in four, with a ball at the end of every lock. The color of her hair was like the flower of the iris in summer or like pure gold after it has been polished. She was undoing her hair to wash it, so that her arms were out from beneath her dress. White as the snow of one night were her hands, and her lovely cheeks were soft and even, red as the mountain foxglove. Her eyebrows were as black as a beetle's back. Her teeth were like a shower of pearls. Her eyes were as blue as the hyacinth, her lips as red as Parthian leather. High, smooth, soft, and white

were her shoulders, clear white her long fingers. Her hands were long. White as the foam of a wave was her side, long and slender, yielding, smooth, soft as wool. Her thighs were warm and smooth and white; her knees small and round and hard and bright. Her shins were short and bright and straight. Her heels were even and lovely. If a rule had been laid upon her feet it would hardly have shown any imperfections in them, unless it should crease the flesh or the skin. The blushing light of the moon was in her noble face, a lofty pride in her smooth brow. The radiance of love was in her eyes; the flush of pleasure on her cheeks, now red as a calf's blood and changing again to snowy whiteness. There was gentle dignity in her voice. Her step was firm and graceful. She had the walk of a queen. She was the fairest, loveliest, finest that men's eyes had seen of all the women of the world. They thought she was of the fairies. Of her it was said: "All are lovely till compared with Étain. All are fair till compared with Étain." '

The king asked whether he might be her lover, and she said that it was for that she had come. He asked her name, and she told him that she was Étain, daughter of Étar, king of the Eochraige from the fairy mounds. She had been sought by many and had refused them for love of Eochu, for she had loved him always for his fame and beauty, although she had never seen him.[29] Eochu paid her a fitting bride-price and promised to give up every other woman for her sake.

Then Eochu Feidlech died, and Cormac Conn Longes of the Ulstermen married Étain. He had a daughter by a former wife, and Étain demanded that the child be killed. Two slaves were sent to bury the child in a pit, but it laughed as they carried it, and their fierceness failed them. They hid the girl in a byre, and she grew to be a good seamstress, and no king's daughter in Ireland was fairer than she.

Eterscéle, king of Ireland, heard of that and sent for the girl; for he was childless, and it had been prophesied that a woman whose family was unknown would bear him a son. But mean-

29. Cf. the love of one unseen (*adrstakāma*) in Hindu tradition. It is a commonplace of Irish legend known as *grád écmaise*.

while one night she saw a bird coming toward her through the skylight. He laid aside his birdskin and came to her and possessed her. He said: 'They are coming from the king to destroy your house and bring you to him by force. And you shall be pregnant from me and shall bear a son, and that boy may not kill birds, and Conaire shall be his name.' Mes Buachalla was the girl's name.

Then Mes Buachalla was brought to the king, and she bore him a son, Conaire son of Mes Buachalla. When Eterscéle died, a bull-feast was held by the Men of Ireland. 'They used to kill a bull, and a man used to eat his fill of it and drink the broth, and a spell of truth used to be sung over him as he lay. The man he would see in his sleep would be king, and he would die if he should tell a lie.'

Conaire was in the plain of Life (Liffey), playing with his foster-brothers, when his foster-fathers came to summon him to the bull-feast. The man saw in his sleep a naked man coming at dawn along the road to Tara with a stone in his sling. Conaire set out in his chariot, and on the way he saw some huge birds and pursued them. The birds put off their birdskins and attacked him with spears and swords; but one of them protected him and explained that he must not cast at birds for they were his own kin. He should go to Tara, for he would be king as a result of the bull-feast.

Conaire went on naked to Tara, and three kings were waiting on each of the four roads to Tara with clothes to cover him. He was received as High King.

The bird-man had warned Conaire that there would be a restraint of 'observance' (*airmitiu*) upon him as king, and the observance was to be as follows: 'Birds shall be privileged, and this shall be your observance always: you shall not pass Tara on your right hand and Bregia on your left; you shall not hunt the crooked beasts of Cernae; and you shall not stay abroad from Tara for nine nights; and you shall not spend the night in a house from which firelight is visible outside after sunset and into which one can see from outside; and three red men shall not go before you into a red (*derg*) man's house; and plunder shall

not be taken during your reign; the visit of one woman shall not come into your house after sunset; and you shall not settle a quarrel between two of your subjects.'

There was abundance of peace and happiness and fair weather in Ireland during the reign of Conaire. But his foster-brothers murmured because they had been used to plunder. They made three thefts from one man each year, a pig and a calf and a cow, to see whether they would be punished and what harm it might bring upon the king's reign. Conaire failed to punish them, and they became unruly and began to lead bands of marauders. They and their companions were exiled to Scotland, where they joined forces with Ingcél of the One Eye, son of the king of the Britons. One night in a raid they killed Ingcél's father and mother and his seven brothers. Then the reavers all set out for Ireland to win a plunder for Ingcél in reward for the plunder he had won.

Conaire went into northern Munster to settle a dispute between the two Corpres, who were his foster-brothers. He made peace between them, but it was a *geis* for him; and he stayed five nights with each of them and that, too, was a *geis*. On his way back to Tara he came by Uisnech and found the whole country in an uproar and the territory of the Ui Néill a blaze of fire. He was told that law had broken down and the country was being burned.

> ' "What way shall we go?" said Conaire. "Northeast," said his people. The way they went was to the left of Tara and to the right of Bregia, and he hunted the crooked beasts of Cernae and did not see it until he had finished hunting them. That was a king whom evil spirits exiled from the world, for terror confused them then, and there was no way that they could go save by Slige Midluachra and Slige Chualann. Then Conaire said, as he was on Slige Chualann: "Where shall we go tonight?" "May I say, Conaire," said Mac Cécht, champion of Conaire son of Eterscéle, "that the Men of Ireland have sought your hospitality at night more often than you have been seeking for a guest-house?" "Fruit comes in season," said Conaire.'

They made for the hostel of Ua Derga, which lay ahead, and on the way Conaire saw three horsemen in front. Their shirts and cloaks were red, their shields and spears were red, their horses were red. They were all red, even their teeth and hair, both horses and men. They went before him to the house. 'All my *gessa* have overtaken me tonight!' said Conaire.

Meanwhile, the reavers, led by Ingcél and the sons of Donn Désa, landed in Ireland. The noise of the hundred and fifty boats as they came to land shook Ua Derga's Hostel so that the weapons fell from the racks. Conaire was asked to explain the noise. 'I cannot explain it unless it is the earth being rent, or the Leviathan which encircles the globe[30] striking with its tail to overturn the world, or the ship of the sons of Donn Désa that has come to land. Alas that it was not they! They were affectionate foster-brothers to me. They were a beloved company. We should not fear them tonight.'

Then Conaire came onto the lawn of the hostel and went in. They all sat down, and the three red men sat down with them. Ua Derga came to welcome them; and while they sat there they saw a woman come to the door after sunset, asking to be let in. Her shins were as long as a weaver's beam and as black as smoke. Her mouth was in her check. She leaned against the doorpost of the house and cast an evil eye on the king and his companions. The king asked, since she was a seer, what she foresaw for him. 'I see for you,' she said, 'that neither skin nor flesh of you will escape from the house to which you have come, save what the birds will take in their claws.' 'What do you want?' said Conaire. 'Whatever you like,' said she. 'It is a *geis*

30. This conception of Leviathan as a serpent coiled around the earth appears also in Snorri's Edda: *þat var Miðgarðsormr, er liggr am lǫnd oll* (Gordon, *Introduction to Old Norse*, p. 16, l. 382). Professor Theodore Silverstein has kindly supplied me with a reference to the Pseudo-Bede (ninth century), *De mundi constitutione liber: 'Alii dicunt Leviathan animal terram complecti, tenetque caudem in ore suo* (Migne, *PL*, Vol. CX, col. 884). The notion of a serpent coiled around the earth, not however identified with Leviathan, appears in the Coptic gnostic work, *Pistis Sophia*, trans. Horner (London, 1924), p. 160. It was no doubt borrowed by the Irish from a medieval Latin text and may have passed from Ireland to Norway. The immediate source may be the Pseudo-Bede quoted above, but the remoter source appears to be rabbinical. Rashi, the famous commentator on the Bible, says that Leviathan is coiled around the earth (see Max Grünbaum, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, p. 129).

for me,' said Conaire, 'to receive a woman after sunset.' 'Though it be a *geis*,' said she, 'I will not go until I have received hospitality tonight.' 'She answers roughly,' said Conaire. 'Let her in, although it be a *geis* for me.'

The reavers were approaching the hostel. Its doors always stood open, and a great fire had been kindled for Conaire. The light of the fire shone through the spokes of the wheels of the chariots that were drawn up outside.[31] Ingcél asked what was the great light. 'I cannot say, unless it is a fire for a king.' Ingcél went forward to spy upon the hostel and came back with news to his companions.

(Now there follows a long and tedious passage in which Ingcél describes the warriors and others whom he has seen in the hostel, and they are identified by the Irishmen. In the course of it, most of the events of the battle are foretold, so that, when the raid actually begins, the end comes quickly.)

The reavers attacked the hostel and sounded their cry. 'Listen!' said Conaire. 'What is this?' 'Warriors around the house,' said Conall Cernach. 'There are warriors here to meet them,' said Conaire. 'We shall need them tonight,' said Conall Cernach.

Conaire killed six hundred before he could reach his weapons. Three times the hostel was set on fire, and three times the fire was quenched. After he had taken his weapons, Conaire killed six hundred more. But the druids that were with the reavers put a magic thirst on him and took away the water from the rivers and lakes of Ireland. He asked for a drink. All the water in the hostel had been used to quench the fire, so Mac Cécht set out in search of water. He searched the rivers and lakes of Ireland, and at last he found water in Uarán Garaid in Mag Ai,[32] for it could not hide from him.

Mac Cécht reached Ua Derga's Hostel before dawn, and as he approached the house he saw two men beheading the body of Conaire. He killed one of them, and the other ran off with the head. But Mac Cécht hurled a stone pillar after him and killed

31. Thus the last of Conaire's *gessa* was violated.

32. The plain around Croghan, County Roscommon. Uarán Garaid seems to be a spring or river.

him too. Then he poured water into the head and the trunk, and the head said: 'Mac Cécht is a good man, Mac Cécht is a brave man, he gives a drink to the king and does the work of a warrior.' Then Mac Cécht went in pursuit of the enemy.

Only nine men fell with Conaire, but of the reavers only five escaped out of five thousand.

Conall Cernach had received a hundred and fifty wounds in his shield arm. He went to the house of Amairgin, his father, and met him at the gate of the inclosure at Teltown.

> ' "Fast dogs have hunted you, son," said his father. "It was a struggle with warriors, old soldier," said Conall Cernach. "What news of Ua Derga's Hostel? Is your lord alive?" "No," said Conall. "I swear the oath of my people, it is a coward who comes out of it alive and leaves his lord dead in the hands of his enemies." "My wounds are not white, old soldier," said Conall. He showed him his shield arm. But his right arm was torn to shreds, for the shield had not protected it. "That arm gave wounds tonight, son," said Amairgin, "and received wounds." "That is true, old soldier," said Conall Cernach. "Many a man got a drink of death tonight at the gate of the hostel." '

II

The Fenian Cycle

THE second heroic cycle is named from the *fiana*, whose adventures it relates. The word *fian* means 'a band of warriors,' and we know that there were such bands of adventurers in Ireland as early as the sixth century. One troop of them went to Britain in 603 to help the Irish king of Scotland, Aedán mac Gabráin, against the Angles.

In the literature three leaders of *fiana* are mentioned—Finn mac Cumaill, Fothad Canainne, and Ailill Flann Bec; but only Finn and his companions became famous. Finn's company comprised two factions, Clann Baiscne, to which he himself belonged, and Clann Morna, whose champion, Goll mac Morna, had slain Finn's father, Cumall, at the battle of Cnucha (Castleknock, near Dublin). The chief heroes of the former, besides Finn, were his son Oisín (MacPherson's Ossian), Oscar son of Oisín, Cailte son of Rónán, and Diarmait (the prototype of Tristan), whose beauty no woman could resist. Conán the Bald, the buffoon of the sagas, was a brother of Goll and belonged to Clanna Morna.

Fenian tradition has received a good deal of attention from scholars in recent years,[1] and something may be said here about the interpretations which they have suggested. Van Hamel regards the Fenian legends as a 'paradigmatic' tradition, examples of heroic conduct calculated to inspire heroism and so protect the country but having also the quality of protective magic. His idea is not quite clear to me, as the 'paradigmatic' purpose

1. A. G. van Hamel, 'Aspects of Celtic Mythology,' *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, XX (1934), 207; M.-L. Sjoestedt, *Dieux et héros celtiques* (Paris, 1941), pp. 109–10; T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), pp. 271–72, 318–19.

seems to be overshadowed by the magical element: 'The myth is not merely an anthropomorphic fiction, but a precedent fraught with magical energy' (p. 209). But one notion emerges clearly, namely, that the pagan Irish had no gods and revered an ideal hero. Finn is the Irish counterpart of the Welsh Arthur.

Mlle Sjoestedt develops the notion of the hero in a very interesting study. She lays stress upon the initiation rites of the Fenians. They were required to know the twelve traditional forms of poetry and to submit to certain physical ordeals. When these requirements had been fulfilled and the warrior had been admitted to the *fian* as a *féinid*, he passed out of his family and became *écland*, 'a kinless man.' An opposition emerges between Cú Chulainn as hero of the tribe and Finn as hero outside the tribe; and the ideal of Fenian life is found expressed in the story told by Cailte about a division of Ireland between Tuathal Techtmar and Fiacha, the sons of Feradach Fechtnach, king of Ireland. Tuathal took the treasures and the cattle and the forts and villages; Fiacha took the rocks and estuaries, the fruits and fish and game. ' "Those two shares are not equal," said the nobles of Ireland. "The share which you think the worse," said Cailte, "is the one that we should prefer." '[2] The life of wild nature is the choice of the *fiana*.[3]

O'Rahilly maintains that 'Finn is ultimately the divine Hero, Lug or Lugaid, just like Cúchulainn. . . . . Finn's rival, Goll ("the one-eyed"), who was also called Aed ("fire") is the sun-deity, who was also the lord of the Otherworld. The enmity between Finn and Goll mac Morna is but another version of the enmity between Lug and Balar and between Cúchulainn and Goll mac Carbada' (pp. 278–79). O'Rahilly sees in the Fenian tradition the reflection of an ancient belief in the conflict between a hero and the lord of the Other World, in which the hero is victorious.

However the legends may be interpreted, there are some points of contrast between the two cycles which are mere mat-

2. *AS*, ll. 2468–83.

3. There is a parallel in the later Christian idea of the hermitage as expressed in the story of Guaire and his brother Marbán (p. 157).

ters of fact but worthy of mention here, as they are pertinent to the discussion, although none of the scholars cited seems to attach much importance to them. First, there are differences of time and place. The Fenian Cycle is traditionally assigned to the third century A.D. at the threshold of the historic period, three hundred years later than the Ulster Cycle. It is located mainly in Leinster and Munster, whereas Ulster and Connacht are the scene of most of the earlier sagas. Thus it represents southern and eastern tradition, and its gradual spreading may well be connected with the rise of the Dalcassians of Munster, who were closely associated with the kingdom of Leinster, and the decline of the ancient dynasty of the Ui Néill, who had held the high kingship of Ireland for five hundred years until the usurpation of Brian in 1002. Then there is a difference in manuscript tradition, and, perhaps connected with this, there are contrasts in the form and temper of the literature. While a few of the texts relating to Finn can be dated to the Old and early Middle Irish period,[4] it is in the late Middle Irish period that the Fenian Cycle becomes prominent. The temper of the Fenian Cycle might be characterized as romantic rather than epic. The heroic tradition is, for the most part, preserved not in the vivid narrative which brings the reader close to the action, but rather as the record of a glorious past, the fierce joy of paganism as it was remembered in a rather melancholy Christian present. The whole saga has been Christianized to some degree. Finally, the characteristic form of the Fenian Cycle is the ballad, and a great amount of extant Fenian literature consists of Modern Irish ballad poetry. We have thousands of lines of verse in which one or another of the warriors recounts the joys and sorrows and heroic deeds of Finn and his companions. There are, however, a number of prose tales as well, the most famous of which, 'The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne,' is discussed below.[5]

4. See Meyer, *Fianaigecht*. These early texts (eighth to eleventh centuries) do not differ in temper or form from those of the Ulster Cycle.

5. I make no account here of contemporary folklore, which includes a great number of prose tales. The Ulster Cycle seems to have disappeared from the folklore of Ireland.

There is a curious legend concerning the wisdom of Finn which may be given first place. It occurs in a text called *Macgnímartha Finn* ('The Boyhood Feats of Finn'), most of which derives from traditions about Cú Chulainn's boyhood. It is preserved in Laud 610 (fifteenth century) and dates from the twelfth century.

The battle of Cnucha[6] was fought between Cumall and Urgriu of the Luaigni. Dáire the Red, whose other name was Morna of the Crooked Neck, fought on the side of Urgriu. Morna had a son Aed, who had lost one of his eyes in combat with Luchet, so that he was called Goll ('one-eyed'). Goll killed Cumall in the battle, but Cumall's wife was pregnant and bore a son. The boy was taken away from his mother and reared secretly in the forest for fear of the warriors of the Luaigni[7] and the sons of Morna. His first name was Demne, but later he was called Finn ('fair' or 'white').

When Finn had grown to manhood he went to a certain poet to learn the art of poetry,[8] for without it he dared not stay in Ireland for fear of the son of Urgriu and the sons of Morna. The poet had waited seven years on the Boyne for the salmon of Linn Féic, which would bring all knowledge to him who should eat it. He caught the salmon and gave it to Finn to cook, bidding him not to eat any of it.

> 'The lad brought him the cooked salmon. "Have you eaten any of the salmon, lad?" said the poet. "No," said the lad, "but I burned my thumb and I put it into my mouth afterwards." "What is your name, lad?" said he. "Demne," said the lad. "Finn is your name, lad," said he, "and it is to you that it has been given to eat the salmon and you are the true Finn." Then the lad ate the salmon. That is what gave knowledge to Finn, when he used to put his thumb into his mouth

6. Castleknock, County Dublin. The story of the battle is preserved in the *Book of the Dun Cow*.

7. The story is discussed in relation to the Perceval theme by L. Mühlhausen, *ZCP*, XVII, 9 f. Finn was killed by the Luaigni of Tara at Brea on the Boyne, according to one tradition (see *Aided Finn*, ll. 69–75; Meyer, *The Battle of Ventry*, p. 75).

8. The person of a poet was sacred (see below).

and chant by means of *teinm laeda* ["chewing marrow"][9] and whatever he did not know used to be revealed to him. He learned the three things which make a poet sacred, *teinm laeda* and *imbas forosndai* and *díchetal di chennaib*.[10] It was then that Finn made this poem proving his poetic skill:

> Summer time, season supreme! Splendid is color then. Blackbirds sing a full lay if there be a slender shaft of day.'[11]

The predominance of the Fenian Cycle in the literature begins with the composition, *ca.* A.D. 1200, of a long story called *Acallam na Senórech* ('The Colloquy of the Old Men'), which is second only to the *Táin* in length. The early recension, which breaks off unfinished in the manuscripts, makes some eight thousand lines in Stokes's edition. In form it is a frame-story like the *Arabian Nights* or the *Decameron*, the framing story here being an account of the meeting of the survivors of the Fenians with St. Patrick. Cailte wanders over Ireland with the saint and tells him the legends of the hills and woods and lakes to which they come, in the manner of the *Dinnshenchas*. Sometimes they separate, and Cailte travels alone or with Conall mac Néill, king of Ulster. He meets with kings and saints and warriors and even encounters some of the ancient gods. Some of the tales he tells to his various hosts belong to the mythological or historical cycles, but they are mostly of the high deeds of Finn and the Fenians.

ACALLAM NA SENÓRECH

The Colloquy of the Old Men

The text is preserved in the *Book of Lismore*, Laud 610 (both fifteenth century) and in a Dublin manuscript of the seventeenth century. It dates from the twelfth century.

The *Acallam* begins with a time when the last survivors of the Fenians, Oisín and Cailte with a few companions, are wandering in desolation. Oisín soon retires to join his mother in a fairy mound, and Cailte goes on alone. He comes to Inber Bic Loing-

9. For this rendering see T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), p. 336.

10. Three means of divination (see N. K. Chadwick, *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, IV [1935], 97).

11. The poem is quoted in full below, p. 159.

sig 'which is now called "The Monastery of Drogheda" ' (this gives us a superior date, for Drogheda was founded in A.D. 1142), and south across the Boyne to Druim Dearg, where St. Patrick was. Their conversation begins well:

> ' "Was he not a good lord with whom you were, Finn mac Cumaill that is to say?" Upon which Cailte uttered this little tribute of praise: "Were but the brown leaf which the wood sheds from it gold—were but the white wave silver—Finn would have given it all away." "Who or what was it that maintained you so in your life?" Patrick asked. And Cailte answered: "Truth that was in our hearts, and strength in our arms and fulfilment in our tongues."

. . . . . .

'Patrick said again: "Well, Cailte, my soul, what was the best hunting that the Fenians ever had in Ireland or in Scotland?" "The hunting of Arran," said Cailte. "Where is that?" said Patrick. "Between Scotland and Pictland," said Cailte, "and we used to go there with three companies of the *fianna* on Lammas Day, and we would get plenty of hunting there until the cuckoo called from the treetops in Ireland. And sweeter it was than any music to hear the cry of the birds there, as they rose from the waves and coasts of the island. Thrice fifty flocks of birds frequented it, of every color, blue and green and grey and yellow." And Cailte sang a lay:

> "Arran of the many stags,
> The sea strikes against its shoulder
> Isle where companies are fed,
> Ridge on which blue spears are reddened.
>
> Skittish deer are on her peaks,
> Delicious berries on her manes,
> Cool waters in her rivers,
> Mast upon her dun oaks.
>
> Greyhounds are there and beagles,
> Blackberries and sloes of the dark blackthorn,
> Her dwellings close against the woods,
> Deer scattered about her oak-woods.

Gleaning of purple upon her rocks,
Faultless grass upon her slopes,
Over her fair shapely crags
Noise of dappled fawns a-skipping.

Smooth is her level land, fat are her swine,
Bright are her fields,
Her nuts upon the tops of her hazel-wood,
Long galleys sailing past her.

Delightful it is when the fair season comes;
Trout under the brinks of her rivers,
Seagulls answer each other round her white cliff,
Delightful at all times is Arran!" '

[trans. Kuno Meyer]

St. Patrick travels south and west through Ireland, and Cailte explains the names of the places they visit and tells stories of the exploits of the Fenians. They come into Munster and stand on a hill called *Finntulach* ('White Mound'), and St. Patrick asks when the hill got its name. Cailte answers that it was from there the Fenians set out to fight the battle of Ventry and that Finn gave the hill its name that day. Many of the Fenians, including Finn himself, were killed in the battle. Cailte tells that when the Fenians were on their way to fight the battle of Ventry against the Foreigners, they met Cael, a young warrior of Finn's people, who had seen a beautiful girl named Créde in a dream and had set out in quest of her. The Fenians turned aside from their expedition and joined him on his quest. Créde was the daughter of the king of Kerry, and could be won only by a man who was poet enough to praise her treasures worthily in verse. Cael won her, for his fairy nurse had given him a poem; and Créde joined the Fenians on their journey. On the last day of the battle Cael was slain, and his body was washed up from the sea, 'so that Cael's strand is the name of that shore ever since.' The beasts whose life-span were joined to his died at his death. And Créde came and lay beside his body, and here is Créde's lament for Cael:

'The haven roars over the angry surf of Rinn Dá Barc: the wave against the shore laments the drowning of the warrior of Loch Dá Chonn.

Plaintful is the crane from the marsh of Druim Dá Thrén: she cannot protect her loved ones, the fox of Dá Lí pursues her nestlings.

Sad is the note of the thrush in Dromkeen, and sad the music of the blackbird in Letterlee.

Sad is the cry of the stag in Druim Dá Léis: the doe of Druim Síleann is dead, and the stag of Díleann laments her.

Sorrowful for me was the death of the warrior who used to lie beside me: the son of the woman from Doire Dá Dos, who lies today with a cross at his head.

Sorrowful for me that Cael lies dead beside me: the wave washes his white side; it is his beauty that has left me senseless.

Sad is the voice of the ebbing wave against the strand, for it has drowned a noble, comely man; alas that he went to meet it!

Sad is the sound of the wave against the beach to the north, breaking over a white rock, weeping for Cael that he is gone.

Sad is the fighting of the wave against the beach to the south: as for me, my day is done, I have lost my beauty.

The strong wave of Tulach Léis makes a heavy spray: as for me, I have nothing, since it proclaimed the tidings that it tells.'

Sometimes the narrative has an Arthurian flavor, as in the repeated mention of generosity as a quality of the Fenians, the *largesce* which, for Chrétien de Troies, was the chief of knightly excellences, or when Cailte discovers two women in distress because their husbands have abandoned them, and he provides

them with a love-charm (*SG*, p. 125 = *AS*, l. 952), or when he delivers Eogan Flaithbrugaid from the reaver (*SG*, p. 148 = *AS*, l. 1868). Sometimes we are reminded of the voyage tales, as in the story of Clidna (*SG*, p. 198 = *AS*, l. 3726) or of the visits to the Other World, as in those of Sliab na mBan (*SG*, p. 222 = *AS*, l. 5001) and Assaroe (*AS*, l. 6789, *SG*, *om.*). It is entirely Christianized, and we are told repeatedly that Finn foretold the coming of St. Patrick and made an Act of Faith before his death. This is introduced rather absurdly for the edification of the fairies (*SG*, p. 147 = *AS*, l. 1825). There is a great deal of legend not found elsewhere, and the compiler seems to have used the opportunity to record whatever he could find of the old tradition. The *Acallam* is undoubtedly a deliberate compilation by a single unknown author, from sources now probably in great part lost. But the question of its sources has not been investigated; it is closely related to the *Dinnshenchas*.

The temper of the *Acallam* is cheerful, in spite of Cailte's loneliness and decrepitude and his regard for the heroic past. St. Patrick and the kings enjoy his stories, and heaven is promised him for himself and Finn and the other warriors whom he praises. But in the later ballad version both saint and hero become caricatures, and a different sort of humor appears. Here Patrick is a bigoted cleric, pronouncing the doom of hell upon the Fenians, and Cailte or Oisín the defiant pagan. If Finn is in hell, they say, then God is a poor judge of men. Finn would not have treated God so harshly. Better to be in hell with Finn than in heaven with pale and flimsy angels; and, as for the devil and his torments, the Fenians can take care of themselves. There is something here of the anticlerical humor which inspires the fantastic 'Vision of Mac Con Glinne,'[12] which Meyer attributed, indeed, to the twelfth century, and Brian Merriman's amazing 'Midnight Court,' written toward the end of the eighteenth century. But I prefer to quote the ballad of the 'Blackbird of Derrycarn':

12. See p. 143.

'Sweet is that, Blackbird of Derrycarn,
I have never heard in any place
Music that was sweeter than your voice
As you sit at the bottom of your nest.

The sweetest music in the world,
Wretched is he who does not listen to it,
O son of Calprann of the sweet bells—
And you may sing your psalms later on!

If you knew as I do
The story of the bird,
You would weep bitterly,
You would pay no heed to God for a while.

In Norway of the blue streams
The son of Cumall, whose cups were of gold,
Found the bird you see now:
That is its story surely.

Derrycarn is that wood in the west
Where the Fenians used to stay:
The blackbird was placed there
Because of the beauty and pleasantness of its trees.

The song of the blackbird of Derrycarn,
The lowing of cattle from Faill na cCaer
Is the music to which Finn slept at sunrise,
And the call of the wild duck from the Lake of Three
Fords.

Grouse around the hill of Cruachain,
The whistling of the badger of Druim Dá Loch,
The voice of the eagle of Gleann na fFuath,
The cry of the cuckoo of Cnoc na Scoth;

The baying of the dogs of Gleann Cain,
And the scream of the blind eagle of the chase,
The cry of the hounds in the morning
Returning from the beach of red stones.

When Finn and the Fenians lived
They held dearer the mountains than the church:
Sweet to them were the blackbird's notes,
The ringing of bells was not sweet.'

There are a number of modern Irish prose tales, among them *Feis Tighe Conáin* ('The Feast of Conán's House'), *Bruidhean Bheag na hAlmhaine* ('The Little Brawl at Allen'), *An Bhruidhean Chaorthainn* ('The Hostel of the Rowan Tree'), *Cath Gabhra* ('The Battle of Gabhra'), and *Cath Finntrágha* ('The Battle of Ventry'); but the great prose tale of the Fenian cycle is the 'Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne.'[13] A version of this story must have existed as early as the tenth century, for it is mentioned in a document of that time; but the surviving version is Modern Irish, and the earliest manuscript belongs to the seventeenth century.

Gráinne was the daughter of Cormac mac Airt, king of Ireland, and was wooed by Finn; but, like Deirdre in the Ulster story, she fled from the old man with Diarmaid, and she, too, caused the death of her lover. According to early tradition, Gráinne was already wedded to Finn when she fell in love with Diarmaid. Finn divorced her and was expelled from Tara. Later he was permitted to return, and he wooed and won Ailbe, another daughter of Cormac. But the tradition that Diarmaid and Gráinne eloped and lived in the forest is old too, for the title, *Aithed Gráinne ingine Corbmaic la Diarmait ua nDuibni* ('The Elopement of Gráinne Daughter of Cormac with Diarmaid Grandson of Duibne') occurs in a tenth-century list of sagas; and, while this story has not been preserved in an early form, there is a text of the tenth century, called *Uath Beinne Étair* ('The Cave of Benn Étair'), which describes an episode of their flight from the vengeance of Finn.

It is clear that the story of Gráinne is a variant of the story of Deirdre, the tragedy of a young girl betrothed to an old man and of the conflict between passion and duty on the part of her

13. These modern stories make less use of verse than do the early ones, and when verse is introduced, it is mere ballad poetry which repeats the prose narrative.

lover. In both cases death is the price of love. It has been shown by Gertrude Schoepperle that these two stories represent the Celtic source of the story of Tristan and Isolt, and that 'The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne' preserves a number of motifs which recur in French and German versions of the great romance.[14]

TÓRAIGHEACHT DHIARMADA AGUS GHRÁINNE[15]

The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne

One day Finn rose early in the morning and sat alone on the green lawn at Almhain. Oisín and Diorruing followed him, and Oisín asked why he was up so early. Finn answered that he was without a wife since the death of Maighnéis daughter of Garadh Glúndubh son of Morna, and a man without a worthy wife was not wont to sleep well. 'Why are you in that state?' said Oisín. 'For there is not a woman in Ireland on whom you would set your eye that we would not bring to you by favor or by force.' Diorruing said that he knew a girl worthy of Finn, Gráinne the daughter of Cormac son of Art. Finn sent the two warriors to Tara to ask Cormac for Gráinne. Cormac said that she must decide for herself, and he brought the warriors to the sunroom which he had built for Gráinne.[16] Gráinne's answer was that if Finn was worthy to be Cormac's son-in-law he was worthy to be her husband; and Cormac consented and invited Finn to come to Tara a fortnight from that day.

Finn assembled the seven battalions of the regular *fian* and went to Tara. Cormac was on the lawn to welcome them, with the chiefs and nobles of the men of Ireland, and he brought

14. *Tristan and Isolt* (London, 1913). This book provides the documentation for the great article by Gaston Paris, 'Tristan et Iseut,' *Revue de Paris*, April, 1894, p. 138. Thurneysen has shown that the Irish saga of Cano son of Gartnán presents another parallel (*ZRP*, XLIII, 385). Here even the name of the old king, Marcán, coincides with French tradition.

15. The summary is based upon O'Grady's edition (*Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, Vol. III [1857]), the source of which is not stated by the editor. This text is not satisfactory, but there is no other published. An interesting oral version is available in *SG*, II, 83, where references to Scottish oral versions will be found.

16. This is the famous Sunroom of the Single Pillar (see my *Cycles of the Kings* [London: Oxford University Press, 1946], p. 58).

them into the banquet hall. Finn was seated at the king's right hand. The other guests sat each according to his rank and inheritance. A druid who sat in front of Gráinne arose and chanted poems in praise of her ancestors. Gráinne asked the druid why Finn son of Cumall had come. 'If you do not know,' said the druid, 'it is no wonder that I do not know.' 'I want to learn it from you,' said Gráinne. 'Well,' said the druid, 'he has come here to ask for you to be his wife.' 'I wonder,' said Gráinne, 'that Finn does not ask me for Oisín, for it would be fitter to give me such as he than a man who is older than my father.' And she asked the druid the names of the fenian warriors she saw at the banquet—Goll, Osgar, Caoilte, and Mac Luighdheach. 'Who is that freckled man of fair words,' said she, 'with curly black hair and ruddy cheeks, on Oisín's left hand?' 'That is Diarmaid Ua Duibhne of the white teeth and radiant look,' said the druid, 'the best lover of women and girls in all Ireland.' 'It is a goodly company,' said Gráinne.

Gráinne called her maid and bade her bring a gold cup. She filled it and told the maid to bring it to Finn and say that she had sent it. Finn drank, and at once he fell asleep. Then Cormac and the queen and Cairbre son of Cormac drank and fell asleep, and everyone who drank from the cup fell fast asleep. Gráinne got up from where she was sitting and sat between Oisín and Diarmaid. First she asked Oisín would he accept her love, and he said that he dared not accept a girl who had been promised to Finn. Then she asked Diarmaid, and he, too, refused her. 'Then,' said Gráinne, 'I put you under *gessa* of destruction, Diarmaid, unless you take me from this house tonight before Finn and the kings of Ireland arise from their sleep.' She told him that she had seen him one day playing hurley on the lawn of Tara and that she had loved him ever since and would never love any other.[17]

Diarmaid asked Oisín what he should do, and Oisín said he must observe the *gessa*. Osgar said the same, 'for he is a wretch-

17. According to the oral tradition, Diarmaid had a 'love-spot' on his forehead, and any woman who saw it fell in love with him. He wore a cap to cover it, but his cap fell off at the game, so that Gráinne saw the magic 'love-spot.'

ed man who violates his *gessa*.' Caoilte said that, although he had a good wife, he would prefer Gráinne to the wealth of the world.

Then Diarmaid took leave of his companions, and he and Gráinne set out westward from Tara to Athlone and across the Shannon into Clanrickarde until they came to a forest. They went into the forest, and Diarmaid made a house there with seven doors to it.

Finn went in pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne; and Oisín, Osgar, Caoilte, and Diorruing were along with him; but they tried to protect Diarmaid against the vengeance of Finn. As they came near the forest where he was hiding, Osgar sent Bran, Finn's hound, to warn him of danger, and Bran came and laid his head on Diarmaid's breast. Diarmaid understood the warning, but he would not try to escape, and Gráinne was much afraid.

Then it was revealed to Aonghus of the Bruigh, Diarmaid's divine foster-father, that his foster-son was in danger; and he came to the forest to the place where Diarmaid was hiding and offered to take him and Gráinne away. Diarmaid allowed Gráinne to go with Aonghus but refused to go himself, for Gráinne had compelled him to elope with her against his will. Aonghus took Gráinne under his cloak and went his way until he came to Ros Dá Shoileach, which is now called Limerick.

Finn and his companions arrived at the hut and Diarmaid went to one of the seven doors and asked who was there. 'No one here is an enemy of yours,' they said, 'for Oisín son of Finn is here and Osgar son of Oisín, and the chiefs of Clann Baoisgne with us; and come out to us, and none will dare to harm you.' 'I will not go out,' said Diarmaid, 'until I find the door at which Finn is waiting.' He went to each door in turn, and from all but one he got a friendly answer. At the seventh door he found Finn himself, and there he leaped out over the door and over the heads of the Fenians and escaped through the forest. He followed the track of Aonghus and Gráinne and came to Ros Dá Shoileach. When Gráinne saw him come, her heart was in her mouth for joy.

Aonghus left them then, but he warned Diarmaid never to go into a cave to which there was only one entrance or to an island to which there was only one approach, not to eat food where he cooked it or to sleep where he ate it. Diarmaid and Gráinne traveled on, with the Shannon on their right until they came to the river Laune. There he killed a salmon and cooked it, but they went across the river to eat it, and from there they traveled westward before they slept. But Diarmaid kept himself from Gráinne, and he had left uncooked meat in the hut as a sign to Finn that he had not sinned with Gráinne, and he had left seven uncooked salmon on the bank of the Laune.

The Green Fenians came from the sea to attack Diarmaid, and he overcame them in many encounters. (The episode is told at length, and various wonderful feats of Diarmaid are introduced.)

Then Diarmaid and Gráinne returned eastward to Ros Dá Shoileach, which is now called Limerick, and turned northward by Sliabh Echtghe[18] and into the cantred of Ui Fhiachrach. As Gráinne walked beside Diarmaid, some muddy water splashed onto her leg, and she said: 'Diarmaid, though you are brave in battle, I find that the splashing water is more daring than you are.' 'That is true,' said Diarmaid, 'and although I have kept myself from you for fear of Finn, I cannot endure your reproaches any longer. It is hard to trust a woman.' Then for the first time Diarmaid Ó Duibhne made a wife of the king of Ireland's daughter. They went into the forest, and Diarmaid built a hut there; and that night he slew a deer, and they both ate and drank their fill of meat and spring-water.

The next day Diarmaid went to the Surly Norseman and got his permission to hunt freely, provided he never touched his magic berries.[19] But when Gráinne learned of the berries, she longed for them, for she was pregnant, and she demanded that

18. Slieve Aughty in County Clare.

19. The Surly Norseman (*Searbhán Lochlannach*) was a giant with one eye in the middle of his forehead, who guarded a quicken tree, the berries of which had magic powers. He who had eaten three berries was free from all sickness, and if he were a hundred years old, he would be as though he were but thirty.

he break his pact. Diarmaid asked for the berries and was refused. There was only one weapon with which the giant could be killed, an iron club which was attached to a ring that he wore around his waist. But Diarmaid contrived to wield the club and killed the giant. Then he and Gráinne ate of the berries and climbed into the tree; and the berries below were bitter in comparison with the berries above.

Finn came in pursuit, and he stopped under the tree in which Diarmaid and Gráinne were hiding. He and Oisín began to play chess. 'They were playing cleverly, and Finn turned the game against Oisín so that there was only one move open to him. "There is one move that will win the game for you, Oisín," said Finn, "and I challenge all those around you to show you that move." Then Diarmaid said so that Gráinne heard it: "I am sorry, Oisín, when you cannot see that move, not to be able to show it to you." "It is worse for you, Diarmaid," said Gráinne, "to be in the Surly Norseman's bed at the top of the quicken tree, with the seven battalions of the Fenians around you, seeking for your life, than for Oisín to be without a move." Diarmaid plucked one of the berries and dropped it on the piece to be moved. Oisín moved that piece, and so won the game against Finn.'

Three games were played, and each time Diarmaid dropped a berry on the piece to be moved, so that Oisín won the game. Finn knew who was at work and called upon Diarmaid to show himself. In answer Diarmaid arose, took Gráinne in his arms, and gave her three kisses in the presence of all the Fenians. Finn's men attacked him. Aonghus came to help him as before and carried Gráinne away to Bruigh na Bóinne. Diarmaid leaped from the tree over the heads of his enemies and escaped; and he followed Gráinne to the Bruigh.

After further adventures in which Finn attempted to capture Diarmaid, Aonghus made peace between them. Cormac gave his other daughter to Finn, and Diarmaid and Gráinne settled peacefully at Ráith Gráinne in Céis Chorainn.[20] Gráinne bore four sons to Diarmaid, and they lived in peace for a long time,

20. In County Sligo.

and people used to say that there was no man in his time more prosperous than Diarmaid.

One night as Diarmaid lay asleep he was awakened by the cry of a hound on the scent. Gráinne persuaded him to lie still, but again and a third time he heard it, and he arose to follow it. Gráinne warned him of danger. He went to Ben Gulben and found Finn alone on the mountain. The Fenians were hunting the wild boar of Ben Gulben, and Diarmaid was under *gessa* never to hunt a pig. Finn told him of his *gessa*,[21] but Diarmaid would not abandon the hunt, and Finn left him alone on the mountain. Diarmaid foresaw his doom and remembered Gráinne's warning. When the boar attacked him, his weapons were useless against it, and he was mortally wounded. Finn and the Fenians came up and found him dying. This was the vengeance of Finn. 'I am glad to see you so,' said Finn, 'and it is a pity that the women of Ireland cannot see you now, for you have exchanged beauty for ugliness.' Diarmaid reminded Finn that he could heal him if he would, for a drink from the hands of Finn had the power of healing. Finn refused at first, and Diarmaid reminded him of many services he had done. Osgar pleaded with Finn, and he went to fetch water; but as he came from the well, he let the water flow through his fingers when he remembered Gráinne. Twice he did this, and the third time, when he came with the water, Diarmaid was dead.

Gráinne lamented Diarmaid and exhorted her sons to avenge him. Aonghus came to fetch the body of his foster-son and brought it to Bruigh na Bóinne.[22]

Not all the ballads are in the form of a dialogue with St. Patrick. Many of them tell merely the adventures of the Fe-

21. Finn explains the *gessa*. Diarmaid's father, Donn Ó Donnchadha, had killed the child of a certain steward named Roc, and Roc changed the dead child into a pig and put *gessa* on it, that its life should last as long as Diarmaid's and that Diarmaid should be killed by it.

22. In the manuscripts the end of the story varies. Sometimes Gráinne exhorts her sons to vengeance; sometimes she is said to mourn Diarmaid until her death; sometimes she is finally reconciled to Finn (see *RC*, XXXIII, 161, n. 2). There is no satisfactory edition of the text, and the earliest manuscript is still unedited. The folk tradition differs widely. Here Gráinne is often presented as a lewd woman, Diarmaid as a chaste hero; and when his chastity has been proved, Gráinne is buried alive.

nians; and there is one connected with this story which may be quoted here. It is a sleep-song sung by Gráinne for Diarmaid during their flight:

'Sleep a little, just a little, for you need not fear a little,
boy to whom I have given my love, Diarmaid son of
Ó Duibhne

Sleep soundly here, noble Diarmaid:
I shall keep watch for you, beautiful son of Ó Duibhne.'

She remembers others who slept soundly when in danger, and then thinks of being perhaps separated from Diarmaid:

'To separate us is to separate two children of one home,
to separate body and soul, warrior from the lake of Carman.

The hound of Caoinche will be loosed upon your track;
Caoilte will run well.
May neither death nor evil overtake you, to send you to
sleep forever!'

The animals around them sense danger. They do not sleep:

'The stag in the east does not sleep; he does not cease to
call:
even though he is in the forest, he has no thought of
sleep.

The lively music does not cease in the twisted branches
of the trees;
they are noisy there: even the thrush is not asleep.

Tonight the grouse does not sleep, in the deep rough
heather;
sweet is the note of his clear voice: amongst the streams
he does not sleep.'

Fenian ballads are found in scores of manuscripts and may still be heard in Scotland and in Ireland from traditional seana-

chies. The most important collection is in the manuscript known as *Duanaire Finn* ('The Poem-Book of Finn'), which has an interesting history. It was written in Ostend and Louvain in 1626 and 1627 by two scribes, for Captain Sorley O'Donnell, probably one of the Wild Geese, a soldier of fortune on the Continent. The Irish Franciscans had a convent at Louvain then, as they have again now, and the scribes may have been friars. The manuscript returned to Louvain, if, indeed, it was ever delivered to O'Donnell; and during the French Revolution it was transferred with the Louvain collection to St. Isidore's in Rome. In 1872 these manuscripts were sent to the Franciscan Convent in Dublin, where they are now preserved.

III

The Mythological Cycle

THE mythological cycle is not well preserved in the literature. In the sagas of the Ulster and Fenian cycles there are references to supernatural beings who are imagined as dwelling in fairy mounds. Some of these sites are actually prehistoric burial mounds, notably the famous Bruig na Bóinne, now known as New Grange, in County Louth; others are natural formations. The beings themselves are called *síde* (pl.), while *síd* (sing.) is the word for a fairy mound. The king of these fairies is the Dagda ('The Good God'). Oengus Mac Óc is a son of the Dagda and dwells in Bruig na Bóinne. Another son Bodb lives in Síd al Femen in County Tipperary. Midir, husband of the beautiful Étain, lives in Brí Léith ('Mound of the Gray Man') near the village of Ardagh (County Longford). Manannán mac Lir ('Son of the Sea') reigns in the Isle of Man. (He appears in Welsh tradition as Manawyddan fab Llyr.) Núadu Airgetlám ('Silver Arm') is apparently a patron of fishing, Díancécht a patron of healing. Lug mac Ethnenn ('Son of Ethniu'), also called Lug Lámfada ('Long Arm'), is the god whose name is widely known over Celtic-speaking territory in the place-name Lugdunum. He is the divine father of Cú Chulainn. Besides Étain, the wife of Midir, may be mentioned Fand ('The Gentle One'), the wife of Manannán and daughter of Aed Abrat ('Fire of the Brow'), and Lí Ban ('Beauty of Women'), wife of Labraid Lúathlám ar Chlaideb ('Swift Hand at Sword'). Donn is the god of the dead and dwells in Tech Duinn ('Don's House'), an island off the coast of Kerry. Bres mac Elathan, Echaid Íuil, Eogan Inbir, Failbe Find, Riangabar,

whose son Loeg is Cú Chulainn's charioteer, and Senach Siaborthe are among other fairy beings whose names occur. Cú Roi is not of this company but is a sort of wizard, lord of Cathair Con Roi, the mighty stone fortress now known as Cahirconree on the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry. These beings do not appear as gods in the accepted sense. They are not adored or served by sacrifice or otherwise. They are supernatural beings with magic powers, who sometimes interfere in the affairs of men.

In the pseudo-history of the monasteries and in the later sagas, these gods or fairies are called Tuatha Dé Danann ('peoples of Dé Danann'). Thurneysen suggests that the name *Dé Danann* first belonged to three mythical beings—the brothers Brían, Iuchair, and Iucharba. How the others came to be called their 'people' remains obscure. In the sagas they are sometimes called *Fir tri nDea* ('Men of the Three Gods') (*RC*, XII, 76, § 60) and the 'Three gods of Danu'[1] are mentioned (*ibid.*, p. 82, § 83). The historians taught that Ireland was inhabited by the Tuatha Dé Danann before the Irish came. There was a race of giants, the *Fomoire*, who were enemies of the Tuatha Dé. They lived on islands and came in ships over the sea.

Much of this tradition is recorded in the *Dinnshenchas*, or 'History of Places,' and the *Cóir Anmann*, or 'Fitness of Names,' learned compilations of the Middle Irish period; it also appears in the account of the Tuatha Dé Danann and Fomorians in the *Lebor Gabála*, or 'Book of Invasions.' This is a fictitious history of Ireland from the earliest times down to the coming of Christianity, which Thurneysen has declared to be, in its extant form, mainly a prose redaction of the 'historical' poems of Gilla Caemáin († 1072).[2] It makes tedious reading but is important because it was regarded as authoritative by native historians down to the seventeenth century.[3] It will not be further consid-

1. Dānu is the mother of Vṛtra in the *Rig-Veda* (see A. MacDonnell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 158).

2. For the dating of the *Lebor Gabála* see Gwynn, *Metr. Dinds.*, V, 110; T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), p. 193, n. 2.

3. It is now being edited for the first time by R. A. S. Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, Vols. I–IV (Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1938–41). A summary of the account of the Tuatha Dé Danann is given in IV, 98–105.

ered here. Only the sagas of the cycle concern us, and they are not many.

The ancient list of tales in the *Book of Leinster* preserves a few titles of mythological stories now lost. Of those which have come down to us, four are early in their extant form: 'The Taking of the Fairy Mound' (*De Babáil int Sída*), 'The Dream of Oengus' (*Aislinge Oenguso*), 'The Wooing of Étain' (*Tochmarc Étaine*), and 'The Battle of Moytura' (*Cath Maige Tured*). Four others have been preserved only in late Middle Irish or Modern Irish recensions: 'The Battle of Moytura at Cong,' 'The Nourishment of the Houses of the Two Cups' (*Altram Tige Dá Medar*), 'The Fate of the Children of Tuirenn' (*Oidheadh Clainne Tuireann*), and 'The Fate of the Children of Lir' (*Oidheadh Clainne Lir*), of which the last seems to be a comparatively modern invention.

'The Taking of the Fairy Mound' is a mere anecdote, too brief in its extant form for recitation before an audience, which tells how Oengus, son of the Dagda, persuaded his father to bestow his dwelling at Bruig na Bóinne upon him for a day and a night. When the Dagda claimed it back, Oengus explained that 'day and night' means 'forever'; and so Oengus remained lord of the place. It is described as a wonderful country. Three fruit trees are always in fruit. There is a roast pig and also a vat of fine liquor, which never diminish. This description corresponds to those of the Other World beyond the sea, to be considered later. Beyond the sea or beneath the fairy mounds, it was apparently the same.

'The Dream of Oengus' tells of a mysterious sickness of Oengus, which can be cured only by the love of a girl whom he has seen in a dream. It is the motif of some of the best of the early sagas—*Echtra Conli*, *Echtra Cormaic*, *Imram Bran*, *Serglige Con Culainn;* but in all of those the lover is human.[4] Here Oengus himself is smitten. At the request of the Dagda, Bodb discovers the girl. She spends one year in human form and the next in the form of a swan. For some reason not stated, Oengus waits to approach her until she has become a swan. He then goes in human

4. These tales are discussed in chap. v.

form to the lake, where he has been told to find her and calls her to him. She will come only if he promises to allow her to return to the lake. Oengus agrees. He puts his arms around her and changes into a swan himself. They fly round the lake together three times, so that his promise is not broken, and she stays with him.

The story of Oengus and the Bruig occurs in a different form in 'The Wooing of Étain,' which is one of the two principal surviving tales of the cycle, the other being 'The Battle of Moytura.' There are indeed three stories about Étain, but they form a sequence and appear so in the two manuscripts that contain them. She is the mother of the Étain whom Etarscéle saw washing at the well and who became the mother of Conaire according to one tradition.[5] In this tale she is at first the wife of Midir, and the dearest, gentlest, loveliest in Ireland; and then after a thousand years she is reborn as a human and becomes the wife of Echaid Airem, king of Ireland, but she returns with Midir to fairyland. There is a strange beauty here which perhaps no other Irish story shares. The temper of love is there and the power of magic—this is a pure fairytale—and a happy ending. And the form is unique, for it is one story in three episodes, a comedy in three acts.

TOCHMARC ÉTAINE

The Wooing of Étain

The text is preserved in the Phillipps leaves from the *Yellow Book of Lecan* and in a fragmentary state in *The Book of the Dun Cow*. It dates from the ninth century.

I. The Dagda wins the love of Boann, wife of Elcmar, who in this story is lord of the Bruig. She bears him a son, Oengus, and he is sent to Midir at Brí Léith to be fostered. He is called *In Mac Óc* 'The Young Son,' for his mother said 'Young is the son who was begotten at the break of day and born between it and evening.' (The Dagda had sent Elcmar on a journey and had bewitched him so that nine months seemed only a day; and on his return his wife had recovered from her sickness.)[5a] When Oengus discovers that the Dagda is his father, he goes to claim

5. See pp. 25, 57.

5a. Cf. the legend of Amphytrion.

acknowledgment and a grant of land. The Dagda instructs him to surprise Elcmar by force and extort a promise of the lordship of the Bruig for a day and a night, and to hold it against him until Elcmar submits the case to him for decision. The decision is in favor of Oengus, for 'it is in days and nights that the world is spent.'[6]

Midir visits Oengus, and, in satisfaction for an injury he suffers at the palace, he demands the fairest maiden in Ireland. She is Étain daughter of Ailill, king of the northeast. Oengus goes to ask her from her father, but he demands a high price. Twelve plains must be cleared for his people and twelve rivers made to water the plains and bring up fish from the sea, and for himself he must have her weight of gold and silver. All this is provided, with the Dagda's help, and the beautiful Étain becomes the wife of Midir; and for a year they stay at the Bruig.

Midir returns home with Étain. Fuamnach, his first wife, a dreadful, cunning woman, strikes Étain with a quicken rod and changes her into a pool of water. The water turns into a worm, the worm into a purple fly of wonderful size and beauty. Its music is sweet, and the air is fragrant around it. The fly attended Midir and went with him as he went, and he knew that it was Étain. Fuamnach drove her away by creating a magic wind which carried her out onto the rocks and waves of the sea, and for seven years she was in misery. Oengus found her and rescued her, but again Fuamnach drove her off; and this time she came to rest on the roof of a house in Ulster and fell into the cup of one of the women in the house. The woman, wife of Étar of Inber Cichmaine, swallowed her, and she was reborn as Étain daughter of Étar. It was a thousand and twelve years from the time of her birth as daughter of the fairy Ailill to the time of her birth in the house of Étar.

II. When Eochaid Airem became king of Ireland, the people refused to pay tribute to a king that had no queen. He sent out messengers to find the loveliest girl in Ireland. She was Étain daughter of Étar, and he married her. His brother Ailill fell sick

6. This is the subject of a poem of Cinaed Ua Hartacáin, still unpublished (*LL*, 208*b*1–209*b*46).

with love of her, and none could cure him. Eochaid went on his royal circuit of Ireland, leaving Étain to attend to his dying brother, so that his grave might be dug, his lamentation made, his cattle slain. One day when they were together, Ailill confessed to Étain the cause of his sickness, and she said that she was willing to heal him with her love but not in her husband's house. She appointed a tryst on the hill above the inclosure, but each night for three nights a magic sleep overcame Ailill at the appointed hour, and each night a man like Ailill came in his stead. It was Midir of Brí Léith, seeking his lost wife.

On the third night Étain questioned the stranger, and he revealed himself and told her that she had once been his wife in fairyland and that he had paid a great bride-price for her in plains and rivers and gold and silver. He asked her to go with him, but she would not leave her husband without his consent. When she returned to the palace, Ailill was healed of his sickness, and they rejoiced that her honor had not suffered.

III. On a lovely summer day Eochaid climbed onto the terrace of Tara to gaze over the plain. A handsome stranger approached. He was Midir of Brí Léith. 'I know you not,' said the king. 'But I know you,' said the stranger. He invites the king to play chess and brings out a silver board with golden men. They play for a stake, and Eochaid wins. Next morning at sunrise the prize of fifty grey horses with enameled reins is on the plain at Tara, and Midir is there again. 'What is promised is due,' he says. Three times they play, and each time Eochaid wins and exacts great prizes from Midir. The fourth time they play for a stake to be named by the winner, and Midir wins the game. 'What would you have from me?' said Eochaid. 'My arms around Étain and a kiss from her,' said Midir. Eochaid was silent. 'Come a month from today, and that shall be given you.'[7]

A month from that day, Eochaid had assembled warriors around him, and the doors were locked. But Midir appeared in the banqueting hall. He was fair at all times, but on that night he was fairer. 'What is promised is due,' he said. Eochaid per-

7. Yudhiṣṭhira staked his wife Draupadī upon the dice and lost her (*Mahābhārata* [Poona ed., 1944] ii. 58. 31–43; cf. 'The Adventure of Cormac,' p. 110).

mits him to take his prize. Midir embraces Étain and rises with her through the roof of the house. They fly away in the form of two swans.

Eochaid and his men resolve to dig up every elf mound in Ireland until Étain is restored to him. First they attack Síd al Femen, the home of Bodb, because it was in that direction that the swans were seen to fly. Failing to find her there, they turn against Brí Léith. Midir comes before them and promises to restore Étain. On the next morning fifty women appear at Tara, all like Étain in form and dress, and Eochaid is in doubt which one to choose.[8] Étain is the best at serving drink of all the women of Ireland, so the women are set to serve drink from a vessel placed in the middle of the hall. It came to the last two women. One of them poured out first. 'This is Étain,' said Eochaid, 'and it is not herself.' 'Truly it is Étain, though it is not her serving,' said they all. And the other women went away. But it was not Étain. Midir came later, and, having bound Eochaid to peace, he told him that Étain was pregnant when she came from Tara and that the girl he had chosen was his own daughter. But she had already lain with him and soon bore him a daughter. Eochaid said: 'I and my daughter's daughter shall never look on one another.' And the child was cast out and left in a dog kennel at a herdsman's house. The herdsman and his wife found the lovely child in the kennel. They reared her, without knowing who she was; and she prospered, for she was the daughter of a king and queen. Her eyes saw nothing that her hands could not embroider. One day Etarscéle's people saw her and told the king. He took her by force and made her his wife. So she is the mother of Conaire son of Etarscéle.

This brings us to the opening chapter of the story of "Ua Derga's Hostel," which has already been discussed and belongs to another cycle. But there the herdsman's fosterling, Mes Buachalla, is not identified with Étain.

The chief saga of the mythological cycle, however, is 'The Battle of Moytura,' for it tells with much circumstance of the

8. So Damayantī had to choose Nala from among the gods who had assumed his likeness (*Mahābhārata* [Poona ed., 1941] iii. 54. 10–25).

victory of the Tuatha Dé Danann over the Fomorians, and many of the leaders on both sides are introduced. Though it is preserved only in a manuscript of the sixteenth century, the language is early, perhaps ninth or tenth century, and the matter is genuine pre-Christian tradition. Its value, however, is rather mythological than literary, for the narrative is rambling and formless and has been used as an occasion for recording lists of names and miscellaneous fragments of mythology.[9]

CATH MAIGE TURED

The Battle of Moytura

The Tuatha Dé Danann were in the northern islands of the world learning the arts of heathendom, and there they obtained the four treasures: the Lia Fáil, a stone which used to scream under every king of Ireland when he was inaugurated; the spear of Lug; the sword of Nuada; and the Dagda's Cauldron. They made an alliance with the Fomorians, and Balor gave his daughter Ethne to Cian son of Diancécht, of the Tuatha Dé, and a son was born to them, Lug of the Long Arm.

The Tuatha Dé then came to Ireland with a great fleet to seize it from the Fir Bolg, who dwelt there at the time. They burned their boats on the beach so as to have no thought of escape, and from the smoke of the great fire it was thought that they had descended upon the country in a cloud. They fought the Fir Bolg at Moytura and were victorious, and the Fir Bolg retired into the islands of Arran and Islay and Man and Rathlin. But Nuada, the king, lost his arm in the battle, so that Diancécht made him a silver arm. He was now unfit to be king, and the kingdom was given to Bres son of Elatha, whose father was a Fomorian and whom they had adopted. His mother was of their own people. Bres oppressed the people and allowed the Fomorians to exact tribute from them. Ogma was made to carry firewood and the Dagda to build earthworks. Bres did not grease the knives of his guests, and their breaths did not smell of ale. The people complained and called upon him to surrender the

9. The text has not yet been critically examined. It has been most recently discussed, with a translation, by Father Gustav Lehmacher, *Anthropos*, XXVI (1931), 435.

kingship. He asked for a respite of seven years, which was granted under guarantees, and Bres departed to the land of the Fomorians to raise an army. Balor, king of the Isles, and Indech, king of the Fomorians, assembled their hosts from Lochlann westward to Ireland, and they made a bridge of ships from Inse Gall to Ireland. Never came to Ireland a host more horrible than that host of the Fomorians.

A long digression follows in which the preparations of the Tuatha Dé are described. A curious passage tells of the coming of Lug to the court, where Nuada again reigns as king.[10] Lug is here called *Samildánach* ('possessing many arts together'). The doorkeeper asks him what art he practices 'for none enters Tara without an art.' Lug says: 'I am a carpenter.' 'We do not need one; we have a carpenter.' Lug says: 'I am a smith.' 'We have a smith.' Lug says: 'I am a champion.' 'We do not need one; we have a champion.' Lug claims to be harper, hero, poet, historian, sorcerer, leech, cupbearer, and brazier, and bids the doorkeeper ask the king whether he has any man who possesses all these gifts. If so, the stranger will not seek admittance. Nuada orders that he be tested in the game of chess, and the stranger wins the game. 'That was told to Nuada. "Let him into the inclosure," said Nuada, "for never before has a man like him come into this fort." ' And Nuada decided to intrust him with the defense of Ireland. Lug sent the Dagda to spy upon the Fomorians and to delay them until the men of Ireland were ready for battle. The Dagda visited their camp and asked for a truce. They agreed, but compelled the Dagda to eat an immense meal of porridge in which goats and sheep and swine were the trimmings, and he staggered away, barely able to walk. He encountered a daughter of Indech, who promised to use her magic against her own people.

The Fomorians advance to battle. The Tuatha Dé are assembled, and Lug asks the various craftsmen what magic powers they have. Goibniu the smith, Diancécht the leech, Credne the brazier, Luchta the wright, Ogma the champion, and Morrígan,

10. A similar episode occurs in the Welsh story of Kulhwch and Olwen (J. Loth, *Mabinogion*, I, 252).

a witch who is usually associated with slaughter in battle, all are questioned and promise their help. Likewise, the cupbearers, sorcerers, druids, witches, Cairpre, the satirist, and the Dagda himself say what they will do against the enemy.

Now comes the account of the battle, with shouting of warriors and clashing of shields. Many are slain, but the Tuatha Dé have a magic well into which dead and wounded are thrown, and they emerge restored. The Fomorians discover it and close it with a heap of stones. Lug and Balor of the Poisonous Eye meet in the fray. 'He had an evil eye. It was opened only on the battlefield. Four men used to raise the lid from the eye with a peg.[11] An army that he looked upon through that eye could not resist in battle though they were many thousands. The way in which the poison came to it was this. His father's druids were making a magic brew. He came and looked out of the window, and the steam of the brew went into it, so that the poison of the brew was in it ever afterwards.' Balor's eyelid is raised, but Lug is ready for him and casts a stone from his sling which knocks the eye out through the back of his head. It is thus turned upon the Fomorians themselves, and twenty-seven of them fall dead beside it. The Fomorians flee to their ships; and the slain are as many as the stars of heaven, the sand of the sea, the flakes of snow, the drops of dew on the grass, the crested waves in a storm. Finally, the she-demon, Morrígan daughter of Ernmas, proclaims the victory to the royal heights and fairy hosts of Ireland and to the chief lakes, rivers, and estuaries. She prophesies the end of the world and the plagues and punishments and misfortunes that will take place.

There is another story entitled 'The Battle of Moytura of Cong' commonly known as 'The First Battle of Moytura,' which narrates the victory of the Tuatha Dé over the Fir Bolg, referred to at the beginning of the saga we have just considered. The text is later than the other and is clearly a mixed one, but it has not been studied in detail. The early part derives from the same sources as the Book of Invasions, according to which the

11. Cf. the eyes of Yspaddaden Penkawr, the lids of which had to be raised with forks (Loth, *Mabinogion*, I, 299).

Fir Bolg and the Tuatha Dé are different branches of the family of Nemed. The second part of the story describes the friendly meeting of the two parties after the Tuatha Dé arrive in Ireland and their subsequent dispute about the division of the country between them.

In the first encounter the Tuatha Dé are defeated and flee eastward. For four days the battle goes on. Each day's fighting is described at length, and the fortune of war is changing. On the fourth day Sreng of the Fir Bolg cuts off the arm of Nuada with a stroke of his sword; but first Aenguba from Hiruaith and then the Dagda come to his rescue, and he is carried from the field attended by fifty warriors with their leeches. The Tuatha Dé fight bravely without their king. Brian, Iuchair, and Iucharba, the three sons of Tuirell Bicreo (elsewhere they are the three *Dei Danann*, the 'three gods') defeat three of the enemy who oppose them. Eochaid, king of the Fir Bolg, is seized with a consuming thirst and leaves the field in search of water, but the druids of the Tuatha Dé hide from him the streams and rivers of Ireland.[12] The three sons of Nemed follow him, and Eochaid and the sons of Nemed are slain.

After another day and night both sides are exhausted. Nuada asks the Dagda how many they have lost, and the Dagda replies in a long poem which repeats the incidents already told. On the sixth day the Fir Bolg renew the attack. Nuada is challenged to single combat by Sreng and asks that Sreng fight with his right arm bound to his side, so that they may meet on equal terms. Sreng answers that they met on equal terms when Nuada lost his arm and that he is not bound to this restriction. The Tuatha Dé decide to offer Sreng his choice of the provinces of Ireland, provided that peace and friendship be established. Sreng chooses Connacht, and the Fir Bolg retire there. The Tuatha Dé elect Bres as their king, and he reigns for seven years.

The sons of Tuirill Bicreo are the heroes of another story, 'The Tragic Death of the Children of Tuireann (Tuirill),' which has come down to us only in a modern version, although it ap-

12. In 'The Destruction of Ua Derga's Hostel' Conaire is seized with thirst and searches Ireland for water (p. 30).

pears to contain very old tradition. Brian, Iuchair, and Iucharba kill Cian, the father of Lug, and Lug lays tasks upon them in eric for his father's death. These take the form of quests for various treasures, all of which they obtain, and the performance of a certain dangerous feat which costs them their lives. It is curious that these personages, elsewhere the gods of the Tuatha Dé, should be presented as victims of the vengeance of Lug. And *Oidhe Chlainne Tuireann* is not a mere invention by some sixteenth-century writer, for Thurneysen has edited an interpolated passage from the Book of Invasions which is the summary of an earlier and more primitive version of the story, dating in its extant form perhaps from the eleventh century.[13] Here, indeed, there is no mention of the death of the three, and we may suppose that they satisfied justice by means of their great power as gods and were reconciled to Lug. I shall not here supply an analysis of the story, as it is not of primary importance or of great literary value. The folklorist, however, should not neglect it. Another modern romance tells of the four children of Lir of Síd Finnachaid. O'Curry observed (*Atlantis*, III, 390) that he had never seen the theme in any early text, and no early reference has since been recorded. It appears, then, to be a modern invention, perhaps by the same author who composed the story just referred to and the modern form of the Deirdre story. These three are often combined in manuscripts under the title 'The Three Sorrowful Stories' (*Trí Truaighe na Sgéalaigheachta*), which may have been given them by this unknown author, perhaps in the fifteenth or sixteenth century. But the question has not been investigated. Strange to say, although the story is well known, perhaps on account of Moore's *Song of Fionuala*, there is as yet no satisfactory edition of the text. It is brief and is worth our attention. The narrative is simple and pathetic, without much artifice. It lacks the magic and the emotion of some of the earlier sagas, but no one with a sense for a good folktale will fail to enjoy it.

13. *ZCP*, XII, 239.

OIDHEADH CLAINNE LIR

The Tragedy of the Children of Lir

After the Battle of Tailtiu, in which the Tuatha Dé were defeated by the Milesians (i.e., the Irish of later times), they assembled in one place from every part of the five provinces of Ireland and decided to choose a king; for they preferred to be subject to one king of their own people rather than to different kings of the Milesians throughout the country. Those who hoped for election were Bodb, son of the Dagda, Ilbrec of Assaroe, Lir of Síd Finnachaid, Midir of Brí Léith, and Oengus Óc, son of the Dagda. But Oengus did not desire it greatly, for he preferred to be as he was than to be king of the Tuatha Dé.[14] Bodb was elected on account of the virtue of his father and because of his own virtue and because he was the eldest son of the Dagda.

Lir was offended by this choice, and he left the assembly without taking his leave of the others. They proposed to follow him and burn his house as a punishment for this misbehavior, but Bodb dissuaded them. Lir's wife died, and he fell into despondency; and Bodb proposed a reconciliation by offering Lir one of his foster-children in marriage, for the three daughters of Oilioll Árann had been fostered at his house at Loch Deirgdeirc. Lir chose Aeb, the eldest of the three, and returned with her to his dwelling, where a wedding feast was held. Aeb bore him twins, a son and a daughter, Aed and Fionnguala ('Fire' and 'Whiteshoulder'). She became pregnant again, and again she bore twins, two sons, Fiachra and Conn; but she died at their birth. Lir was again despondent and found comfort only in his children. Bodb gave him Aoife, a sister of Aeb, and they were married, and Aoife honored and loved her sister's children.

Bodb often visited Lir for love of the children, and often they used to go to his palace. When the Feast of Age was held at Lir's dwelling, the four children were the delight and entertain-

14. The notion that Lug was independent of the Tuatha Dé appears in 'The Tragic Death of the Children of Tuireann' (see Macalister, *Béaloideas*, I, 15). Here Oengus seems to be so presented (cf. p. 113).

ment of all. They used to lie on couches beside their father, and he would get up early in the morning to be with his children.

Aoife grew jealous of Lir's love for the children, and she pretended sickness and lay for almost a year as though sick; and she planned their destruction. One day she set out with them, as though to visit Bodb, and Fionnguala did not wish to go, for she had a foreboding of evil; but she could not escape her doom. When they had gone some way, Aoife said to her people: 'Kill the children of Lir, because their father has ceased to love me. I shall reward you as you desire.' 'No,' said they, 'We will not kill them. It is evil to think of such a deed, and worse to speak of it.' Then Aoife sought to kill them herself with a sword, but her womanly nature prevented her. They came to Lake Derryvaragh, and she told the children to bathe in the lake. When they were in the water, she struck them with a magic wand and changed them into swans.

Fionnguala reproaches Aoife and foretells her ruin. She asks her to fix a term to the curse that she has laid upon them, and Aoife says that it will last until a woman from the south shall be joined to a man from the north, namely, Lairgrén son of Colmán, king of Connacht, and Deoch daughter of Fíngein, king of Munster.[15] Since Fionnguala has asked for a term, no power of the Tuatha Dé can lift the curse until they have spent three hundred years on Lake Derryvaragh and three hundred years by the Mull of Cantyre in Scotland and three hundred years in Erris and around Inishglory. But Aoife relents, and, since she cannot undo the curse, she grants the swans certain qualities. They shall have the power of speech and the gift of singing, so that no music in the world shall be equal to it; and they shall have their senses and faculties. They shall suffer no anguish in being in the form of swans. She speaks a lay in which the curse is repeated, and she laments the anger of Lir which she has now brought on herself.

Aoife goes to Bodb's dwelling. He asks for the children, and she replies that Lir will no longer intrust them to Bodb. He

15. He was present at the assembly of Druim Cett in A.D. 575, according to Keating, *Foras Fessa ar Éirinn*, III, 82.

sends messengers to Lir, and Aoife's treachery is discovered. Bodb changes her into a demon, and she must wander through the air in this form forever. He and the Tuatha Dé come to the shore of the lake and stay listening to the music of the swans. And the Men of Ireland, too, come from every part to listen to the swans, so that for three hundred years the Tuatha Dé and the Men of Ireland were by Lake Derryvaragh; and the swans conversed with them during the day and sang them to sleep at night. And all who heard that music slept peacefully, though they were sick or in trouble. All were happy after hearing the music.

At the end of that time Fionnguala says that it is time to go. She says farewell to Bodb in a short poem, and the swans fly away to the Mull of Cantyre. That lonely sea is a place of hardship for them, and their sufferings are described. They are scattered by a storm in winter, and Fionnguala laments in verse their misery and remembers the happiness of the past. All night she waits alone on the Rock of Seals, and in the morning she sees Conn approaching wet and weary. Then Fiachra comes, and she warms him under her wing; and she says: 'If only Aed would come, we should be without complaint.'

By day they visit the shores of Ireland or Scotland and at night they return to Mull. One day when they are in the mouth of the river Bann, they see horsemen approaching. These are the two sons of Bodb with a third of the fairy host, who have been in search of them. They bring tidings of the Tuatha Dé. Lir and Bodb are well, and all are now assembled at Síd Finnachaid for the Feast of Age, peaceful and happy except for the sorrow because of the absence of the four children of Lir. Fionnguala replies in a poem lamenting their fate. The people of Lir are happy, but his children have a cold dwelling place. They have exchanged satin for the feathers of swans. The white sand and the sea water are their food instead of the mead of the hazel tree. Once they enjoyed the instruction of Manannán, the conversation of Bodb, the sweetness of the kiss of Oengus.

At the appointed time Fionnguala says that they must go to Erris. They suffer great hardship there for a long time. One

night was the worst of all, when the sea froze from Erris to Achill. Fionnguala lamented their misery:

> 'Sad is the cry of the swans tonight. It is an ebb or a drought that has caused it: no cool water beneath them, their bodies waste from thirst.
>
> No firm supporting water, no wave washes their sides. The pleasant sea has frozen so that it is smooth as a board.
>
> O God, who made heaven and earth and delivered the six hosts, save, too, this flock. Even the strong become weak through suffering.'

' "Brothers," said Fionnguala, "believe in the God of truth, who made the heaven with its clouds and the earth with its fruits and the sea with its wonders, and you shall have help and comfort from the Lord." And they believed and received comfort and suffered no more from storm or bad weather.'

At the end of three hundred years they returned to Síd Finnachaid and found the site empty and deserted, without house or fire or dwelling. They uttered three cries of sorrow, and Fionnguala spoke a lay:

> 'Strange it is to see this place without house or shelter. My heart is sad from what I see.
>
> No dogs, no sporting hounds, no women, no stately kings. I never knew this place to be thus in my father's time.
>
> No drinking horns, no cups, no feasting within painted walls; no horsemen, no happy youths—
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Formerly this place was not left to grass and forest. All that we knew are dead, and we are here. It is strange.'

They returned to Inishglory and remained there until St. Patrick came to Ireland and Mo Chaemóc to Inishglory. One morning they heard the bell for matins. When the singing of matins was over, they sang their lovely song, and Mo Chaemóc heard

it and prayed that he might know who made such music. It was revealed to him. He took the swans, and he joined Fionnguala to Aed, and Conn to Fiachra with silver chains, and they stayed with him and were his delight, and they forgot all their suffering.

It was then that Lairgrén was king of Connacht, and Deoch, daughter of the king of Munster, was his wife. She heard the fame of the birds and desired them for herself, and Lairgrén came and seized them. But his violent act undid the magic which disguised them. They were changed back and appeared as three withered old men and an old woman.

Mo Chaemóc baptized them and they died; and they were buried, Conn on the right side of Fionnguala and Fiachra on her left, and Aed in front. And they went to heaven. And Mo Chaemóc was sad after they were gone.

There is another saga of this cycle, published only recently, which has attracted attention because it seems to provide a parallel to the French legend of the Holy Grail. The Irish title, *Altrom Tige Dá Medar*, may be rendered 'The Nourishment of the Houses of the Two Milk-Vessels.' The manuscript tradition is earlier than that of the story of the Children of Lir, for it is preserved in the *Book of Fermoy* (fifth century). The texts agree in some details of legend, and the later story may have borrowed from this one. Here, as above, the narrative begins with a reference to the Battle of Tailtiu, the election of Bodb as king, and the institution of the Feast of Age. Lir of Síd Finnachaid is of the company but plays no part in the story. One interesting mythological feature appears clearly, namely, that Manannán, while being lord over the Tuatha Dé Danann, is not one of them. He is, however, a foster-son of their erstwhile king, the Dagda. He dwells outside Ireland, as always in the cycle (here at Cruithín na Cuan in Emain Ablach), and belongs to the nobles of the Land of Promise. These people, who figure largely in the next chapter, appear to be higher in the order of supernatural beings than are the Tuatha Dé, who retired after the Battle of Tailtiu into the fairy mounds of Ireland. Nowhere else

in the cycle does this distinction emerge so clearly, and it seems to be an old tradition.[16]

ALTROM TIGE DÁ MEDAR

The Nurture of the Houses of the Two Milk-Vessels

Érimón had defeated the Tuatha Dé Danann at the Battle of Tailtiu, in which the three kings of Ireland—Mac Cuill, Mac Cécht, and Mac Gréine—were slain, and again at the Battle of Druim Ligean. Manannán came to advise them; and he bade them scatter themselves in the fairy mounds and in the hills and plains of Ireland. They chose Bodb as king, and Manannán appointed to them their dwellings in the fairy mounds: Bodb to Síd Buidb above Loch Dergirt, Midir to Síd Truim, Sigmall to Síd Neannta, Finnbarr to Síd Meada, Tadg Mór son of Nuada to Síd Droma Dean, Abartach to Síd Buide, Fagartach to Síd Finnabrach, Ilbrec to Síd Aeda Easa Ruaid (Assaroe), Lir son of Lugaid to Síd Finnachaid, Derg Dianscothach to Síd Cleitid. And he instituted the *feth fiada*[17] and the Feast of Goibniu and the Pigs of Manannán for the warriors—the *feth fiada* to make them invisible, the Feast to protect them against old age, the pigs to be killed for food and yet survive for their sustenance. And Manannán told them to lay out their fairy dwellings after the manner of the households of the Land of Promise, that is, Emain Ablach.

There was another magician in Ireland at the time, namely, Elcmar, son of Cairbre Crom, a brother of Sigmall. And Oengus Óc son of the Dagda was his fosterling. He invited Manannán to a feast at Bruig na Bóinne, and Manannán and the nobles of the Land of Promise and also the magicians of the Tuatha Dé assembled there. After three days of feasting, Manannán ordered the banquet hall to be cleared, so that he and Oengus

16. On this contrast between the people of the fairy mounds and the Land of Promise, see Windisch, 'Das keltische Brittanien,' *AKSGW*, XXIX, Phil.-Hist. Kl., VI (1912), 109–12; Loth, *Rev. Arch.*, XXIV (4th ser.; September–December, 1914), 223. Cf. below, p. 112.

17. The meaning of the term is obscure, but it is a name for the magic power by which the Tuatha Dé could make themselves invisible.

were alone. He then informed Oengus that he, Manannán, was king over all the kings of the Tuatha Dé and senior over their hosts and the author of their prosperity. He tells him that Elcmar is not destined to occupy the splendid palace of Bruig na Bóinne and that Oengus should expel him from it. And he teaches him a spell to that end, the same which drove the rebellious angels from heaven and the Fir Bolg from Ireland and which the Men of Ireland used against Manannán's people in their turn. Oengus asks: 'Is there a god over our gods?' 'There is,' said Manannán. 'The one omnipotent God who can overthrow our gods and whom our gods cannot harm, the powerful Lord who made heaven and earth, and the sea with its wonders, and all the four elements.' And he tells the reason for the creation of Man. The lord of the tenth order of angels rebelled against God, and those angels were expelled from heaven and changed into demons, and God created Man; and he takes into heaven those who obey him and sends those who oppose him to the prison prepared for the demons. 'But it is not of that I wish to speak. Take the advice I have given you.' Oengus agrees to expel Elcmar from the Bruig.

After Elcmar has been expelled, Oengus holds the feast for Manannán and for the Tuatha Dé. At the end of the feast he invites all present to send a child to him in fosterage. Manannán returns home, and his wife bears him a daughter, Curcóg. She and the other girls born at that time to the Tuatha Dé are sent in fosterage to Oengus. The wife of the steward of the Bruig bears a daughter, Eithne, who surpasses them all in beauty and virtue.

The fame of Eithne spreads abroad. Finnbarr comes to the Bruig to visit the girls, and when they are brought before him, he stares at Eithne and asks who she is, with an insulting remark.[18] Eithne blushes and goes away in tears. Oengus turns in anger against Finnbarr, who humbles himself before him, and

18. *Cé hí síud doní an suighi sála?* which Miss Duncan has rendered 'Who is that who is sitting on her heel?' This interpretation seems to me correct, as being capable of an obscene suggestion. The girls may be imagined sitting on the floor. Finnbarr stares at Eithne and makes a coarse joke about her posture.

they are reconciled. But from that moment Eithne will touch neither food nor drink. For seven days she fasts. Oengus offers her the milk of his dun cow and the use of a fine gold milk-vessel. She accepts if she may milk the cow herself. This was one of two marvelous cows which Manannán and Oengus had brought from India, with their gold vessels and silk spancels. They were in milk at all seasons of the year, and their milk had the taste of honey and the intoxication of wine. Manannán possessed the other, the brindled cow, and there were none like to them.

The news of Eithne reached Cruithín na Cuan in Emain Ablach and the nobles of the Land of Promise; and Manannán summoned Curcóg and her maidens, including Eithne, so that he might learn the cause of her trouble, for he recognized every sickness and knew the remedy for it. Eithne tells him that after the shame that was put upon her by Finnbarr, she could take no food save only the milk of the dun cows that she milked herself. That night Manannán prepares her food with his own hands, but it avails nothing; but she consents to drink the milk of his brindled cow, if she may milk it. Manannán diagnoses the case. She is no longer of the Tuatha Dé nor yet of the people of the Land of Promise. When Finnbarr insulted her, her guardian demon left her, and an angel took his place. She cannot touch their food, nor will she follow druidry or devilry ever more. She can take the milk because it comes from a righteous land, namely, India, and all men will speak of this nourishment, the Nurture of the Houses of the Two Milk-Vessels. And the Trinity of Three Persons will be her God.

So from the time of Érimón until the time of Laegaire son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, when Patrick came to Ireland, Eithne lived upon the wonderful milk, for a while with Oengus at the Bruig and another time at Emain Ablach with Manannán.

Once in the heat of the day Curcóg and her maidens went to bathe in the Boyne. When they went out of the water to dress, Eithne did not see them go, for the *feth fiada* had departed from her. This rendered them invisible to her and made her visible to

men. She came out of the river and put on her clothes and searched in vain for the other women. She came to a garden and saw a cleric at the door of a church with a book before him, praising the Lord.

Eithne tells the cleric her story, and he says that he is of God's people and that Patrick is his second lord. ' "To what people do you belong, girl?" said the cleric. "I was of the Tuatha Dé Danann until now," said she, "but your people shall be my people from this hour." ' Eithne bends over the book and reads it at once. The cleric catches a salmon, but it is only enough for one. Eithne bids him ask the Lord for her share. He fishes again and catches a marvelous salmon, which tastes of honey, and half of the half of it suffices them both.

Oengus sets out with Curcóg in search of Eithne. He visits every fortress in Ireland and comes at last to the Boyne. They see the hermitage across the river, and Eithne sees them. (It is not explained how she has recovered this faculty.) The hermit cannot see them. Eithne tells him who they are and says she will not go with them. In a poem she recounts her adventures and rejoices that Patrick has come to Ireland.

Patrick arrives at that moment at the hermitage, through the prayers of the hermit. Oengus demands his foster-child, and Patrick denies him. ' "If you would take my advice, Oengus," said he, "I should not oppose you about any just claim." "What is that?" said Oengus. "To adore the true God Almighty and to avoid false gods, and to be baptized in the name of the Trinity, and to change your name and be separated from punishment." "That is not the errand upon which we came," said Oengus.'

Oengus and his people departed, and they uttered a loud cry of anguish; and when Eithne heard that cry her heart was stirred, and she felt a pang of loneliness. She asked for baptism and pardon of her sins, and Patrick gave her that and gave her her own name. After a fortnight Eithne died, and her soul went to heaven, and they buried her with honor, and from her Ceall Eithne at Bruig na Bóinne is named.

St. Patrick ordained that no one should sleep or interrupt during the recitation of this story and that it should be told only

in the presence of a few good people, so that it be heard the more attentively; and he endowed it with many other qualities, as is told in the elegy that follows. (Here follows a poem in which St. Patrick tells the virtues which the story possesses for those who hear it: safety on a journey, good hunting, happiness and fertility in marriage, peace in a drinking bout, consolation for prisoners, and so forth.)[19]

The elegy, here called *marbnaid*, is widely known in various degrees of corruption among Irish-speaking people today and is called *Marainn Phádraig*. It is believed to be a prayer of great efficacy.

19. Cf. the *śravaṇaphala* ('reward for hearing a sacred text') in Hindu tradition; see H. Lüders, 'Die magische Kraft der Wahrheit im alten Indien,' *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, XCVIII (1944), 1.

IV

The Historical Cycles

THE Irish took great delight in the knowledge of the past, and it was the special duty of the great order of *filid*[1] to preserve that knowledge and be ready to recite from it before the assemblies and at royal banquets. They even constructed a history for Ireland from the Deluge down to the period of recorded history; and this fictitious learning is preserved in long historical poems, many of them still unedited, which were later expanded in the Book of Invasions. It figures also in the genealogical tables and lists of kings, of which many are extant, many still unpublished.

Apart from these learned works, the *filid* recorded history in another way, and it was not the Greek way. Their duty was to celebrate the heroic past rather than to narrate events of recent history; and they did it in stories, with the emphasis on the story rather than on the events, so that we have a blend of fact and fiction. Sometimes the annals serve to confirm a fact. Sometimes a historical person is made the hero of a tale that is pure mythology or legend. These historical tales may be grouped into cycles around the names of the kings who appear in them, and the boundary between legend and history cannot be fixed. The earliest figure is Labraid Loingsech, supposed to have been king of Leinster in the third century B.C., hero of the 'Destruction of Dinn Ríg'; the latest is Brian Bóramha, High-King of Ireland, 1001–14; and the mixture of fiction and fact varies with the period involved. This mass of historical tales is not negligible as a

1. See p. 149.

source for Irish history, and there are some seventy extant. But it is as literature that a selection from among them is presented here.

Labraid Loingsech

Labraid Loingsech, also called Labraid Moen or Moen Ollam, was a great-grandson, according to tradition, of Úgaine Mór, king of Ireland, and himself became king of Ireland *anno mundi* 4659 = B.C. 431 according to the reckoning of the Annals of the Four Masters. The chief tale of the cycle is the story of Labraid's vengeance upon the murderer of his father. He trapped his enemy, Cobthach, with his followers, in a house of iron which was then made red hot so that all perished within.[2]

ORGAIN DENNA RÍG

The Destruction of Dinn Ríg

The text is Old Irish, perhaps of the ninth century, and is contained in three early manuscripts—*LL*, Rawl. B 502, and *YBL*. The motif of the burning house recurs in the Welsh story of Branwen (*White Book*, pp. 23–24 = J. Loth, *Mabinogion*[2] [Paris, 1913], I, 131).

Cobthach the Meager, son of Úgaine the Great, was king of Bregia (northern Leinster), and his brother Loegaire Lorc was king of Ireland. Cobthach was so envious of his brother that he wasted away, wherefore he was called the Meager One of Bregia. Loegaire was summoned to visit his brother before he died, and, as he came in, he broke the leg of a chicken on the floor. 'The sickness was unlucky for thee, brother,' said Loegaire. Cobthach answered that nothing prospered with him and asked that the chicken be brought to him that he might bind its leg. He bade Loegaire return the next day to perform the funeral rites, and Loegaire consented.

' "Well," said Cobthach to his queen and his steward, "say that I died without anyone present but you, and have me placed in my chariot with a razor in my hand. My brother will come eagerly to mourn me and will lie down upon me.

2. O'Rahilly regards this tale as a legendary record of the invasion of Ireland by the 'Laginians' (*Early Irish History and Mythology* [Dublin, 1946], p. 116).

Perhaps something will happen to him." So it was done. He is put into his chariot. His brother comes to mourn him. He goes and lies down upon him. He thrusts the knife into his back so that the point came out at the corner of his heart, and he died of it.'

Loegaire had a son, Ailill Áne, who held the kingdom of Leinster, and Cobthach caused him to be poisoned and took his kingdom. Ailill had a son, Moen Ollam; and he was dumb. One day on the playing-field a hurley-stick struck him on the shin, and he cried out: 'I am hurt!' 'Moen is talking! [*labraid*]' said the boys, and so he was called Labraid. The men of Ireland were summoned to Tara for the assembly, and Cobthach asked them who was the most generous prince in Ireland. Craiphtine the harper and Ferchertne[3] the poet answered that Labraid was the most generous. 'Go to him, then,' said Cobthach, 'since he is more generous than I.' 'He will be none the worse, nor thou the better,' said Craiphtine. 'Begone from Ireland!' said Cobthach.

The poet and the musician went with Labraid westward to Scoriath, king of Fir Morca, who made them welcome. He had a daughter Moriath, who was carefully guarded, for none had yet been found worthy of her. Her mother's two eyes never slept at once, but one of them always watched the girl. Moriath loved Labraid, and they had an understanding. Scoriath prepared a feast for the Fir Morca, and Craiphtine played sleep-music on his harp until the mother slept, so that the lovers met.

Soon the mother awoke. 'Get up, Scoriath!' said she. 'Yours is an unlucky sleep. Your daughter breathes like a wife. Listen to her sigh after her lover has left her!' Scoriath threatened to kill the druids and poets unless his daughter's lover was discovered. Labraid bade Ferchertne tell the truth, so that he alone might be answerable. Ferchertne told what had happened, and Scoriath accepted Labraid joyfully and ordered a feast. Moriath was bestowed upon Labraid, and Scoriath said that he would help him to recover the kingdom of Leinster.

Scoriath called a hosting of the men of Munster, and they at-

3. Elsewhere Ferchertne appears as a contemporary of Conchubar (see p. 174).

tacked Dinn Ríg, the citadel of Leinster; but they failed to take it and resorted to a ruse. Craiphtine was sent to play sleep-music on the rampart, while the besiegers lay on the ground with their fingers in their ears. When all within were asleep, the men of Munster stormed the place and slew the defenders. (Moriath was on that hosting and would not stop her ears against her favorite music, so that she slept for a whole day, for none dared to disturb her.)

Then Labraid took the kingdom of Leinster and was at peace with Cobthach. He invited Cobthach to visit him, and a house was built for his entertainment. Strong was that house, for it was made of iron—walls and floors and doors. The Leinstermen were a full year building it, and father spoke not of it to son nor mother to daughter, as the proverb says: 'Every Leinsterman has his own secret.' Cobthach came with thirty kings in his train, but he refused to enter the house until Labraid's mother and his jester should go before him. Labraid went into the house and said that fire and food and drink had been provided. Nine men seized the chain that had been attached to the door, and dragged it out and fastened it to a pillar. Thrice fifty forge-bellows, with four men to each bellows, were blown until it grew hot for them in the house.

' "Your mother is within, Labraid!" said the warriors. "Nay, son," said she, "save your honour through me, for I shall die at all events." Cobthach Coel is slain there with seven hundred men and with thirty kings. *Inde dicitur:*

"Three hundred years, a great reckoning, before Christ's birth, holy conception, it was not brotherly, it was wicked, Lorc was killed by Cobthach Coel.

Cobthach Coel with thirty kings was killed by proud Labraid of great following, grandson of Loegaire from the sea; in Dinn Ríg the host was killed."

'And it is of this that Ferchertne Fili said:

"Dinn Ríg, a red wall of fire; thirty princes died in suffering. The fierce champion, Labraid, crushed them, burned them, Ireland's hero, grandson of Loegaire Lorc.

Lugaid was a fierce warrior, Sétne was *sanb*[?], Cobthach the Meagre was famous, Muredach Mál was a chieftain.[4] The Ollam destroyed the weapons of his elders: Moen slew the sons of noble Úgaine."

'He was Moen Ollam at first, Labraid Moen afterward; and Labraid Loingsech after he went into exile [*longais*], when he established a kingdom as far as the Ictian Sea, when he brought back the many foreigners, two thousand two hundred foreigners with broad spears [*laignib*] in their hands, *et de quibus Laigin* ['Leinstermen'] *dicuntur*.'

Lugaid Mac Con and Cormac mac Airt (A.D. 227)

Lugaid Mac Con was a foster-son of Oilill Ólom ('Bare-Ear'), king of Munster. Like Labraid Loingsech, he was banished from Ireland and returned to seize the kingdom for himself. At the battle of Mag Mucrama, in which Mac Con was the victor, the kings of Munster and Tara were slain, and Mac Con became king of north and south. The night before the battle, the king of Tara, Art son of Conn of the Hundred Battles, begot a son, and he was named Cormac.

Cormac son of Art is the most famous of the early kings of Ireland. He is said in one text to have been the first to have his royal seat at Tara, and he reigned for forty years. He was the wisest of men, an Irish Solomon. It was during his reign that Finn son of Cumall and the Fenian warriors performed their exploits, so that the whole Fenian Cycle is, in a sense, a part of the cycle of Cormac.

The length of the reign of Mac Con varies in different documents. Cormac was king of Ireland from 227 to 266, according to the Four Masters. According to the Annals of Tigernach, he reigned for forty-two years, save two separate years during which Tara was occupied by the Ulaid.

4. Here apparently the names of some of those who were killed are given. Lugaid was a son of Bresal Brecc and Sétne was his son. Muredach Mál was brother to Cobthach and a son of Úgaine Mór.

This poem has been edited by Meyer (*AID*, II, 7). The text is doubtful and the translation therefore tentative.

CATH MAIGE MUCRAMA

The Battle of Mag Mucrama[5]

The story is preserved in the *Book of Leinster* and is in the style of the early sagas. No study of its date has been made, but it can scarcely be later than the tenth century.

Oilill Bare-Ear, king of Munster, had for wife Sadb daughter of Conn of the Hundred Battles. She bore him three sons, Eogan, Cian, and Cormac, from whom, respectively, are descended the Eoganacht, the Ciannacht, and Dál Caiss. Lugaid Mac Con[6] was foster-son to Oilill and Sadb, and he and Eogan were reared on the same knee and at the same breast.

'One Hallowe'en Oilill went to pasture his horses on Áne Cliach.[7] A bed was made for him on the hill. That night the hill was stript bare, and none knew who stripped it. Twice it happened to him thus. He wondered at that. He sent messengers to Ferches son of Commán, a poet who dwelt on the boundary of Leinster. He was a prophet and a warrior. He came to speak with him. They both went on Hallowe'en to the hill. Ferches was apart from it. Oilill falls asleep listening to the grazing of the cattle. They came out of the fairy mound, and Eogabul son of Durgabul[8] after them, and Áne daughter of Eogabul with a bronze lyre in her hand playing before him. Ferches went against him and dealt him a blow. Eogabul fled into the fairy mound. Ferches strikes him with a great spear, which broke his back as he came up to Oilill. Oilill lay with the girl while he was there. The woman bit his ear so that she left neither flesh nor skin on it and none ever grew on it from that time. And Oilill Bare-Ear is his name ever since.'

Áne said she had been ill used in the outrage on herself and the killing of her father and that she would outrage Oilill in requital, for she would leave him no compensation[9] when they parted.

5. The plain west of Athenry, County Galway.

6. His name, 'son of a bitch,' is explained in *Cóir Anmann*, p. 71. He was suckled by a bitch in the house of Oilill.

7. Knockany, County Limerick. 8. 'Yew-Fork son of Oak-Fork.'

9. *Athgabáil:* the word is ordinarily a legal technical term for "distraint." The meaning here is not clear to me.

On another occasion Eogan and Lugaid Mac Con went to visit Art son of Conn, Lugaid's uncle, while he was on a circuit of Connacht, to get horses and bridles from him. On their way they heard music in a yew tree over a waterfall. They took the musician captive and returned to Oilill for a decision as to which of them might keep him. He was Fer Fí son of Eogabul. Oilill bade him play, and he played a sad strain so that all wept, and then a merry strain so that all laughed until their lungs were almost visible, and then a lullaby so that they slept until the same hour on the morrow. Then he disappeared, leaving the claimants disputing.

They persisted in asking for a judgment. Oilill observed that there was little profit to be had from it now but awarded the man to Eogan; for when they found him Lugaid had said: 'The music is mine!' but Eogan had said: 'Mine is the musician!' Lugaid said it was a false judgment and challenged Eogan to meet him on the battlefield at Cend Abrat a month from that day.

A month from that day the two armies met, and Mac Con went to converse with his fool before the battle. The fool, Do Dera, foresaw defeat and death for Lugaid and offered to go into battle in Lugaid's place, for they were much alike. If he should fall, Mac Con was to flee, but Eogan would pursue him if he caught sight of Mac Con's legs. So it fell out. Do Dera was slain, but Eogan knew it was not Mac Con, and he saw Mac Con's legs white as fresh snow through the maze of battle. He ran after him and made a cast which struck him in the thigh.

Mac Con fled to Scotland with his tutor, Lugaid Lágae son of Eogan Mór, and three times nine[10] in their company. Lugaid warned his men to obey one another as though each were king over the other, and that none should call him by his name, lest the king of Scotland discover his identity and be persuaded to kill him. The king of Scotland welcomed them, knowing not who they were but that they were Irishmen. A pig and an ox were provided them each day in a guesthouse until the end of a

10. For the reckoning of three times nine in Greek and Roman tradition see S. Bugge, *Home of the Eddic Poems* (London, 1899), p. 267 (*Virgines ter novenae*, Livy xxvii. 37).

year. The king marveled at their accomplishments in games and in battle and that they had no chieftain over them. One day, as he and Lugaid were playing chess, a stranger arrived from Ireland. He was a poet. The king asked for news of the men of Ireland, and how the reign of Art son of Conn was prospering. The stranger said there never was a prince in Ireland equal to him:

> ' "Who is king of Munster?" asks the king. "Eogan son of Oilill, for his father is an old man." "And Lugaid Mac Con?" said the king. "It is not known where he went when he was banished by Eogan son of Oilill." "That is a great pity," said the king. "Unhappy Ireland to be without him! And Lugaid's people, how are they?" "They are not prospering," said he, "but in subjection and misery in the service of Eogan." '

Mac Con started at this news and went out. The king observed him and knew that he was Mac Con. He planned a ruse to prove it. The pig and the ox were brought on the hoof one day. The king expected that when lots were cast to see who should slaughter and dress them, Mac Con would be exempted. But he cast his lot with the others. The king bade the steward observe who was served first, but the steward was not admitted while they were feasting. Finally, he ordered mice to be killed and a raw mouse to be laid upon the portion of each man. They were told that they would be killed unless they ate the mice. Mac Con wished ill luck to him who ordered it, as he put the mouse into his mouth. The king observed him. All followed his example, but there was one man who vomited each time the mouse's tail came to his lips. Mac Con reproved him, and he swallowed the tail.

> ' "They obey you," said the king. "I obey them too," said Lugaid. "Are you Lugaid?" said the king. "That is my name," said Lugaid. "You are welcome," said the king. "Why have you hidden yourself from me?" "For fear of you," said Lugaid. "I had avenged the wrong before today, if I had known." "Help me even now," said Lugaid. "You shall have help indeed," said the king. "I am king of Scotland. The daughter of the king of the Britons is my mother, the daugh-

ter of the king of the Saxons is my wife. I shall bring them all to avenge your wrong." "I am thankful," said Lugaid.'

The great army invaded Ireland, and many submitted to them. They came to Mag Mucrama. Art son of Conn and Eogan son of Oilill agreed to give them battle. The day before the battle Eogan went to a certain blind druid, Dil Maccu Crecga of Ossory, to ask that he come and cast a spell over the enemy. Dil consented, and his daughter Moncha went with him as charioteer. The druid knew from Eogan's speech that he was doomed and bade his daughter lie with Eogan so that perchance one of his descendants might be king of Munster. By their union Fiacha Flat-Head was begotten. Art spent the night before the battle with a smith of the men of Connacht, and he, likewise, foresaw defeat, for Mac Con's army was powerful and the men of Scotland and Britain had no thought of flight. Moreover, the cause of Eogan was a bad one, for Mac Con had a lawful claim against him. The smith asked Art how many children he had. Art had but one son, so the smith bade him lie with his daughter, and of this union Cormac was begotten. Art told the girl that she would bear a son who would be king of Ireland. He foretold his own death and took leave of her.

Mac Con's plans were ready. The account of them is obscure; apparently some of his men were concealed in a pit covered with wattles. But we are told that the Irish in his army were tied leg to leg with men from Scotland so that they might not flee. And there were two Britons along with every Irishman. Lugaid Mac Con, Lugaid Lágae, and Béinne Britt were at the head of one army. Art son of Conn, Eogan son of Oilill, and Corb Cacht son of Oilill were at the head of the other.

Mac Con challenged Eogan to single combat, but Eogan refused because his cause against him was bad. Mac Con said that if he should fall this time, it would not be a fool taking his place, for he would rather that the dogs of Ireland should devour his body than to stay out of Ireland any longer.

The air was black with demons waiting to drag souls to Hell. But two angels were over Art wherever he went, on account of

his truths.[11] (The battle is joined, and we are given a lively description of the conflict. Finally, the men of Scotland come out of the pit in the ground and surround the men of Ireland. Art and his men are routed. The seven sons of Oilill are slain. As Béinne Britt is beheading Eogan, Lugaid Lágae comes up and is seized with affection for his brother's son. He cuts off the head of Béinne Britt so that it falls on Eogan's breast. Mac Con sees that and reproaches him, and Lugaid Lágae promises him the head of the king of Ireland. He goes in pursuit of Art and slays him.)

Then Lugaid Mac Con took the kingdom of Ireland and reigned in Tara for seven years. He took Cormac son of Art in fosterage. Once it happened that sheep grazed the woad of the queen. Lugaid adjudged the sheep as forfeit for the trespass. Cormac was a little boy and lay on a couch beside him. He opposed the verdict, saying that it would be more just to award the shearing of the sheep in compensation for the shearing of the woad. The woad would grow again, and the wool would grow again on the sheep. 'That is the true judgment,' said all, 'and it is the son of the true prince who has given it!' At that, one side of the house, the side in which the false judgment was given, fell down the slope. It will remain thus forever, The Crooked Mound of Tara.[12] For a year afterward, Lugaid was king in Tara, and no grass came out of the ground or leaves on the trees or grain in the corn.[13] Then the men of Ireland expelled him from the kingship, for he was a false prince.

Lugaid Mac Con returned to his own country with a great following, but Lugaid Lágae did not consent to return to the place where he had opposed his own brother but entered the service of the son of the king whom he had slain. Mac Con went to Oilill to tend him as befitted a foster-son. When he reached the place, Sadb, his foster-mother and sister of Art, put her

11. For the Act of Truth in Irish tradition see p. 110.

12. Other texts explain that the true judgment of Cormac prevented the other side of the house from falling (see *Modern Philology*, XLIV [1947], 140).

13. Cf. the story of Oedipus, and, for fertility under a just king, the story of the birth of Cormac, *SG*, II, 289, and *Odyssey* xix. 109–14.

arms around his neck and bade him not to go in. 'Evil is the man to whom you go! He is not forgiving.' But Oilill welcomed him, saying that they would be as father and son, since he had no son to tend him. He put his cheek to Lugaid's cheek and pierced it with a poisonous tooth. As Lugaid went out, he met Sadb. ' "Woe is this!" said she, as she saw him.

> "It is a thrust by which a king falls. A poisoned tooth has wounded you. Your appearance has changed. Sad is the last farewell." '

Then Ferches came to Oilill, and he bade him go in pursuit of Lugaid. Lugaid reached his own country. His cheek had rotted away. He leans against a stone in presence of his men. They see Ferches approaching and seek to shield their king, but the spear strikes him in the forehead and rings in the stone behind him. Lugaid withers lifeless to the ground.

' "Oilill said:

> "It is thirty years since I became a worn old man: the cast of Commán's son has aroused me from my weariness."

'Oilill was king of Munster for seven years after that. Some say that Lugaid Mac Con was king of Ireland for thirty years.'

One of the stories about Cormac is apparently an Irish version of the Indian legend of Śakuntalā made famous by Kalidāsa. It has not lost its charm, although the Irish text seems to be a mere outline.

ESNADA TIGE BUCHET

The Melodies of Buchet's House

The story is preserved in five vellum manuscripts, including *LL*, Rawl. B 502, and *YBL*. It belongs to the tenth century in its extant form, but I suggest that it derives from very ancient tradition.

There was a hospitable man in Leinster named Buchet. He had Eithne, the daughter of Cathaer Mór, king of Ireland, in fosterage. Cathaer had twelve sons, and they used to come for

guesting with large companies, so that they wasted all Buchet's substance. At last he was left with only seven cows and a bull, where there had been seven herds of cattle.

Buchet went to Cathaer to seek redress. But Cathaer was then a withered old man and told him that he could not restrain his sons and advised him to go away. Buchet fled secretly in the night until he came to Kells of the Kings. He brought with him only his old wife, his seven cows and the bull, and the girl, Eithne daughter of Cathaer. They dwelt in a hut in the forest, and the girl served them.

Cormac was in Kells at that time, for he had not yet taken the kingship of Ireland. Medb of the Red Side, the wife of Art, took the kingship after Art's death and did not suffer Cormac.[14] Kells was then the royal seat, and it was Cormac, when he became king, who founded Tara on the land of Odrán, a herdsman.[15]

One day, when he was king, Cormac saw the girl milking the cows. She put the last milk into a vessel apart. Then she cut rushes and put the best rushes in a separate bundle. She drew water and put the water from the middle of the stream in a separate pail.

> ' "Who are you, girl?" said Cormac. "The daughter of a poor herdsman yonder," she said. "Why do you divide the water and the rushes and the milk?" "A man who was honored formerly," said she, "to him I bring the freshest of the rushes and the last of the milk, and the rest is for myself, so that he may not be without honor so far as I can find. And if I should find greater honor he should have it." "It may be that you shall find it," said Cormac. "Whom do you honor so?" "His name is Buchet," she said. "Is that Buchet of Leinster?" said Cormac. "It is he," she said. "Are you Eithne

14. This conflicts with the tradition concerning Lugaid Mac Con in the preceding story.

15. This conflicts with the established tradition that Cormac's father, Art, and his grandfather, Conn of the Hundred Battles, dwelt at Tara, and Tuathal Techtmar long before them. Moreover, we have just been told that Cormac was at Kells because he was not yet king.

of the Long Side, daughter of Cathaer Mór?" said Cormac. "Yes," said she.'

Cormac sent a message to Buchet to ask for the hand of Eithne, but he did not give her for he was not her father. She was carried off that night, and spent one night with Cormac. Next day she escaped, but that night she had conceived a son, Cairpre Lifechar son of Cormac.

Afterward she became Cormac's queen, but only when her bride-price had been paid to Buchet. And Cormac gave him all that he could see from the rampart of Kells for a whole week, cow and man and ox and horse, so that Buchet was unable to bring all his wealth of herds back into Leinster.

'The music of Buchet's house was his laughing cry to his guests: "Welcome! You will be happy, and I shall be happy along with you!" Fifty warriors made music when the guests were drunk. Fifty maidens, too, played for the company. And then fifty harpers soothed the guests until morning.

'And so men speak of "The Melodies of Buchet's House." '

SCÉL BAILI BINNBÉRLAIG

The Story of Baile of the Clear Voice

There is a love story that is worth recording here. It belongs, however, to the time of Cormac's father, Art son of Conn of the Hundred Battles. The text is preserved only in three late manuscripts—Harl. 5280, RIA 23 N 10, and T.C.D. H 3.18—but the language of the first is not later than the eleventh century.

Baile of the Clear Voice was the only son of Buan, grandson of Caba. He was the chosen lover of Ailinn, daughter of Lugaid son of Fergus of the Sea, and he was beloved of all who saw him or heard of him, both men and women. Baile and Ailinn made a tryst at Ros na Ríg on the Boyne. Baile came south from Emain Macha with his companions. When they had reached the trysting place and were making merry, they saw a fearful specter approaching from the south, darting like a hawk from the cliff or like the wind from a gray sea. His left side was toward them. They accosted him and asked for news. He said that he had come

north from Mount Leinster and had no news save only that Ailinn had given her love to Baile and was on her way to meet him, when she was overtaken and killed by the warriors of Leinster. Druids and seers had foretold that they would not meet in life, but they would meet after death, never to part.

Baile died of grief, and he was buried; and his tomb was raised, and his funeral games were held by the Ulstermen. And a yew tree grew out of his grave, and the likeness of Baile's head was in its branches. Then the specter went south to where Ailinn was. She asked for news. He said he was going to Mount Leinster and had no news save only that he had seen the Ulstermen dig the grave of Baile son of Buan, heir to the kingdom of Ulster, and celebrate his funeral games, for he had died on his way to meet a girl to whom he had given his love. Ailinn fell dead, and she was buried, and out of her grave there grew an apple tree. After seven years it was a strong tree, and the likeness of Ailinn's head was in its branches.

After seven years poets and seers cut down the yew that was over Baile's grave and made a poet's tablet from it; and the vision-tales and feasts and loves and wooings of Ulster were written on it. Likewise, the wooings of Leinster were written on the wood of the apple tree. When the feast of Samain was held by Art son of Conn, the poets and men of every craft came and brought their tablets with them. Art noticed these two tablets and asked for them. They were brought to him, and as he held them face to face they sprang together and were joined like woodbine round a branch. It was impossible to part them. They were kept in the treasury of Tara with all the other treasures, until Dúnlang son of Enna burned them, when he slew the maidens.[16]

Rónán, King of Leinster *ca.* A.D. 600

Only one story about Rónán, king of Leinster, has come down to us, but it is worth attention. Kuno Meyer pointed out that it

16. This raid by the provincial king of Leinster against Tara is recorded in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 241, in the reign of Cormac mac Airt. Cormac avenged the outrage by killing twelve Leinster kings and increasing the amount of the tribute known as *Bórama*, which had been imposed on Leinster by Tuathal Techtmar.

resembles the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus. It is mentioned in the list of sagas in *LL* and is preserved in that manuscript and in H. 3.18. The story appears to be pure legend, for Echaid Iarlaithe, king of Dál nAraide, whose daughter is here said to be the wife of Rónán, died, according to the Annals, *ca.* 665, while Rónán died *ca.* 610. Some confusion of names is possible, since Echaid (Eochu) is of frequent occurrence. The value of the story as history does not concern us here. It is well told, with perhaps more deliberate artistry than is common. The single motif is introduced in the first dialogue and repeated at once in the conversation between the hero and the queen. The tension is not relaxed throughout.

AIDED MAELE FOTHARTAIG MAIC RÓNÁIN

The Death of Mael Ḟothartaig Son of Rónán

The text is early Middle Irish, perhaps of the tenth century. It is preserved in the *Book of Leinster* and in H. 3.18.

There was a famous king of Leinster, Rónán son of Aed; and Eithne daughter of Cummascach son of Eogan of the Dési of Munster was his wife. She bore him a son, Mael Ḟothartaig son of Rónán. He was the most wonderful boy that ever was seen in Leinster. The crowd would gather round him in assemblies and games. He was the darling of the girls and young women.

Eithne died and Rónán was for a long time without a wife.

> ' "Why have you not taken a wife?" said his son. "It were better for you to have a wife." "I am told," said Rónán, "that Echaid, king of Dunseverick in the north, has a lovely daughter." "You are no husband for a girl!" said the lad. "Will you not take a steady woman? I should think it fitter for you than a skittish girl." '

But Rónán was not to be dissuaded. He went north and brought the girl home with him; but Mael Ḟothartaig had gone on a visit to the south of Leinster. She asked where he was, for she had heard of his greatness, and asked that he be summoned to receive her.

'Then Mael Ḟothartaig comes and gives her a great welcome. "You shall have love," said the lad. "Whatever we have of treasures and wealth shall be yours for loving Rónán." "I am glad," said she, "that you care for me."

The queen sent her maid to solicit Mael Ḟothartaig, but the maid feared to speak. Once when he was playing chess with his two foster-brothers, Donn and Congal, the maid joined their game. She was trying to speak but did not dare, and she was blushing.

'The men noticed it. Mael Ḟothartaig went away. "What do you want to say?" said Congal to the woman. "It is not I that want to speak," said she, "but Echaid's daughter wants to have Mael Ḟothartaig as her lover." "Do not say it, woman," said Congal. "You shall be killed if Mael Ḟothartaig hears it. But I shall speak to him for yourself, if you wish it." '

The queen consented to this and bade the maid use her advantage to speak for her. The maid slept with Mael Ḟothartaig, and the queen soon suspected that she was keeping him for herself and threatened her life. She told Mael Ḟothartaig of the queen's desire. He was angry and said that though he should be burnt to ashes he would not go to Rónán's wife. He would go away so as to avoid her.

Mael Ḟothartaig went to Scotland, accompanied by fifty warriors, and was welcomed by the king. There he excelled in hunting and in battle. His hounds, Doilín and Daithlenn, were swifter than all the king's hounds. But the men of Leinster threatened to kill Rónán, their king, unless Mael Ḟothartaig returned. He heard that and went back to Ireland. He landed at Dunseverick and was made welcome. 'It is bad of you that you have not slept with my daughter,' says Echaid. 'It was for you I gave her and not for that old churl!' 'That is bad indeed,' said Mael Ḟothartaig.

He came to Leinster and was made welcome, and the queen's maid again shared his bed. Echaid's daughter again threatened her life if she should not persuade him to become her lover.

Mael Ḟothartaig turned to Congal for advice, and Congal promised to cure the queen of her passion if he got a reward. Mael Ḟothartaig offered his horse and bridle and his cloak; but Congal would have the two precious hounds, and they were promised him.

Congal sent Mael Ḟothartaig out hunting and sent a message to the queen that she might go to a tryst with him. She could hardly wait for the morning. In the morning she and her maid set out for the trysting place. They met with Congal.

‘ “Whither away, harlot?” said he. “You do ill to travel alone, unless it be to meet a man. Go home, and bad luck go with you!” He went with her to her house. They saw her coming again. “Nay,” said Congal, “you will bring shame on the king of Leinster, you wicked woman. If I see you again, I will bring your head and fix it on a stake in Rónán’s presence, as that of a wicked woman who shamed him in ditches and brakes, going alone to tryst with a lad!” He took a horsewhip to her and left her in the house. “I shall bring blood into your mouth,” said she.

Rónán came in. Mael Ḟothartaig’s companions came in before him, and Rónán asked where she was and regretted his absence. The queen complained that Rónán was always talking of his son.

‘ “It is right to speak of him,” said Rónán, “for there is not in Ireland a son more faithful to his father. For his zeal for us both, man and wife, at Áth Cliath and Clár Daire Móir and Droichet Caipri[17] is as great as though it were his own life that were at stake, all for my sake, so that you and I may have comfort, wife.”

‘ “He does not get from me the comfort he desires,” said she, “which is to come in to me in your despite. I will put up with him no longer. Three times since morning Congal has taken me to him, and it went hard that I escaped from him.”

‘ “A curse on your lips, wicked woman!” said Rónán. “You lie!”

17. Perhaps the limits of Rónán’s kingdom.

‘ “You shall see proof of it now,” said she. “I shall make a half-quatrain to see whether it will fit what he makes.”

‘He used to do that every night to please her. He would make a half-quatrain and she would make the other half.

‘Then he came in and was drying his legs at the fire, and Congal was beside him. Mael Ḟothartaig’s jester, Mac Glas, was playing on the floor. Then he said, for the day was cold:

“It is cold against the wind
for him who herds the cows of the slope.”

‘ “Listen to this, Rónán!” said she. “Say that again,” said she.

“It is cold against the wind
for him who herds the cows of the slope.”

‘She said:

“It is a vain herding
without cows, without one you love.”

(That is: “I did not come, and you did not bring home the cows.”)

‘ “It is true, then,” said Rónán. There was a warrior beside Rónán, Aedán son of Fiachna Lára. “Aedán,” said he, “a spear into Mael Ḟothartaig, and strike Congal too!” Since his back was toward them as he faced the fire, Aedán thrust the spear into him and its head went through him and fixed him to his seat. As Congal rose, Aedán thrust a spear into him which pierced his heart. The fool jumped away. Aedán cast a spear after him which tore out his bowels.

‘ “You have played enough against the men, Aedán!”, said Mael Ḟothartaig from where he sat.

‘ “You were lucky indeed,” said Rónán, “that you found no woman to entreat but my wife!”

‘ “That is a sad deception that has been put upon you, Rónán,” said the lad, “to kill your only son unjustly. By your majesty and by the tryst to which I go, the tryst of death, I no more thought of lying with her than I would lie with my mother. But she has been soliciting me since she came to this

country, and three times today Congal brought her back to keep her from me. Congal did not deserve his death."

'A raven was gathering the bowels of the jester onto the front bridge. The churls were laughing. Mael Ḟothartaig was ashamed.

'He said:

"Mac Glas, gather in your bowels:
although you know no shame
the churls are mocking you."

'Then the three died. They were brought into a separate house. Rónán went and stayed by the head of his son for three days and three nights.'

Rónán's lamentation for his son has the eloquence of restraint:

'It is cold against the wind
For him who herds the cows of the slope;
It is a vain herding
without cows, without one you love.

The wind is cold
in front of the warrior's house;
dear were the warriors
who used to be between me and the wind.

Sleep, daughter of Echaid.
The wind is fierce.
Woe is me that Mael Ḟothartaig
was slain for the guilt of a lustful woman.

Sleep, daughter of Echaid.
I have no comfort though you sleep not,
seeing Mael Ḟothartaig
in his bloody shroud.'

But Donn, Congal's brother and foster-brother to Mael Ḟothartaig, went with twenty horsemen to Dunseverick and lured forth Echaid to the boundary of his territory by pretending that Mael Ḟothartaig had eloped with his daughter and was

on his way there. They killed Echaid and his wife and son, and brought back their heads, and threw them upon the queen's breast. She arose and threw herself on her knife.

'Then Rónán said:

"Echaid has got a shroud
after being in a fine mantle:
the grief that is upon Dún Áis
is also upon Dunseverick.

Give food and drink
to Mael Ḟothartaig's hound,
the hound of a man who would give food
to him from whom he bought.

It is sad to me that Daithlenn suffers
with her ribs spare through her sides:
I have no grievance against her,
it is not she who has betrayed my dear ones.

Doiléne
served me well:
her head is in the lap of everyone in turn
seeking one whom she will not find.

The men, the youths, the horses
that were around Mael Ḟothartaig,
they were not eager for protection
in the lifetime of their lord.

. . . . . .

My son, Mael Ḟothartaig,
whose dwelling was the tall wood,
neither kings nor princes
would part from him without respect.

My son, Mael Ḟothartaig,
he was the hound around whom the pack would close,
the tall white flashing salmon,
he has taken a cold dwelling." '

The two sons of Mael Ḟothartaig pursued the man who had killed him, and killed him in revenge.

'Then Rónán said:

"It is a great matter
for the son of a churl to kill the son of a king:
that was clear on the day of his death
to Aedán son of Fiachna Lára."

'After that the fight was brought close to him, up to the door of the house. Then he said:

"This fighting outside,
I await it without Mael Ḟothartaig:
against this last fight
an old champion cannot stand."

'With that, the blood came from his mouth and he died at once. That is how Rónán slew his son.'

Domnall Son of Aed Son of Ainmire, 628–42 A.D.

We come now to one of the greatest of the historical cycles. It comprises three famous tales and centers around a heroic struggle for the high kingship, which is a matter of history. The battle of Moira was fought in 637 between Domnall son of Aed, king of Ireland, and Domnall Brecc, king of Dál Riada, the Irish kingdom in Scotland, which at that time included a small territory in northeastern Ireland. The occasion of the battle was a feud between the Irish king and Congal Caech, king of the Ulaid. Congal had killed Suibne Menn, king of Ireland, whom Domnall succeeded. Congal then opposed Domnall and was defeated at Dún Cethirn. He fled to Scotland, and the Scottish Domnall took up his cause and landed in Ireland with a large army. The king of Ireland was victorious, and one result of the battle seems to have been the loss to the Scottish kingdom of its Irish territory. It must have been an event of historic importance, for it became the subject of legendary traditions. In the Preface to an old law tract it is said: 'The three virtues of that battle are the defeat of Congal Claen in his falsehood by Dom-

nall in his truth, and that Suibne the Madman became mad, and that the brain of forgetfulness was taken out of the head of Cennfaelad. And the virtue is not in Suibne becoming mad, but in all the stories and poems he left after him in Ireland. And the virtue is not in the brain of forgetfulness being taken out of the head of Cennfaelad, but in all the book-learning that he left after him in Ireland.' Moreover, three sagas about this general theme have been preserved. The first, the "Feast of Dún na nGéd," leads up to the battle; the second is the "Battle of Moira"; the third, "The Frenzy of Suibne," tells the adventures of the famous madman.

BUILE SHUIBNI

The Frenzy of Suibne

The story is preserved only in late manuscripts, but it belongs to the twelfth century in its extant form and is compiled from earlier originals. It seems to be based upon the legend of "The Wild Man of the Woods."

Suibne son of Colmán was king of Dál nAraide.[18] One day St. Rónán was marking the boundaries of a church in that country, and Suibne heard the sound of his bell. When his people told him that the saint was establishing a church in his territory, he set out in anger to expel the cleric. His wife Eorann sought to restrain him and caught the border of his cloak, but he rushed naked from the house, leaving the cloak in her hands. Rónán was chanting the Office when Suibne came up, and the king seized the psalter and threw it into the lake. He then laid hands on the saint and was dragging him away, when a messenger arrived from Congal Claen to summon him to the battle of Moira. Suibne departed with the messenger, leaving Rónán sorrowful. Next day an otter from the lake restored the psalter to the saint unharmed. Rónán gave thanks to God and cursed the king, wishing that he might wander naked through the world as he had come naked into his presence.

Rónán went to Moira to make peace between Domnall and Congal Claen, but without success. He and his clerics sprinkled

18. A territory south of Dál Riada and bordering on Lough Neagh. It included parts of southern Antrim and of County Down.

holy water on the armies, but when they sprinkled it on Suibne he slew one of the clerics with a spear and made a second cast at Rónán himself. The second spear broke against the saint's bell, and the shaft flew into the air. Rónán cursed Suibne, wishing that he might fly through the air like the shaft of his spear and that he might die of a spear cast like the cleric whom he had slain.

Thereafter, when the battle was joined, the armies on both sides raised three mighty shouts. Suibne was terrified by the clamor. His weapons fell from his hands. He was seized with trembling and fled in a frenzy like a bird of the air. His feet rarely touched the ground in his flight, and at last he settled upon a yew tree far from the battle-field. There he was discovered by a kinsman, Aongus the Fat, who had fled the field after the victory of Domnall. Aongus sought to persuade Suibne to join him, but Suibne flew away like a bird and came to Tír Conaill, where he perched on a tree near the church called Cill Riagáin. It happened that the victorious army of Domnall had encamped there after the battle. Domnall recognized him and lamented his misfortune.

(In a short poem Domnall reproaches Suibne for his part in the battle. Part of the poem however is a dialogue between Domnall and Congal and is out of place here.)

Suibne fled again and was for a long time traveling through Ireland till he came to Glenn Bolcáin.

> 'It was there that the madmen used to abide when their year of frenzy was over, for that valley is always a place of great delight to madmen. Glenn Bolcáin has four gaps to the wind and a lovely fragrant wood and clean-bordered wells and cool springs, and a sandy stream of clear water with green cress and long waving brooklime on its surface.'

For seven years Suibne wandered throughout Ireland, and then he returned to Glenn Bolcáin. There Loingsechán came to seek him. (Some say that Loingsechán was a son of Suibne's mother, some say that he was his foster-brother; but, however that may be, he was a faithful friend, for he rescued Suibne

three times.) Loingsechán found the footprints of Suibne near the river where he came to eat watercress, and the trace of his passage from tree to tree in the broken branches, but he found not Suibne. He slept one night in a hut and Suibne came near and heard him snore. And he uttered a lay:

'The man by the wall snores: I dare not sleep like that.
For seven years since that Tuesday at Moira I have not slept for a moment.

. . . . . .

The cress of the well of Druim Cirb is my meal at terce. My face betrays it. Truly I am Suibne the Madman.

. . . . . .

Though I live from hill to hill on the mountain above the valley of yews, alas! that I was not left to lie with Congal Claen.

. . . . . .

Green cress and a drink of clear water is my fare. I do not smile. This is not the fate of the man by the wall.'

. . . . . .

Eorann, Suibne's wife, had gone to live with Guaire, one of the claimants to the kingdom. He visited her and spoke of their former happiness together, of her present comfort and his misery. Their dialogue is in verse. He reproaches her for enjoying the love of another man and the comfort of his house while her husband is an outcast; and she protests that she would rather live with Suibne in the wilderness than with any man of Ireland or Scotland. Suibne tells her that she does better to stay with Guaire than to share the life of a madman and that he bears her no grudge. As people approach he flies away.

Suibne came to Ros Ercáin, where he had had a house, and he settled in a yew tree there. Loingsechán came again to capture him. At first he pleaded with him to return home and resume the royal comforts that had been his. Suibne bade Loingsechán leave him to his fate and asked for news of his country.

' "Your father is dead." "That grieves me," said he. "Your mother is dead," said the lad. "Now all pity for me is at an end," said he. "Your brother is dead," said Loingsechán. "I am sorely wounded by that," said Suibne. "Your daughter is dead," said Loingsechán. "And an only daughter is the needle of the heart," said Suibne. "Dead is your son who used to call you 'Father,' " said Loingsechán. "Indeed," said he, "that is the drop that brings a man to the ground." '

This dialogue is repeated in verse in a greatly expanded form. When Suibne heard of the death of his son, he fell down from the tree, and Loingsechán seized him and bound and then told him that all his kindred were alive. Soon he recovered his reason and was king again, but he remained in the custody of Loingsechán. One day an old woman reminded him of his frenzy and so excited him that he flew away, and the hag followed him; and when at length he alighted on a tree she perched on a tree beside him. Then Suibne heard the cry of hunters and the bellowing of the stag, and he made a poem in praise of the trees of Ireland and in memory of his hardships:

> 'O lowing stag, sweet clamorer, dear to me is the music thou makest in the valley.'

Oak, elder, blackthorn, apple tree, briar, yew, holly, birch, and aspen are addressed in turn, and then he remembers his happy life as king and laments his fate. Then nature is praised in the spirit of some of the fenian ballads:

> 'The starry frost will come, falling on every pool. I am wretched, wandering exposed to it on the mountain.
>
> The herons call in cold Glenn Aigle, swift flocks
> of birds coming and going.
>
> I love not the prattle that men and women make:
> sweeter to me is the song of the blackbird on his perch.
>
> I love not the trumpeting I hear in the morning: sweeter
> to me is the squeal of the badger in Benna Broc.

I love not the loud horn I hear: sweeter to me is
the belling of a twenty-pointed stag.

. . . . . .

The curse of fair-haired Rónán has made me
thy companion, lowing stag, sweet clamorer.'

(This poem of sixty-five quatrains is in a bold meter, lines of seven syllables ending in a trisyllabic word alternating with lines of five syllables ending in a monosyllable, and the meter is well handled. It is followed by two others of similar temper, one of twenty-three quatrains, the other of thirty-two, each in a different meter.)

After other adventures, Suibne went again to visit his wife but refused to enter the house for fear that his people would confine him there. Eorann said that, since he would not stay with her, he had best be gone and not return, for she was ashamed that people should see him in his madness. (In a short poem Suibne laments the frailty of women and recalls his feats of battle when he was king. He flies away to Benn Boirche. Two short poems follow, the first somewhat in the spirit of Marbán's account of his life as a hermit,[19] the second another lament for his misery.)

Then his reason returned to Suibne, and he sought to go back to his people; but that was revealed to St. Rónán, and he prayed that Suibne might not be allowed to return to persecute the church as he had done before. When the madman was on his way, he was beset by a fearful apparition of headless bodies and trunkless heads, which pursued him through the air with frightful clamor until he escaped from them into the clouds.

At last Suibne came to the monastery of St. Mo Ling. (In a poem of fifteen quatrains in dialogue between the saint and the madman, Suibne foretells his death by the hand of a herdsman.) Mo Ling made him welcome and bade him return from his wanderings every evening so that his history might be written; for it was destined that his story should be written there and that he should receive a Christian burial. Mo Ling bade his cook give

19. See p. 157.

supper to Suibne, and, wherever he traveled during the day, he would return at night. The cook would thrust her foot into some cowdung and fill the hole with milk, and Suibne would lie down to drink. But the cook's husband, who was a herd, grew jealous of this attention by his wife, and he slew Suibne with a spear as he lay drinking the milk one evening. (Others say that the herd placed the point of a deer's horn on the spot where Suibne used to drink and that he fell upon it and so died.) Before his death he confessed his sin and received the body of Christ and was anointed. (The conversation of Suibne, Mo Ling, and Mongán the herdsman is recorded in a poem of twenty-six quatrains. Suibne says:)

> 'Sweeter to me once than the sound of a bell beside me was the song of a blackbird on the mountain and the belling of the stag in a storm.
>
> Sweeter to me once than the voice of a lovely woman beside me was the voice of the mountain grouse at dawn.
>
> Sweeter to me once was the cry of wolves than the voice of a cleric within bleating and whining.
>
> Though you like to drink your ale in taverns with honor, I would rather drink water from my hand taken from the well by stealth.
>
> Though sweet to you yonder in the church the smooth words of your students, sweeter to me the noble chant of the hounds of Glenn Bolcáin.'

Then Suibne swooned, and Mo Ling and his cleric brought each a stone for his monument, and Mo Ling said:

> ' "Here is the tomb of Suibne. His memory grieves my heart. Dear to me for love of him is every place the holy madman frequented.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Dear to me each cool stream on which the green cress grew, dear each well of clear water, for Suibne used to visit them.

If the King of the stars allows it, arise and go with me.
Give me, O heart, thy hand, and come from the tomb.

Sweet to me was the conversation of Suibne: long shall I remember it. I pray to the chaste King of heaven over his grave and tomb."

'Suibne arose out of his swoon, and Mo Ling took him by the hand, and they went together to the door of the church. And Suibne leaned against the doorpost and gave a great sigh, and his spirit went to heaven, and he was buried with honor by Mo Ling.

'Thus far some of the tales and adventures of Suibne son of Colmán, king of Dál nAraide. *Finis*.'

V

The Adventures

THERE is a group of stories called *echtrae* ('adventure') in which the Promised Land is the chief motif. Here is introduced most strongly the Celtic magic, the imaginative quality for which Irish literature is well known. The Other World is called the "Land of the Living," the "Delightful Plain," the "Many-colored Land," the "Land of the Young" or the "Promised Land," the last a translation of *terra repromissionis*, which occurs in the Würzburg Glosses (*tír tairngire* 32b2, 33a23). It seems, indeed, that a primitive pagan belief, which is expressed in the early stories in its true form, was later validated and sustained by confusion with the Promised Land of the Old Testament.

The Irish Other World is a country where there is neither sickness nor age nor death; where happiness lasts forever and there is no satiety; where food and drink do not diminish when consumed; where to wish for something is to possess it; where a hundred years are as one day. It is the Elysium, the Island of the Hesperides, of the Greeks; the Odains-Akr, the Jörd Lifanda Manna, of the Norse. Alfred Nutt pointed out that it finds its closest analogues in early Greek mythology, and he suggested that it represents ancient Indo-European tradition.

The Land of the Living is thought of as in the western sea. A beautiful girl approaches the hero and sings to him of this happy island. He follows her, and they sail away in a boat of glass and are seen no more. Or else he returns after three days, warned not to set foot upon the soil of Ireland; and when his feet touch the earth he turns into ashes, for he has been away for hundreds of years.

ECHTRAE CONLI

The Adventure of Conle

Conle was a son of Conn of the Hundred Battles, who was High King of Ireland in the second century A.D., according to the Annals. The story is preserved in *LU*, *YBL*, and other manuscripts and dates perhaps from the eighth century in the form in which we have it.

'One day Conle the Red, son of Conn of the Hundred Battles, was beside his father on the hill of Usnech. He saw a woman in wonderful attire approach him. Conle said,

' "Where do you come from, woman?"

' "I come," said the woman, "from The Land of the Living, a place in which there is neither death nor sin nor transgression. We enjoy lasting feasts without preparing them and pleasant company without strife. We live in great peace. From that we are named the People of Peace."

' "With whom do you speak, boy?" said Conn to his son, for none saw the woman save Conle alone. The woman answered:

> "He speaks to a beautiful young woman of noble race whom neither death threatens nor old age. I love Conle the Red, I call him to the Plain of Delight, where reigns a king victorious and immortal, a king without weeping or sorrow in his land since be became king.
>
> Come with me, Conle the Red of the jewelled neck, red as flame. Your hair is yellow over the bright noble face of your royal form. If you come with me, your beauty will not lose its youth or its fairness forever."

'Conn said to his druid, Corán was his name, for they all heard what the woman said, although they did not see her:

' "I pray you, Corán of the many songs and many talents, trouble has come to me which defeats my counsel, which defeats my power, a strength which I have not known since I became king, that I should meet an invisible form which strives against me to steal away my fair son by magic spells. He is being lured away from me, the king, by women's wiles."

'Then the druid sang against the woman's voice so that no one heard the voice of the woman and so that Conle did not see the woman after that; but when the woman went away at the loud chanting of the druid, she threw an apple to Conle. Conle was for a month without drink, without food. He cared not to eat any other food but his apple, and his apple did not diminish for what he used to eat of it, but was still whole. A longing then came upon Conle for the woman he had seen. A month from that day Conle was beside his father in the plain of Archommin, and he saw the same woman approach him, and she said to him:

> "There above sits Conle among lifeless mortals waiting for gloomy death. Living immortals invite you. You are a hero for the people of Tethra who see you every day in the assemblies of your fatherland among your dear companions."

'When Conn heard the woman's voice he said to his people: "Call me the druid. I see that her tongue has been loosened today." The woman said then:

> "Conn of the Hundred Battles, do not love druidry for it is small. A just man comes to give judgment at the wide strand with many companions, many and wonderful. Soon shall his judgment reach you, and it will scatter the spells of the druids in the sight of the devil, the Black Magician."

'Conn thought it strange that Conle spoke with no one once the woman had come.

' "Did you understand what the woman says, O Conle?" said Conn.

' "It is not easy for me, for I love my people, but a longing for the woman has come upon me."

'The woman answered then and said this:

> "You have a longing greater than all other desires to go from them over the sea, so that we may come in my ship of glass to the dwelling of Boadach, if we can reach it.

"There is another country where also you could go. I see the sun sets. Though it is far away, we shall reach it before night.

"It is the country which delights the mind of anyone who goes there. There are no people there save only women and girls."

'When the maiden had finished speaking Conle sprang away from them so that he was in the ship of glass, that is, in the firm crystal coracle. They looked out farther and farther, as far as their eyes could see. They rowed then over the sea away from them, and they were not seen since, and it is not known where they went.'

The most famous of these Adventures (*echtrai*) is that of Bran son of Febal, which was edited in a two-volume study by Meyer and Nutt.[1] The text is one of the earliest of all the sagas and may go back in its written form to the seventh century.

ECHTRAE BRAIN MAIC ḞEBAIL

The Adventure of Bran Son of Febal

One day Bran was walking alone close to his dwelling when he heard music behind him. He turned about, but the music was still behind him; and soon he fell asleep from the sweetness of the music. When he awoke, he found beside him a silver branch with white flowers, and he brought it into the house. When all were assembled in the house, they saw a woman in strange attire in the middle of the house, and she sang fifty quatrains to Bran, so that all could hear.

Now comes an astonishing poem (only twenty-eight quatrains occur, and three of these appear to be a Christian interpolation), describing the beauty and the pleasures of the Other World. It sets the tone for many other such descriptions, unless, indeed, we should suppose a single author of this genre. There is an island supported by four pillars of gold. On a plain of silver (a silver strand?), games are held. There are chariot races and boat

1. Kuno Meyer, *The Voyage of Bran*, I (London, 1895); Alfred Nutt, *The Voyage of Bran*, II (*The Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth*) (London, 1897).

races. Lovely colors shine on every side. Joy is constant. There is no sadness, no fierceness, neither sorrow nor sickness nor death. Music sounds always in the air. The sea washes the wave against the land, so that tresses of crystal fall on the shore. The chariots are of gold and silver and bronze, the horses golden chestnut, roan, even blue as the sky. The sun-god is described:

> 'A fair-haired man comes at sunrise to light up the level lands. He rides over the white plain against which the ocean murmurs. He stirs the sea into blood.'

The hosts who hear the music of this peaceful island expect neither death nor decay. Thousands of brightly clad women are there for their enjoyment. The place is called the Very Peaceful (*imchíuin*) and the Many-colored (*ildathach*). A white cloud glitters over it. To the west of it are thrice fifty islands, each of them two or three times the size of Ireland. In three quatrains, apparently interpolated, the woman suddenly turns to prophesy the birth of Christ. The last two are addressed to Bran, who is urged to shake off his lethargy and come to the Land of Women.

The woman departs and vanishes. As she goes, the silver branch flies from Bran's hand into hers. He cannot hold it. On the next day Bran sets out upon the sea with twenty-seven companions. After two days and two nights he sees a man approach, who drives a chariot upon the water. It is Manannán mac Lir, and he sings a lay of thirty quatrains (only twenty-eight appear in the manuscripts). The poem is rather incoherent but again strongly marked by the peculiar magic of these descriptions of the Other World, all of which follow a common pattern, with a similarity of image and vocabulary that cannot be accidental.

Bran thinks that he is rowing over the sea, but for Manannán it is a flowery plain. The waves that Bran sees are red blossoming shrubs. The leaping salmon are calves and frisking lambs. Though he sees but one chariot in Mag Mell (the sea upon which Bran rows his boat is really the Delightful Plain), there are many horses and many people whom he does not see. His boat is floating over an orchard of fruitful trees. Here, as in the first

poem, there is a sudden interpolation of religious matter. The sin of Adam is recalled and the coming of Christ foretold. Then Manannán tells that he will be the lover of Caintigern, wife of Fiachna, and will have by her a son Mongán.[2] Mongán will live for ages, as a deer, a salmon, a swan, and will reveal secrets to men. His human life will last only fifty years. He will be killed with a stone.[3] In the last quatrain Bran is told to row to the Land of Women (apparently a different place from the Plain of Delight), here called "Emne." He will reach it before sunset.

Bran travels on and comes to an island on which there is a crowd of people, who laugh and shout. He sends one of his men ashore, and the man at once begins to laugh and shout like the others and merely laughs at his former companions when they call to him. It is the Island of Merriment.

They leave the place and row on until they come to the Island of Women. The leader of the women calls to Bran to come ashore, but he is afraid to land. She throws a ball of thread in his face, and he puts up his hand. The ball sticks to his hand, and the woman draws the boat ashore by the thread. They go into a great hall, where there is a bed for every man, twenty-seven beds. The food that is served them does not diminish. They thought they were a year there, but it was many years.

One of the men, Nechtán son of Allfronn, feels a longing to return home, and Bran is persuaded to go. The woman warns them not to set foot on land and bids them bring along with them the man whom they had left in the Island of Merriment. They arrive at Srub Brain in Ireland and find people assembled there, who ask who has come from over the sea. Bran replies: 'I am Bran son of Febal.' 'We know him not, but the Voyage of Bran is one of our ancient stories.' The man who longed to return is put ashore, and he turns to ashes at once, as though he had been in the grave for hundreds of years.

Bran told his adventures to the assembled people and bade

2. This refers to the saga of the Birth of Mongán (see my *Cycles of the Kings* [London: Oxford University Press, 1946], p. 50).

3. According to another text, Mongán was slain by Artur mac Bicoir. He was a reincarnation of Finn mac Cumaill (Meyer and Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, I, 49).

them farewell. And from that time forward his adventures are not known.

This story of Bran is mainly an *echtrae*, a visit to the Other World; but the account of the voyage, with the incident of the Island of Merriment, leads to a distinct class of stories, called *immrama* ('voyages'), in which the voyage is the principal theme. And, indeed, the only manuscript which supplies a title (*The Book of Leinster*) calls it 'The Voyage of Bran and His Adventure.'[4] It may be that the 'Adventure of Conle' represents the *echtrae* in its simplest and oldest form. In the story of Bran we would then have the germ of a development, in which the journey is made the occasion for a narrative of wonderful places visited.[5] This reached its fullest attainment in the famous 'Voyage of Mael Dúin.' But we shall first consider the other examples of the simple *echtrae*.

BAILE IN SCÁIL

The Phantom's Frenzy

The form of the *echtrae* was used by some scholar of the eleventh century, perhaps Dub Dá Leithe (abbot of Armagh, 1049–64), to introduce a list of the kings of Ireland from Conn of the Hundred Battles to the end of the High Kingship. The compilation is preserved in Rawl. B 512 and in Harl. 5280 (only the first half). The list is there presented in the form of a prophecy uttered by the god Lug mac Ethnenn in the presence of Conn. But there is an earlier text, entitled *Baile Chuind Chétchathaig*, in which the prophecy is apparently uttered by Conn himself.[6] The two prophecies do not agree in form or in content, for the earlier is an archaic 'rhetoric,' and many of the names in the latter part of it are disguised in 'kennings.' The later text, which is here presented, appears to be a conflation of two distinct prophecies, one in the old alliterative rhetorical style, and the other in syllabic verse. Neither of these prophecies has yet been interpreted, and both are very difficult and probably corrupt. They are of considerable importance for Irish history, as more than fifty kings are mentioned, with the battles they fought, the lengths of their reigns, and the manner of their deaths.

The Introduction to *Baile In Scáil*, which is the *echtrae* proper, is, however, quite straightforward and was translated by E. O'Curry in his *Lectures on*

4. But in the second list of sagas it is called simply *Echtra Brain maic Febail* (see H. d'Arbois, *Essai d'un Catalogue* (Paris, 1883), p. 261.

5. On this distinction between *echtrai* and *immrama* see Zimmer, *ZfDA*, XXXIII, 146.

6. The title suggests this, but there is no introductory statement (ed. without translation, Thurneysen, *Zu ir. Hdschr.*, I, 48.

the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History (Dublin, 1878), pp. 387 f., where the document is discussed. Thurneysen seems to think that the compilation of *Baile In Scáil* took place in the eleventh century and that the later names were added afterward. The Introduction may be the work of the compiler.[7]

One day Conn was in Tara after the other kings had departed. He went onto the rampart of Tara, preceded by his three druids, Mael, Bloc, and Bluiccniu, together with Eochu, Corbb, and Cesarn the *fili*. For it was his custom to mount the rampart every day lest the people of the fairy mounds or the Fomorians should take Ireland unawares. He saw a stone at his feet and trod upon it, and it screamed so that it was heard throughout Tara. Conn asked the *fili* why the stone had screamed and what manner of stone it was. The *fili* asked for a delay of fifty days and three. At the end of that time, through his power of divination he was able to answer. *Fál* (i.e., *fo-ail* 'under-rock,' i.e., 'a rock under a king') was the name of the stone. It had come from Inis Fáil to Tara in the country of Fál. It would go to Teltown, where a fair of games would always be held, and any prince who should not find it on the last day of the week of the Fair of Teltown would die within the year. The number of cries that the stone had uttered under Conn's feet signified the number of kings of his seed who should be over Ireland. 'Tell them to me then,' said Conn. 'I am not destined to tell them to you,' said the druid.

A great mist came around them so that they lost their way. They heard the sound of a horseman approaching, and then he made three casts against them. The *fili* called out a warning against violation of the king's person. The horseman ceased from casting and welcomed Conn and bade him go with him to his dwelling. They came to a plain where there was a golden tree. There was a house thirty feet long, with a ridgepole of white gold. They went into the house and saw a girl, seated in a chair of crystal and wearing a gold crown. In front of her was a silver vat with corners of gold. A vessel of gold stood beside her, and before her was a golden cup. They saw the Phantom

7. *ZCP*, XX, 215–17.

himself on his throne, and never was there seen in Tara one as wonderful as he.

'He spoke to them and said: "I am not a phantom and I am not a specter, and I have come after death to be honored by you, and I am of the race of Adam. My name is Lug son of Ethniu son of Smretha son of Tigernmar son of Faelu son of Etheor son of Irial son of Érimón son of Mil of Spain. And I have come to tell you the span of your sovranty and of that of every prince that will come of you in Tara forever." '

The girl was the Sovranty of Ireland, and she gave food to Conn, the rib of an ox and the rib of a hog. The oxrib was twenty-four feet long and eight feet from the arch to the ground. The hog's rib was twelve feet long and five feet from the arch to the ground. When she went to serve the ale, she asked to whom the cup of red ale (*derg flaith*)[8] should be given, and the Phantom answered her. When he had named every prince from the time of Conn onward, Cesarn wrote them down in ogam on four staves of yew. Then the Phantom and his house disappeared, but the vat and the vessel and the staves remained with Conn. And so men speak of the 'Vision and Adventure and Journey of Conn of the Hundred Battles' and the 'Phantom's Frenzy.'

The remainder of the text is a recitation of the dialogue between the Sovranty of Ireland and the Phantom, in which the names of more than fifty kings are given. After the name of Mael Shechlainn, who died as High King of Ireland in 1022, seven names appear: Flaithbertach (16 years), Murchadh (20 years), Oengus (22 years), Murchadh or Muiredach (13 years), Aed (16 years), Cerball or Cairell (15 years), Fergal (17 years). Then follows a period of twenty-seven years of joint kingship (*comflaithius*), and the last king of Ireland is Fland Cinuch.[9] But none of these appear in history as kings of Ireland.

8. Thurneysen points out that there is a play on the words *flaith*, 'sovranty,' and *laith*, 'a drink' (*Zu ir. Hdschr.*, I, 48; cf. *Cáin Adamnáin*, 10. 7).

9. According to a prophecy in *LB*, Fland Cinuch is to be king of Ireland toward the end of the world, when the Bladed Wheel and the Broom of Fanaid and the Fiery Bolt shall come to destroy the people (see O'Curry, *MS Mat.*, p. 426).

ECHTRAE CORMAIC

The Adventure of Cormac

Besides Conle, Conn of the Hundred Battles had another son, Art, the father of Cormac, who was king of Ireland in the third century A.D., according to the annals. And of him a similar tale is told. It is preserved in the *Yellow Book of Lecan* and the *Book of Ballymote* (both fourteenth century), and also in the *Book of Fermoy* (fifteenth century, unpublished). No study of the text has been made, but the tale is clearly genuine old tradition. The Act of Truth, which is its main theme, is one of the features common to Hindu and Irish legend.[10]

One day in May at sunrise, Cormac was on the rampart of Tara, when he saw a warrior approach. He was finely clad and carried on his shoulder a branch with three golden apples. The branch gave forth delightful music when it was shaken, so that wounded men or those in sickness would fall asleep when they heard it.

> ' "Where do you come from, warrior?" said Cormac. "From a land where there is only truth," said he, "and there is no old age nor decay nor sadness nor envy nor jealousy nor hatred nor arrogance." "It is not so with us," said Cormac. "Warrior, shall we join friendship?" '

They joined friendship, and Cormac asked for the branch. The warrior gave it in exchange for the promise of three wishes in Tara. Cormac returned to the palace, and all admired the branch. He shook it, and they fell asleep until the next day. A year later the warrior returned to demand his first wish. He chose Ailbe, the daughter of Cormac. The women of Tara uttered three cries of sorrow at the loss of the king's daughter; but Cormac shook his branch, and they forgot their sorrow and fell asleep. A month from that day the warrior came again and took Cairpre Lifechar, son of Cormac.

The third time he took the king's wife, Eithne of the Long Side. Cormac could not suffer that. He pursued them, and everyone followed him. A great mist fell, and Cormac found himself alone on a wide plain. There was a great inclosure in the middle

10. Myles Dillon, 'The Hindu Act of Truth in Celtic Tradition,' *Modern Philology*, XLIV (1947), 137.

of the plain, surrounded by a fence of bronze. Within was a house of silver, which was half-thatched with birds' feathers; and men were working on the thatch, but as they laid on the feathers a gust of wind would come and blow them away. He saw a man kindling a fire, and he would lay a whole tree upon it, root and branch; but, when he came with the next tree, the first was already burnt away. He saw another royal inclosure with four houses. Here he entered, and saw a palace the roof of which was of bronze and silver, covered with birds' feathers. There was a shining spring from which five streams flowed, and the people drank from the streams. Nine ancient hazel trees stood around the spring, and the five salmon in the spring fed on the nuts which fell from them, so that the husks floated down on the streams. The sound of the falling streams was sweet music.

Cormac went into the palace. A handsome warrior and a beautiful girl welcomed him. The water for washing was heated by stones which came and went of themselves. In the evening a man arrived, carrying an ax in his right hand and a stave in his left and leading a pig. The pig was killed and put on to roast. It could be roasted only if a truth were told for each quarter. The warrior bade the man tell the first story. He related how he came by the pig, the ax, and the stave. They were given him in reward for lost cattle that he had found. The pig might be killed each night, and the stave yielded enough kindling to cook it. It was food enough for the whole palace and was alive again the next morning, and the stave was whole again. 'That is true,' said the warrior. The pig was turned, and one quarter was found to be cooked. The warrior told the next story. At plowing time his wheat field was found already plowed, sown, and harrowed. At reaping time the wheat of itself formed a stack in the field. When it was time to bring it in, it was found already stacked in the yard. It was eaten but never diminished. After this story they turned the pig, and the second quarter was ready. 'Now it is my turn,' said the woman. She had seven cows and seven sheep. The milk of the cows was sufficient for all the people of the Land of Promise, the wool of the sheep was enough

to clothe them. By that story the third quarter of the pig was cooked.

Then Cormac told how his wife and son and daughter were taken from him, and the whole pig was found to be ready. It was divided; but, when Cormac was served, he protested that he never dined without a company of fifty. The warrior chanted a lullaby so that Cormac slept, and when he awoke he found fifty warriors around him and his wife and his son and daughter.

A gold cup was brought to the warrior, and Cormac marveled at its beauty. 'There is something more wonderful about it,' said the warrior, 'for if three lies are told over it, it breaks into three parts, and three truths make it whole again.' He told three lies, and the cup broke. Then he told that Eithne had had no converse with a man, nor had Ailbe, nor Cairpre with a woman, since they came from Tara, and the cup was made whole.

The warrior then revealed that he was Manannán mac Lir. He had brought Cormac to see the Land of Promise. The men whom he saw thatching the house were the poets of Ireland who had amassed wealth in vain. The man whom he saw kindling the fire was a lord who paid from his householding for everything he consumed (?). The spring was the Well of Knowledge. The five streams were the five senses by which knowledge was attained.

When Cormac awoke the next morning, he found himself and the other three on the lawn at Tara, with the branch and the cup. Cormac's Cup distinguished truth from falsehood among the Irish, but it did not remain after Cormac.

ECHTRAE AIRT MEIC CUINN

The Adventure of Art Son of Conn

Art, the brother of Conle and father of Cormac, is the hero of an *echtrae* of which no early text is extant. The *Book of Fermoy*, in which the last story is preserved, also contains the only surviving copy of the 'Adventure of Art.' It is a modern version, and the question of its relation to other *echtrai* is still open. Specialists in mythology may decide whether we must assume an Old Irish original. It may be that this is a late derivative composition. Here the Tuatha Dé inhabit the Land of Promise, and the fairy mounds of Ireland are also theirs. The two regions are, however, distinguished.[11]

11. Cf. p. 68.

There are obscurities in the only surviving text which rather spoil the story. Bé Cuma is said to be in love with Art, but she later drives him away from Tara; and the quest for Delbchaem, which she imposes upon him, is unmotivated. There may have been a tradition that Delbchaem was destined to be the wife of Art. Bé Cuma at first pretends to be Delbchaem.

Eithne of the Long Side daughter of Brislenn Binn, king of Lochlann, was the wife of Conn of the Hundred Battles. She died and was buried at Tailtiu. Tailtiu and Bruig na Bóinne and Cruachain were the three chief burial places of Ireland. Conn was desolate. He went out alone from Tara one day and came to Benn Étair meic Étgaith.[12] On that same day it happened that the Tuatha Dé Danann were met in council to judge a woman taken in sin. Bé Cuma of the Fair Skin daughter of Eogan Inbir, the wife of Labraid Swift Hand at Sword, had sinned with Gaidiar son of Manannán. Their counsel was to banish her from the Land of Promise. A message was sent to Oengus of the Bruig by Labraid, whose daughter Nuamaisi was Oengus' wife, that Bé Cuma should be refused hospitality in all the fairy mounds of Ireland.[13] She was sent into Ireland because the Tuatha Dé hated the Irish for driving them out.

Bé Cuma loved Art son of Conn, although she did not know him, but she had heard his fame. She set out over the sea in a coracle and came to land at Benn Étair. (Her beauty is described in the conventional style. But a banished woman is no mate for the High King of Ireland.) She met Conn and told him that she was Delbchaem daughter of Morgán, and that she had come in quest of Art. They joined friendship, and she bound him to obey her. She required that Art be banished from Tara for a year. They arrived in Tara as man and wife, and Conn banished Art from Tara and from Ireland. For a year there was neither corn nor milk in Ireland. The druids declared that Conn's wife had brought this curse on the country by her wickedness and her unbelief and that it could be removed only by the sacrifice of the son of a sinless couple, whose blood must be mixed with the soil of Tara.

Conn set out in quest of the sinless boy, leaving the kingdom

12. The Hill of Howth.

13. Cf. p. 63, n. 14.

to Art during his absence. He went to Benn Étair and found there the coracle which Bé Cuma had concealed. For a month and a fortnight it carried him over the sea from one island to another. Monsters of the sea surrounded the boat. At last he came to a strange island and put into shore. (The description of the island echoes that in the preceding story—fragrant apple trees, wells of wine surrounded by hazel trees, a house thatched with birds' feathers, with doorposts of bronze and doors of crystal.) Within he found the queen, Rígru of the Large Eyes, daughter of Lodan from the Land of Promise, and wife of Dáire the Wonderful son of Fergus of the Noble Judgment from the Land of Wonders. Her son, Ségda Saerlabraid, sat in a chair of crystal. Conn sat down, and his feet were washed by invisible hands. Soon a flame leaped from the hearth, and a hand guided him toward the fire. Tables laden with food appeared before him, but none had brought them. A drinking-horn appeared, and the dishes were borne away. Then he saw a tub of blue glass with hoops of gold, and Dáire bade him bathe in the tub. He slept and awoke refreshed, and food was again set before him. This time he declared that it was a *geis* for him to eat alone.[14] His hosts were bound to eat alone, but Ségda consented to eat with him. Those two lay in the same bed that night.

Next day Conn declared his quest and asked that Ségda be given up to him for the sacrifice. Dáire would not surrender him. His only intercourse with his wife had been at the conception of Ségda, and both he and his wife were conceived in the same way, their parents having had only one intercourse. But the boy protested that the king of Ireland should not be refused and insisted on going. His people placed him under the protection of the kings of Ireland and of Art son of Conn and Finn son of Cumall, and of the poets, so that he might return safely. Conn agreed to that if it was possible. He returned to Tara, and the druids insisted on the boy's death. As they were about to kill him, a woman entered the assembly, driving a cow. She sat between Conn and Finn and bade the druids slaughter the cow and mix the blood with the soil of Tara and smear it on the door-

14. Cf. 'The Adventure of Cormac,' p. 112.

posts and spare the boy. There were two bags on the cow's sides, a bird with one leg in one of them, a bird with twelve legs in the other. She told them to cut open the bags, when the cow had been slaughtered, and release the birds. The birds fought, and the one-legged bird prevailed. The woman told them that they were the bird with twelve legs, and Ségda was the bird with one leg, for he was in the truth. She then bade Conn put away the sinful woman, but he could not do that. She foretold that their state would grow still worse, and then she departed with her son Ségda.

Bé Cuma called upon Art to play chess. He won the game and laid a *geis* on her not to taste food in Ireland until she should bring him the wand of Cú Roi. She visited the Bruig and the other fairy mounds of Ireland, and finally seized the wand at Cahirconree on Slieve Mish and brought it to him. They played again, and Bé Cuma won. She bound Art to taste no food in Ireland until he should bring back Delbchaem daughter of Morgán. Art asked where she dwelt and was told only that she was on an island in the sea. He went to Inber Colptha[14a] and found a coracle ready. (What follows is a brief repetition of Conn's journey, the island, and the house thatched with birds' wings as before.) Here, however, Art found only fair women, among them Créide the Beautiful, daughter of Fidech of the Long Hair. She told him his coming had long been fated and gave him three kisses. He stayed for a month and a fortnight and then declared his quest. Créide told him the way was long and difficult, over sea and land. There was a dense forest and a house on the path, where seven hags had prepared a bath of lead for him. Ailill of the Black Teeth, whom no weapon could wound, awaited him with her own two sisters, Fínscoth and Aeb, one with a cup of poison, the other with a cup of wine. Near by was the maiden's stronghold, surrounded by a fence of bronze; and there was the head of a man slain by Coinchenn on every stake in the fence save only one. Coinchenn was the mother of Delbchaem. Art set out and overcame all the perils of the way (some that have not been mentioned before).

14a. The mouth of the Boyne.

He encountered the giant, Ailill Dubdétach son of Morgán, and killed him and forced his wife to show him the way to the fort of Morgán and the Land of Wonders.

'That was where Coinchenn Cennfata wife of Morgán was. She had the strength of a hundred in battle or conflict. And she was a daughter of Conchruth king of the Coinchinn ("Dogheads"). And the druids had foretold that, if ever her daughter should be wooed, she would die then; so for that reason she used to kill every man that came to woo her daughter.'

Art arrived at the stronghold, where Delbchaem dwelt. She occupied a sunroom apart from the house. She saw him approach. She had long awaited him and feared for his safety. He went to the sunroom, and her women made him welcome and washed his feet. Coinchenn came and challenged him to fight. But Art soon overcame her and cut off her head and set it on the vacant stake. Then Morgán came to avenge his wife, and he, too, lost his head. (The fight with Morgán is told in the rhetorical fashion of the *Book of Leinster* version of the *Táin*.) Art then took possession of the Land of Wonders and set out with Delbchaem for Ireland. They landed at Benn Étair, and Delbchaem bade Art go on alone to Tara and tell Bé Cuma to depart and that it was a great ill fortune for which she was being warned to quit Tara. She rose up at once and went away without farewell and came to Benn Étair. Delbchaem came to Tara, and Art told his adventure to the nobles of Ireland.

ECHTRAE LAEGAIRI

The Adventure of Laegaire

We must now return to the Old Irish period for a short saga preserved in the *Book of Leinster* and again in the *Book of Fermoy*, which presents the *echtrae* type in a simple form, but with one curious feature. Here it is not a girl who entices the hero away to an island of peace but a fairy warrior who seeks the aid of mortals against other fairies. The tale has recently been edited by Jackson (*Speculum*, XVII [1942], 377), who shows that it is very old—the prose, as we have it, perhaps of the ninth century, the verse somewhat later. The prose style is archaic, the bare staccato narrative of the earliest sagas. The poems resemble closely, even in details of vocabulary, those in *Echtrae Conli*, and in *Serglige Con Culainn*, which is discussed below. There is a summary by Alfred Nutt, *The Voyage of Bran*, I, 180.

Once when Crimthann Cass was king of Connacht, there was an assembly at Énloch in Mag Ai. Early in the morning the men of Connacht saw a man approaching through the mist. Laegaire son of Crimthann welcomed him and asked why he came. The stranger said that he had come for help. He was Fiachna mac Rétach from the fairy mounds. His wife had been carried off by Eochaid son of Sál. He had slain Eochaid in battle, but his wife had fled to Eochaid's nephew, Goll son of Dolb, a king in Mag Mell (here the Plain of Delight is apparently separated from the fairy mounds in the manner of the early stories), and Goll had defeated him in seven battles. Another battle was to be fought that day. He would give silver and gold to all who would go along with him.

In two short poems Fiachna describes the fighting that has taken place and praises the beauty and valor of his people. The region is here called the "Plain of the Two Mists' (*Mag Dá Chéo*). He goes away, and Laegaire sets out with fifty men to help him. There is no account of the journey. He reaches the camp of Fiachna and undertakes to oppose Goll with his fifty men. Goll and his company are slain. Laegaire asks where the woman is, and Fiachna says she is in Mag Mell (apparently another region) under guard. Laegaire tells Fiachna to stay while he goes to deliver her. He goes to the place and demands her release, announcing his victory over Goll. She is surrendered to Laegaire and utters a lament in verse, confessing her love for Eochaid, king of Mag Dá Chéo, and for Goll.

Laegaire restored his wife to Fiachna, who gave him his daughter Der Gréine, and fifty maidens for his fifty men. They stayed a year, and then Laegaire resolved to visit Ireland. Fiachna gave him horses and warned him not to dismount in Ireland. They found the Connachtmen still assembled. They had waited a whole year, lamenting the disappearance of Laegaire. They leaped forward to welcome him back. 'Do not approach us,' said Laegaire, 'for we have come to say farewell.' 'Do not leave me!' said Crimthann. 'I will give you the kingdom of the Three Connachts, with their gold and silver, their steeds and bridles, and their fair women; but do not leave me!' (Laegaire replies in a

poem praising the joys of the Other World. They travel on the mist, leading a mighty army. There is delightful music and the happiness of love.)

> ' "Delightful fairy music, travel from one kingdom to another, drinking mead from bright vessels, talking with the one you love.
>
> "We play with men of yellow gold on golden chess-boards: we drink clear mead in the company of a proud armed warrior.
>
> "Der Gréine, daughter of Fiachna, is my wife, and, to tell all, there is a wife for each of my fifty men."

'After that he went from them into the fairy mound again, and he shares the kingdom of the fairy mound with Fiachna mac Rétach in the fort of Mag Mell,[15] and Fiachna's daughter with him; and he has not come out yet.'

SERGLIGE CON CULAINN INSO SÍS 7 ÓENÉT EMIRE

The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn and the Only Jealousy of Emer

The hero of the Ulster Cycle is here the hero of an Adventure, and the story is one of the most effective that has come down to us. It is preserved only in *LU* (twelfth century) and in a late manuscript which may derive from it and is not of great importance. The text we have is a combination of two versions, so that there is some incoherence in the narrative. In the first part, Cú Chulainn's wife is Eithne In Gubai, in the second Emer. But the charm of the story is not lost. The songs in praise of the Other World are worth attention, and the farewell songs of Fann at the end have some verses that are worthy of the author of Deirdre's lament in 'The Exile of the Sons of Usnech.' The story is not wanting in episodes of humor and pathos.

The language of the earlier of the two versions (B) which are here combined is perhaps not earlier than the tenth century, that of the later (A) may be assigned to the eleventh century; and the common source seems to be influenced by *Echtrae Laegaire*. Besides the woman, Lí Ban, who comes to invite Cú Chulainn to the Other World, a warrior comes to summon him. He is asked to fight a battle in Mag Mell for Labraid Swift Hand at Sword against Eogan Inbir and Eochaid Iuil, in reward for which he is offered the love of Fann. Manannán mac Lir, who has abandoned Fann, is also on the opposing side; but he takes no part in the battle and appears only at the end. There may, indeed, have been two different stories, as the title suggests, one of the *Echtrae Laegaire* type, in which Cú Chulainn fights a battle in the Other

15. Mag Mell is thus here identified with the fairy mound.

World, and one of the *Echtrae Conli* type, in which Fann invites him to be her lover there.

This story has attracted particular attention on the part of Arthurian scholars, as presenting motifs which recur in the Grail legend.[16] For many of these it may not be the earliest available source, as it does not date from the Old Irish period in its present form.

(B) The men of Ulster were assembled at Mag Muirthemni to celebrate the feast of Samain. Some wonderful birds settled on the lake before them, and all the women longed to have a pair of them, one for each shoulder. Cú Chulainn took his sling and brought in the birds, but when they were divided, his wife Eithne In Gubai alone had not received her share. Cú Chulainn sought to comfort her, but she answered that when he gave she also was the giver, for, while all the women loved him and he cared for them somewhat, she cared for him alone. He promised that he would find other birds for her; and soon two magic birds descended on the water, but he failed to catch them.

Cú Chulainn fell asleep, and in his dream two women came and beat him, so that when he awoke he was unable to speak. He remained prostrate for a year at Emain Macha; and at the next feast of Samain a man appeared beside his bed and announced that Fann awaited Cú Chulainn in the Plain of Cruach. He said that he was Oengus son of Aed Abrat. Cú Chulainn then rose up and went to the place where he had slept before, and a woman came to him. She was Lí Ban, the wife of Labraid Swift Hand at Sword, and she brought a message from Fann and from Labraid, that if Cú Chulainn would come to Mag Mell and fight for one day against Labraid's enemies, he might have the love of Fann. His charioteer, Loeg, was sent with Lí Ban to visit the place, and they traveled in a boat of bronze across a lake[17] to an island where Loeg was welcomed by Fann and by Labraid. He returned and told Cú Chulainn what he had seen.

(Here the narrative is interrupted by the account of Cú Chulainn's instructions to Lugaid Reoderg, who has been chosen king of Tara. This belongs to the group of *tecosca* or 'Instruc-

16. See A. C. L. Brown, *The Origin of the Grail Legend* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943).

17. In *Echtrae Laegaire*, Laegaire goes over a lake to the Other World.

tions,' of which *Tecosca Cormaic* is the best-known example. It can hardly be part of the story in its original form.)

(A) Cú Chulainn sent Loeg to Emer to say that he was recovering and that she might come to see him. She visited him and exhorted him to rise from his long sickness. He set out, and Lí Ban appeared before him at Airbe Roir and invited him to the Other World, here called simply the *síd* ('fairy mound'). He asks where Labraid dwells,[18] and she replies in a fine poem describing the marvels of the Other World and the glories of Labraid:

> 'Labraid dwells upon clear water, where companies of women come and go. You will be glad to go to his country, if it be to visit Labraid the Swift.
>
> Daring his right hand, which cuts off a hundred—she who tells it knows! Crimson of lovely shade is the likeness of Labraid's cheek.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Bravest of warriors, most wonderful his story, he has set out for the land of Eochaid Iuil. His hair is like strands of gold; the smell of wine is on his breath.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> A bridle of gold on every horse, and that is not all: pillars of silver and of crystal in the house where Labraid dwells.'

Cú Chulainn refuses to go at the invitation of a woman and sends Loeg to visit the place. This time the journey seems to be overland, and various unidentified place-names are given. Loeg is welcomed by Fann and returns to Cú Chulainn. He tells the wonders he has seen and praises the beauty of Fann. The two poems that occur here are good examples of the descriptions of the Other World. There is a sameness about them all, but, like the medieval Latin hymns, they keep their freshness:

> 'I came, a splendid course, to a place that was wonderful though not unknown,[19] to a mound, where scores of

18. The question occurs in the same form in B before Loeg goes with Lí Ban. The two versions appear to overlap at this point.

19. Loeg's father, Riangabar, was of the Tuatha Dé Danann.

companies were assembled, where I found longhaired Labraid.

I found him seated on the mound, with thousands of weapons, his hair of lovely shades, a golden ball clasping it.

. . . . . .

The two kings are in the house, Failbe Find and Labraid; three times fifty around each of them, it is the number of the household.

. . . . . .

The stead of each bed is copper, white pillars gilded; the candle which stands before them is a gleaming precious stone.

Before the entrance to the west, where the sun sets, there are grey horses with shining manes and others of roan color.

Before the entrance to the east three trees of purple crystal, in which birds sing softly without ceasing to the children from the royal fort.

There is a tree at the entrance of the inclosure—it were well to match its music—a silver tree on which the sun shines, brilliant as gold.

. . . . . .

A vat there is of heady mead, which is served to the household; it stays ever—a lasting custom—so that it is always full.

There is a girl in the noble house who surpasses the women of Ireland, with yellow flowing hair: she is beautiful and skilled in crafts.

The conversation that she holds with each one is beautiful, wonderful: the heart of every man breaks with longing and love for her.

. . . . . .

If I had all Ireland and the kingdom of the yellow hills, I would give it—no weak resolve—to dwell in the place to which I came.'

' "That is good," said Cú Chulainn. "It is good," said Loeg, "and you should go there. And everything in that country is good." And then Loeg said again, telling the joy of the fairy mound:

' "I saw a bright free land where no falsehood is spoken nor deceit. There is a king there who reddens troops with blood, Labraid Swift Hand at Sword.

. . . . . .

Beautiful women—supreme joy—are the daughters of Aed Abrat. The beauty of Fann—brilliant name—no queen nor king has attained it.

. . . . . .

I saw musicians in the house playing for the maiden. Were it not that I came out quickly, they would have left me without reason.

I have seen the hill where a lovely woman dwelt, Eithne of the Sigh, but the woman I tell of here brings the hosts out of their senses." '

Cú Chulainn goes with Lí Ban in his chariot to the island (here the island reappears), and is welcomed by Labraid. He fights alone against the great host of the enemy and defeats them. His battle frenzy is calmed by three immersions in vats of cold water, as in the episode told at the beginning of *Táin Bó Cualnge*. Fann sings of his beauty and valor, and Lí Ban greets him with a 'rhetoric.' He spends a month with Fann; and, when he bids her farewell, they make a tryst at Ibor Cinn Tráchta in Ireland.

Emer came to the trysting place to kill Fann and reproached Cú Chulainn for dishonoring her.

' "Perhaps," says Emer, "the woman you follow is not better than I. However, what glitters seems beautiful, what is new seems bright, what is high seems fair, what is custom

seems tasteless, what is lacking seems lovely, what is familiar seems worthless, until all be known. Lad," said she, "you had us once in dignity together, and we should be so again, if you desire it." And she was sad. "On my word," said he, "I want you, and I shall want you as long as you live."

' "Leave me then," said Fann. "It would be better that he abandon me," said Emer. "No," said Fann, "it is I who shall be abandoned, and it is I who was caught unawares a while ago." And she began to be sad and very faint in spirit, for she was ashamed at being abandoned and to go so soon back to her house. And her great love for Cú Chulainn troubled her, and thus she was lamenting, and she made this lay:

> "I shall go on a journey, though I like our adventure best. Though some famous man should come to me, I would liefer stay.
>
> I would liefer be here—I shall confess it to you without grudge—than to go, though you may wonder at it, to the sun palace of Aed Abrat.
>
> Emer, the man is yours; and may you enjoy him, good woman. I must hunger for what my hand does not reach, though it is hard.
>
> Men were wooing me under the roof and in secret places: I made no tryst with them, for I was faithful.
>
> Unhappy is one who gives love to another, unless it be cherished: it is better to be thrust aside unless love is given for love." '

Manannán learns of Fann's distress and comes from the east to fetch her. She greets him in another poem and says she will follow him, for Cú Chulainn has betrayed her and, moreover, he has a worthy queen already, while Manannán is alone. Cú Chulainn wanders through the mountains in distraction and takes neither food nor drink, until the druids give him a drink of forgetfulness and he forgets Fann. Emer drinks and forgets her jealousy. Manannán shakes his cloak between Cú Chulainn and Fann, so that they may never meet again.

VI

The Voyages

WE HAVE seen in 'The Voyage of Bran' the beginning of a second focus of interest in the account of the visit to the Other World, namely, the journey itself, which in the *echtrae* is either not described at all or indicated only briefly. Sometimes it is not clear whether the region visited is imagined as beyond the sea or in a fairy mound. Often both these notions seem to be present. But there is a group of stories in which the journey is the main interest, and Zimmer suggested that they grew out of stories of the actual experiences of fishermen and hermits, blended with the pagan traditions of the Other World and borrowings from Vergil and from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[1]

Of the seven *immrama* mentioned in the two lists of sagas, only three have come down to us: 'The Voyage of Mael Dúin,' 'The Voyage of the Uí Chorra,' and 'The Voyage of Snédgus and Mac Riagla.' Of these the oldest and the most successful as a story is 'The Voyage of Mael Dúin.' Zimmer showed that it was the immediate source of the famous *Navigatio Brendani*, which had a great influence in the Middle Ages and is believed to have supplied an impulse to the voyages of discovery which led men eastward to the coasts of India and west to the New World.[2]

1. *ZfDA*, XXXIII (1889), 129–220, 257–338; see esp. pp. 176–82 and 324 f. There is a good summary of the whole matter by Alfred Nutt, *The Voyage of Bran*, II (London, 1897), 161. Zimmer's theory has been well criticized by W. F. Thrall (*Modern Philology*, XV, 449–74), who shows that some of the comparisons with episodes in the *Aeneid* are farfetched. Thrall later stressed the voyages of hermits and missionaries as the most probable source of the *immram* (*Manly Anniversary Studies* [Chicago, 1923], pp. 276–83).

2. Many voyages were undertaken in quest of the Island of St. Brendan, the latest in 1721 (see A. d'Ancona, *Scritti danteschi* [Firenze, 1913], p. 47). The whole question of the legendary islands and their possible influence upon the great explorers is discussed by T. J. Westropp, 'Brasil and the Legendary Islands of the North Atlantic,' *PRIA* XXX (1912), 223–60.

IMMRAM CURAIG MAÍLE DÚIN

The Voyage of Mael Dúin's Boat

The story is preserved in fragments in *LU*, *YBL*, Eg. 1782, and Harl. 5280 and dates from the tenth century in its extant form. Zimmer held that the original tale was not later than the eighth century (*KZ*, XXVIII, 789; *ZfDA*, XXXIII, 289), and, since a manuscript of the *Navigatio Brendani*, later acquired by the British Museum, appears to belong to the tenth century and shows itself to be a copy of an earlier original,[3] this assumption is almost necessary. There is no sufficient reason, I think, to doubt Zimmer's theory of the relation between the texts, but the matter invites a final discussion in the light of subsequent research.[4] The composition is attributed in Egerton 1782 to Aed Finn, chief scholar of Ireland. One of that name is recorded in the annals as having died A.D. 777;[5] but he was king of Dál Riata, and no mention is made of his being a learned man. The setting of the text is of uncertain time, as the persons named have not been identified, but it is Christian, for Mael Dúin was born of a nun. His father, Ailill Ochair Ága, is described as a warrior of the Eoganacht of Ninuss (explained as the Eoganacht of the Arans).[6]

Mael Dúin was a love-child and was fostered by the queen, who was a friend of his mother, and reared as one of her own children. Like Oengus in 'The Wooing of Étain,' he discovered from the taunt of a companion that he was not her son; and he then learned that his father, Ailill Ochair Ága, had been murdered by marauders from Leix. He asked the way to Leix, and wise men told him he must go by sea, so he went to Corcomroe (in the present County Clare) to consult a druid, who appointed

3. See Plummer, *VSH*, I, xli, n. 2.

4. See W. F. Thrall, *Manly Anniversary Studies*, p. 283, n. 2; E. G. R. Waters, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St. Brendan by Benedict* (Oxford, 1928), p. lxxxii, n. 3; J. F. Kenney, *Sources of the Early History of Ireland* (New York, 1929), p. 411, n. 144. Van Hamel would place it in the eighth or ninth century (*Immrama* [Dublin, 1941], p. 24).

5. *Annals of Ulster*, I, ed. W. M. Hennessy (Dublin, 1887), 248.

6. There is a townland Eoghanacht in Aranmore.

the day he should begin to build his boat and the number of men he should take, namely, seventeen.[7] However, after he had set sail, his three foster-brothers swam out after the boat and were taken aboard in violation of the druid's counsel.

They voyaged all day until midnight, when they reached two small islands from which there came a great noise of intoxication and boasting; and they heard one man cry out that he was the better warrior, for he had slain Ailill Ochair Ága, and none of Ailill's kindred had avenged the crime upon him. Mael Dúin's people rejoiced at having come straight to the house of the murderer; but, while they spoke together about it, a storm arose, and their boat was carried away to sea. When morning broke they saw no land. Mael Dúin reproached his foster-brothers for having brought this misfortune upon them by causing them to disobey the druid's instruction. They left their boat to sail wherever God might guide it, and so their wonderful voyage began.

The boat travels over the endless ocean and brings them to many marvelous islands, thirty-one in all. On the islands and in the open sea they encounter prodigies the account of which displays considerable power of imagination and a nice sense of humor. Here I can choose only a few episodes.

On the first island they see a swarm of ants, each as big as a foal, which seek to devour them; so they flee. On another they find only great birds and take some of them for food; on another a wild beast like a horse with sharp nails on his hooves, and they flee in terror. The next island is occupied by demons who are having a horse-race. Sometimes they find food and drink made ready for them. A branch plucked by Mael Dúin bears three apples after three days, and they all eat of these apples forty days and are satisfied.

'They found another island surrounded by a stone wall. When they came near, a great beast arose and ran around the island. Mael Dúin thought it faster than the wind. It went to the summit of the island and stretched itself on the ground with its feet in the air. It would turn in its skin, the flesh and bones

7. 'Or sixty according to others,' adds the redactor.

revolving and the skin unmoved; or at another time the skin turning like a mill, the bones and the flesh quite still.'

They fled in haste, and the beast came down to the shore and hurled stones after them, one of which pierced Mael Ḍúin's shield and lodged in the boat's keel.

On one island there are apple trees with golden apples. Red swine devour the apples by day and disappear underground at night. Then the sea birds come and eat the apples. Mael Dúin says that it can fare no worse with them than with the birds, and they go ashore. The earth is hot so that they can hardly stay, for the swine are blazing hot. They fill the boat with apples and escape.

On the next island they find a feast prepared, and they eat and drink. There is a wealth of treasure guarded by a cat. One of the foster-brothers seizes a gold bracelet, and the cat jumps right through him and burns him to ashes. Later they come to an island inhabited by a hideous miller, who tells them that he grinds half the corn of Ireland in his mill, all that is ever begrudged. On another there are people whose bodies and clothes are black. They wail unceasingly. The lot falls on one of the two remaining foster-brothers who goes ashore; and at once he turns black and wails like the others. Two are sent to rescue him and suffer the same fate. Four more go and succeed in bringing back the last two, but not the foster-brother.

After other adventures they reach an island where they find an old man whose clothing is his hair. He tells them he is of the Men of Ireland. He is a pilgrim and has come out floating on a sod of earth which the Lord established in that place. The sod grew miraculously year by year to be an island, and the souls of his children and his kindred in the form of birds have settled in the trees there. All are fed by the ministry of angels. He prophesies that Mael Dúin and his companions will return home safely, all save one man. After three days they depart.

At one time the sea is like green glass, transparent and beautiful; at another it is like a cloud, so that they fear it will not support them. Below them now is a wonderful country with great strongholds. A fearsome beast in a tree seizes an ox and devours

it. In terror they sail over this region and escape. A stream of water flows through the air like a rainbow, and they pass below it and spear salmon from the water over their heads. From Sunday evening until Monday morning the stream subsides and does not flow. They fill their boat with salmon and go on their way. They behold a pillar of silver rising out of the sea to which a great silver net is attached. The boat passes through a mesh of the net. Diurán brings with him a piece of the net and vows to lay it on the altar at Armagh.

At last they reach an island, which is plainly the Land of Women of the *echtrai*. Seventeen girls are there preparing a bath for them. One of the girls comes to welcome them and announces that the queen invites them into the fort. A feast is served, and, when they have finished eating and drinking, each of Mael Dúin's men takes a wife, and Mael Dúin sleeps with the queen. In the morning she bids them abide there. Age will not come upon them, and they will live forever and enjoy the pleasures they have known there every night without any toil. They stay for three months, and it seems like three years. One of Mael Dúin's companions grows weary and wishes to go home (as in *Echtrae Brain*), but Mael Dúin wishes to stay. The others prevail upon him, and one day, while the queen is away, they set sail. She rides down to the beach and throws a ball of thread to Mael Dúin. He catches it, and she draws the boat back to land (as in *Echtrae Brain*). Three times she treats them so, and at last Mael Dúin says that someone else must attend to the ball of thread. They set out again, and when the queen throws her ball of thread another man takes it and it clings to his hand, but Diurán cuts off his arm, and they sail away.

Now comes an episode which Zimmer rightly held to be the occasion of the later attribution of a marvelous voyage to St. Brendan of Clonfert.[8] They land on a large island, one half of which is wooded with yews and oaks, while the other is an open plain grazed by great flocks of sheep. They see a little church and a fort, and in the church they find an old monk. His hair covers him completely. He is one of the fifteen disciples of St.

8. *ZfDA*, XXXIII, 295 f.

Brendan of Birr who set out on a pilgrimage and landed there. All are dead save him alone. He bids them eat of the sheep, and they stay there for a while. (St. Brendan of Birr died A.D. 565, St. Brendan of Clonfert, A.D. 576. And it is not here said that the former made the voyage himself, merely that fifteen of his monks did so. The latter, however, was known to have made other voyages and easily became the subject of a regular *immram* [see Zimmer, *loc. cit.*]).

On this same island they see a huge bird which eats the fruit of a branch which it carries in its claws. It is visited by two eagles, which pick the lice from its head and body and remove the old feathers. Then they pick some of the fruit and cast it into a lake, so that the foam of the water becomes red. The great bird descends into the lake and washes himself. Afterward his flight is swifter and stronger than before. They understand that he has undergone the renewal of youth according to the word of the prophet who says: *renovabitur ut aquilae iuventus tua.*[9] Diurán bathes in the lake, and he never lost a tooth or a hair of his head, nor did he suffer weakness or disease from that time forth.

On the next island the third of the foster-brothers meets his doom. It is inhabited by people who play and laugh unceasingly. The lot falls upon him to go ashore, and he at once begins to play and laugh like the others. His companions wait a long time, and then abandon him.[10]

'Then they saw another island which was not large, with a wall of fire all around it; and that wall revolved about the island. There was an open doorway in the side of the wall, and each time the doorway came in front of them they saw the whole island and all that was on it with all its inhabitants, many handsome people in lovely garments with golden cups in their hands as they feasted. And they heard their ale-music. And they were for a long time watching the wonder which they saw, and they found it delightful.'

9. Ps. 103:5.

10. This episode should precede the visit to the Land of Women, for Mael Dúin had only the original seventeen with him there.

Two more islands are visited, on one of which they meet a hermit who bids them return home and foretells that they will find the slayer of Mael Dúin's father but that they must spare him because God has saved them from many dangers. At last they see an Irish falcon flying to the southeast. They follow the course of its flight, and at nightfall they come to the first island, from which the wind had borne them out to sea. They are made welcome, and they relate all the wonders that God has shown them according to the word of the 'prophet' who says: *haec olim meminisse iuvabit.*

Mael Dúin returns to his own country. Diurán lays the silver on the altar of Armagh. They relate their adventures from beginning to end and the dangers and perils which they had experienced on sea and land.

The second title in the Leinster saga list under the heading *immrama* is *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*, and this tale has also been preserved. It is contained in the *Book of Fermoy* (fifteenth century) and in some late paper manuscripts. The text is perhaps originally of the early Middle Irish period (eleventh century?) and is a blend of episodes borrowed from the 'Voyage of Mael Dúin' and motifs from the Visions of Heaven and Hell.[11] It was edited by Stokes, with a translation (*RC*, XIV, 22–69) and by Van Hamel (*Immrama*, p. 93). There are abstracts of it by E. O'Curry (*Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History* [Dublin, 1878], p. 289) and by Zimmer (*ZfDA*, XXXIII, 183). Zimmer, indeed, supposes an Old Irish original earlier than that of the preceding story.

The only other Voyage extant is *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla*, and the original version is in verse, a poem of seventy-six stanzas, preserved in *YBL*. It narrates the adventures of two monks of Iona, who set out upon the ocean on pilgrimage. The episodes are borrowed in part from the 'Voyage of Mael Dúin,' but there are religious motifs that are not so derived. Eight islands are visited. On one of them a great bird tells the monks

11. Stokes called attention to a parallel with the *Divina commedia* in the vision of a fiery sea in which the heads of the damned are dashed against each other (*RC*, XIV, 54, § 66; cf. *Inferno*, VII, 112–14).

the story of the Creation, the Nativity, the Passion, the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and the Story of Doomsday. (No account of the recital is given.) On another, which is a modification of the Island of Women, the king tells them that Elijah and Enoch dwell there in a place apart, awaiting the Day of Judgment. The poem dates perhaps from the tenth century, for it refers to the incursions of the Norsemen as a visitation from God upon the Irish in punishment for sin. It gave rise to two prose versions, both of which have been preserved and are of little interest.

The mention of the Story of Doomsday and the prophet Enoch shows again the introduction into these voyage tales of a new element borrowed from the Visions which will be discussed in the next chapter. And in the later of the prose versions this is carried farther by the interpolation of a part of the 'Vision of Adamnán' as one of the adventures of the wandering clerics.[12]

12. The original verse text was first edited and translated by R. Thurneysen, *Zwei Versionen d. mittelirischen Legende von Snedgus u.M.R.* (Halle, 1904), Corrigenda, *ZCP*, V, 418; also by Van Hamel, *Immrama*, p. 78; the prose version A by Stokes, *RC*, IX, 14, and by Thurneysen, *Zwei Versionen;* the prose B by Stokes, *RC*, XXVI, 132, and by O Máille, *Miscellany presented to Kuno Meyer* (Halle, 1912), p. 307. For discussion see Zimmer, Zf*DA*, XXXIII, 211.

VII

The Visions

WE HAVE seen in the later Voyage tales the appearance of visions of hell and heaven as incidents in the story; and there is a separate group of texts which derive from Christian and Jewish originals and describe such visions as experienced by one or another of the Irish saints. The apocryphal Book of Enoch, which dates from the time of Judas the Macchabee (second century B.C.) and enjoyed considerable esteem among Christians down to the third century A.D.,[1] the Vision of Esdras, the Gospel of Nicodemus, the *Visio Pauli*, and the Apocalypse itself are examples of this tradition. The *Divina commedia* is its greatest realization as literature. The only attempt to examine the Irish texts from this point of view is that of C. S. Boswell, *An Irish Precursor of Dante*, a book which has not, I think, received the attention it merits. The author seems to work largely at second hand, but he makes a number of valuable observations and covers a wide field. He cast his net too widely, indeed, to permit of his coming to close quarters with the matter. The Irish Visions contain valuable evidence about what was read and studied in Ireland in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, and there is still room for investigation.[2]

More important, indeed, for the wider question of Irish influence in the medieval literature of western Europe are the

1. R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch*[2] (London: Oxford University Press, 1912).

2. See G. T. Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church* (6th ed., 1907), pp. 211 f.; A. d'Ancona, 'I Precursori di Dante,' *Scritti danteschi* (Firenze, 1913). S. J. Crawford observes that apocryphal writings, condemned by a decree wrongly ascribed to Pope Gelasius († 496), continued to be favored by the Irish (*Anglo-Saxon Influence on Western Christendom* [London, 1933], p. 95).

Irish Visions composed in Latin, the *Vision of Tundale*,[3] and the *Purgatorium Patricii*,[4] which, with the *Navigatio Brendani*, are considered by D'Ancona as among the works that may have prompted Dante ("I Precursori," pp. 37, 63, 102). These three can hardly have been unknown to him. But they are beyond the limit I have set for myself. The earliest and best of the Visions composed in Irish is the 'Vision of Adamnán.'

FÍS ADAMNÁIN

The Vision of Adamnán

St. Adamnán, author of a beautiful life of St. Colmcille[5] and of a description of the Holy Land,[6] was abbot of Iona (679–704), tenth in succession to Colmcille, its founder. Of him it is told that once, on the feast day of St. John the Baptist, his soul parted from his body and was guided by its guardian angel to heaven and to hell. The text is preserved complete in *LU* and also in *LB* (fourteenth century).[7] The *LU* version cannot be earlier than the tenth century, to judge from the language; nor can it be much later. The possibility of an earlier original, from which the extant text derives, is not excluded.[8]

3. There is an Irish version, edited by V. H. Friedel and Kuno Meyer, *La Vision de Tondale* (Paris, 1907). The original was written in 1149 by an Irish monk of Ratisbon (see Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland* [New York, 1929], p. 742).

4. The *Purgatorium Patricii* was written by an English monk, Henry of Saltrey, *ca.* 1190, and describes a vision seen in 1153 at St. Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg by an English knight named Owen. It is therefore Irish only in its setting. A modern Irish version of the Latin text as edited by Messingham, *Florilegium insulae sanctorum* (1624) has been edited by Treasa Condún, *Lia Fáil*, I (1924), 1–48. For an Irish version of *Visio Pauli* see *ZTS*, XXIV (1922), 54. The Irish Visions are discussed briefly by T. Silverstein, *Visio Pauli*, pp. 82–90, in K. Lake and S. Lake, *Studies and Documents*, IV (London, 1935).

5. W. Reeves, *The Life of St. Columba* (Dublin, 1857).

6. *De locis sanctis*, ed. P. Geyer, *Corp. SS. Eccl. Lat.*, XXXIX (Vienna, 1898), 219–97.

7. Stokes (ed.), *Fís Adamnáin* (Simla, 1870); Windisch, *IT*, I, 165; Best and Bergin, *LU*, p. 67. Translations: Stokes, *Fís Adamnáin* and *Fraser's Magazine*, LXXXIII, 184; also in Margaret Stokes, *Three Months in the Forests of France* (London, 1895), p. 265; Vendryes, *RC*, XXX, 349; Boswell, *An Irish Precursor of Dante* (London, 1908), p. 28. There is also a Paris manuscript of the sixteenth century, ed. Vendryes, *RC*, XXX, 349. The three texts vary, and the manuscript tradition has not yet been studied.

8. Zimmer held that the language could be dated as early as the ninth century, but it appears to be later than that of the *Vita tripartita*.

The 'Vision of Adamnán' seems to me to be an example of smooth and stately prose, not without good imagery and a sort of gladness that rings true. It makes better reading than the Book of Enoch, which is perhaps the earliest example of its kind.[9] There is a good analysis by Seymour (*PRIA*, XXXVII [1927], Sec. C, 304), who calls it 'the finest of all the medieval visions prior to Dante.' It has a claim on our attention, whatever its own merit, for two reasons. First, it is one of the earliest medieval visions,[10] earlier than the *Visio Tnugdali* and the *Purgatorium Patricii;* and, second, it is related to the Voyage tales discussed above. The Voyages borrow from the Visions, and the Visions seem to have been influenced by the pagan traditions about the Other World.[11]

Many of the saints and of the apostles and disciples of Christ have been permitted to know the mysteries of heaven, the rewards of the just, and the pains of hell and those who suffer them. St. Peter beheld the four-cornered vessel which was let down from heaven. St. Paul was raised to the third heaven and heard unutterable words. On the day of Mary's death, all the apostles saw the sufferings of the damned, when the Lord bade the angels of the west open the earth before them, so that they might behold hell and its torments, as he had foretold long before his Passion.

All this was revealed to Adamnán, when his soul went forth from his body and was brought to heaven and to hell. Its guardian angel appeared to it and brought it first to heaven, a bright and happy land, where the saints of the east and west and north and south are ranged in separate choirs, clad in white cassocks, with hoods over their heads. All are equally close to the vessel in

9. See Boswell, *An Irish Precursor of Dante*, p. 175.

10. The earliest Irish Vision tale is the Latin *Vision of Fursa*, which is incorporated in the *Vita Fursei* and was known to Bede, who summarizes it, *Hist.* iii. 19 (written in 731). The fragmentary 'Vision of Laisrén,' preserved in an Irish text, is said by Meyer to go back to the ninth or early tenth century (see *Otia Merseiana*, I [1899], 112).

11. M. R. James regarded the fragment of an apocalypse preserved in a Reichenau manuscript now at Karlsruhe, which is apparently the work of an Irishman, as a source of the 'Vision of Adamnán' (*JTS*, XX [1919], 15).

which the nine degrees of heaven dwell. All hear the heavenly music. At one time the saints sing, praising God; at another they listen to the music of heaven, for that music and the light that they behold and the fragrance of that country fill them with delight. There is a wonderful prince facing them to the south-east, with a veil of glass between and a golden arch beyond it. Through this arch they perceive the forms and shadows of the heavenly host. A wall of fire surrounds the country, but it harms not those who cross it.[12]

The host of heaven is described; the apostles and the Blessed Virgin are around Christ. On Mary's right hand are the holy virgins, 'and no great space between them.'

'But great and wonderful as are the brightness and light in the land of the saints, as we have said, more wonderful a thousand times is the brillance of the plain of the heavenly host around the throne of the Lord himself. That throne is a well-wrought chair, supported by four pillars of precious stone. Though one should hear no other music but the fair harmony of those four pillars, it would be enough of happiness. Three stately birds are perched on the chair before the king, their minds ever intent upon their Creator. And this is their office. They sing the eight Hours praising and glorifying the Lord, and a choir of archangels accompanies them. The chant is begun by the birds and the angels, and the whole host of heaven responds, both saints and virgins. Above the Glorious One seated on his throne, there is a great arch like a wrought helmet or a royal crown. If human eyes should see it, they would melt away at once. Three zones are around it, between it and the host, and what they are cannot be told. Six thousand thousands[13] in the forms of horses and birds decorate the fiery chair and blaze eternally.

'To describe the mighty Lord who is on that throne is not possible for anyone save Him alone, unless he should intrust it to the heavenly orders; for none shall tell His ardor and energy,

12. Mael Dúin sees this blessed land surrounded by a wall of fire (p. 129).

13. Cf. 'ten thousand times ten thousand before him' (Enoch 14:22); 'and the number of them was thousands of thousands' (Rev. 5:11).

His glow and gleam, His dignity and beauty, His constancy and firmness, the number of angels and archangels who sing their chant before Him. . . . . Though one should gaze around east and west and north and south, he will find on every side the noble face seven times as bright as the sun. He will see no human form, neither head nor feet, but a mass of fire blazing throughout the world, and all in fear and trembling in Its presence.

'The citadel in which that throne is set is surrounded by seven walls of glass of various colors, each one higher than the next. The ceiling and the floor of the citadel are of glass, bright as the sun, shot with blue and purple and green and every color.

'People gentle and kind, lacking no sort of goodness, are they who dwell in that citadel. For none come there nor dwell there but holy virgins and pilgrims zealous for God. Their order and arrangement is hard to understand, for none has his back or his side toward another; but the inscrutable power of the Lord has appointed them face to face in ranks and equal circles joyful around the throne, all of them face to face with God.'

The description of the citadel is completed, and then we are told of those who are outside the gate, awaiting the Last Judgment, after which they are destined to go in. A veil of fire and a veil of ice hang in the gateway and strike against each other with a sound terrible to the ears of sinners. To the host of heaven within, however, it is perceived only as faint music.

Then the approach to the citadel is set forth. For there are seven heavens, and six gates through which the race of men must pass. The first is guarded by the Archangel Michael and two men that are virgins. They scourge sinners with iron rods. The Archangel Ariel with two virgins güards the second, and they have flails of fire. There is a river of fire before the gate in which the angel Abersetus washes the souls of the just clean of any stain of sin, so that they are as bright as stars. They pass into a cool and fragrant well and are comforted, but in that same well the souls of sinners are tormented further. The sinners proceed in sorrow, and the just rejoicing, to the gate of the third heaven; and so on until the sixth gate is passed. Michael then

approaches the Angel of the Trinity, and together they lead the soul into the presence of God.

The just soul is received with joy by the heavenly host and by the Lord himself, but the Lord is harsh to the unrighteous. The wretched soul is separated from the kingdom of heaven and the presence of God, and it utters the sigh that is heavier than any other sigh on going into the presence of the devil after having seen the joy of heaven. Twelve fiery dragons swallow it, one after the other, and the last deposits it in the devil's maw.[14]

When the guardian angel had shown the soul of Adamnán these visions of heaven, he brought it to hell. From a black and dismal country, where, however, there is no punishment, a bridge leads across a valley of fire into the Land of Torment.[15] Three companies seek to cross it. For one company it is wide, and they pass over without fear. They are the chaste, the penitent, and the martyrs. For the second it is narrow at first and then wide, so that they pass with peril. These are they who were compelled to do God's will and later consented to it. For the third it is wide at first and then narrow, so that they fall into the fire and are devoured by the eight monsters who dwell in that valley. These are the sinners who have heard the word of God and have not kept it.

There follows a description of the various torments suffered by those guilty of particular crimes, as in the *Inferno*. Not all, however, are doomed to eternal punishment. Finally, we are told that beyond the Land of Torment there is a wall of fire seven times more horrible. But no souls shall suffer there until after the Last Judgment. Only demons dwell there. The soul of

14. Boswell maintains that the original vision ended here and that the ten chapters following, in which the Land of Torment is described, are by another hand (*An Irish Precursor of Dante*, p. 197). There are, indeed, discrepancies, for even the just are here made to visit hell for a time. There is room for further investigation.

15. The bridge is a feature common to many descriptions of hell, including that in the Avesta (see Darmesteter, *Sacred Books of the East*, IV [Oxford, 1880], 219. It first appears in the West in the fourth book of the dialogues of Gregory the Great (Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, LXXVII, 385; see T. Silverstein, *Visio Pauli*, p. 78. See also Boswell, *An Irish Precursor*, p. 71, and Index, *s.v.* "bridge." Milton uses it (*Paradise Lost*, Book X, ll. 282–324).

Adamnán was brought, then, in the twinkling of an eye, through the golden arch and the veil of glass into the Land of Saints again; but when it thought to abide there, it heard the voice of the angel from beyond the veil bidding it return into the body whence it had come and tell in assemblies of laity and clergy the rewards of heaven and the pains of hell as the guardian angel had revealed them to it.

The text concludes with a passage confirming the authenticity of the vision, and it is said that Silvester, 'abbot of Rome,' told Constantine the doctrine of heaven and hell at the assembly before which Constantine 'bestowed Rome upon Paul and Peter.' This last sentence has been used to provide a superior date for the composition of the Vision, since it appears that the legend of the Donation of Constantine is not earlier than the late eighth century. But the point is hardly important, since that date is uncertain and the whole concluding passage is not an integral part of the Vision and may be a later addition. There is, however, no evidence that the Vision is much earlier than the extant text (tenth century), and none other to the contrary.

One paragraph from this final passage deserves attention, for it appears, indeed, to be a later addition and to present a conflicting eschatology. Elijah and Enoch are represented in Paradise,[16] where the souls of the faithful dwell in the form of white birds. This latter notion occurs in the Voyage tales, while the reference to Elijah and Enoch derives from a well-established tradition. The immediate source is a text entitled "The Two Sorrows of the Kingdom of Heaven" (*Dá Brón Flatha Nime*) which seems to derive from a Greek apocryphon:[17] 'This is the story that Elijah tells to the souls of the righteous under the Tree of Life in Paradise. When Elijah opens the book to instruct the souls, the souls of the righteous in the form of white birds

16. Cf. R. H. Charles, *Book of Enoch* 60:8 (note).

17. See Dottin, *RC*, XXI, 349; Seymour, 'Notes on Apocrypha in Ireland,' *PRIA*, XXXVII, Sec. C, 110. Dottin remarks (p. 353) that the author of *Fís Adamnáin* did not know *The Two Sorrows*, but he is clearly wrong. Part of the text quoted here is taken directly from it (cf. *RC*, XXI, 385, 387).

come to him from every quarter. He tells them, first, the rewards of the righteous, the joy and the delights of the kingdom of heaven, and they are exceedingly glad the while. Then he tells them the pains and torments of hell and the decrees of Doomsday. And a look of sorrow is manifest upon him and upon Enoch, so that those are the two sorrows of the kingdom of heaven. Then Elijah closes the book, and the birds utter a mournful cry and strike their wings against their bodies for fear of the pains of hell and the day of Judgment, so that streams of blood flow from them.'

Two other texts which record eschatological traditions are 'The Tidings of Doomsday' (*Scéla Laí Brátha*) and 'The Tidings of the Resurrection' (*Scéla na Esérge*), both added by the Interpolator in *LU* to follow the 'Vision of Adamnán.' They are of no literary value, although they are of interest for the history of Irish learning and particularly for their evidence of oriental influence on medieval Irish Christianity.[18]

There is, however, one other text which claims attention for its literary quality, although it can hardly be regarded as a part of Irish literature. It is indeed un-Irish in thought and expression and is probably a mere translation of an unknown Latin original. But it has something of the quality of the 'Vision of Adamnán' in its clear unburdened prose, and the Irish is the only extant form of the work, so far as is known. The title is 'The Evernew Tongue' (*Tenga Bithnúa*), and the form is a dialogue between Hebrew sages assembled on Mount Zion on Easter-Eve, and the spirit of the Apostle Philip. He is called "Evernew Tongue" by the heavenly host because, when he was preaching to the heathen, his tongue was nine times cut out and each time miraculously restored. The text dates probably from the tenth century, although it is preserved only in the *Book of Lismore* (fifteenth century). A shorter recension, called by Stokes an "abridgment," is preserved in five manuscripts, all of which are said to present texts not earlier than the fourteenth

18. See Gougaud, *Christianity in Celtic Lands* (London, 1932), p. 271.

century. But, of these, only one has been printed: the earliest, that in *YBL*, is still unpublished.

There is also a long modern recension. The relationship between the three, and that between the various texts of the short recension, have not been examined, although Dottin has collected some information in his editions. James has shown that the modern recension has borrowed from the 'Vision of Adamnán,' though not from the extant text.[19]

In answer to questions put by the sages, the Evernew Tongue tells about the creation of the universe, the seven heavens, the seas, wells, rivers, precious stones, trees, sun and stars, birds, men, and beasts. Hell and Doomsday are described. Finally, the sages are told that midnight is the sacred hour at which took place the Creation, the Fall of Lucifer, the Sin of Cain, the Flood, the Nativity, and the Harrowing of Hell; and at midnight will come the end of the world. The wrath of God is expounded, and then his beauty.

A few passages will illustrate the strange quality of the tract:

'*In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram et reliqua*. It is the High King of the earth, who is mightier than any king, higher than any power, fiercer than any dragon, gentler than any child, brighter than suns, holier than any sign, more vengeful than men, kinder than any mother, the only Son of God the Father, who gave this story to the many peoples of the earth, namely, of the form and creation of the world. Since it was not known what form anything possessed of all that is seen in the world save to God alone; for the children of Adam were like a head in a bag and were dwelling in a house of darkness, since they never knew what form was on the world nor who had made it until this story came from heaven for the opening of the sense and understanding of everyone, so that the way of life and salvation for souls might be discovered and obtained.'

The people were assembled on Mount Zion when they heard

19. *JTS*, XX (1919), 14–15. Edited with translation, Stokes, *Ériu*, II, 96; the short recension, from the Rennes manuscript, with a French translation by Dottin, *RC*, XXIV, 365; a late recension from a nineteenth-century Dublin manuscript with French translation, by Dottin, *RC*, XXVIII, 277.

a voice from heaven. It sounded over the camp like a great wind, but yet it seemed no louder than the conversation of a friend, and it was sweeter than music. The sages of the Hebrews asked who it was, and the voice answered: 'I was born among the peoples of the earth,' said he, 'and begotten of a man and a woman. My name is Philip the Apostle. The Lord sent me to the Gentiles to preach to them. Nine times my tongue was cut out by the Gentiles and nine times I stayed to preach again, so that my name in the household of heaven is the Evernew Tongue.'

'This then,' said he, 'has sent me to you, to explain to you the wonderful story which the Holy Ghost told through Moses son of Amram of the creation of heaven and earth with all things that are in them. For it is of the making of heaven and earth that story tells, and likewise of the forming of the world which was caused by the resurrection of Christ from the dead on this eve of Easter. For every substance and every element and every nature that is seen in the world, all were combined in the body in which Christ arose, that is, in the body of every man. There is, first, the substance of wind and air; from it came the inspiration of breath in the bodies of men. Then there is the substance of heat and boiling from fire; that is what makes the red heat of the blood in bodies. Then there is the substance of the sun and the other stars of heaven; and it makes color and light in the eyes of men. Then there is the substance of bitterness and saltness; and that makes the bitterness of tears and the gall of the liver and abundance of anger in the hearts of men. Then there is the substance of stones and of the soil of the earth; and it makes the blending of flesh and bones and limbs in men. Then there is the substance of flowers and the lovely colors of the earth; and it makes the varied hue and brightness of faces and the color in the cheeks.'

He describes the order of the universe: 'Though you do not see it,' said he, 'it is in roundness that each element has been appointed even according to the forms of the world; for it is in even roundness that the heavens have been appointed, and it is

in roundness that the seven seas were made all about, and it is in roundness that the lands were made. And in even roundness the stars circle about the round wheel of the earth; and it is in roundness of form that the souls are seen after going forth from their bodies; and in roundness the circuit of the noble heavens is seen, and in roundness is seen the circuit of sun and moon. All that is fitting, for roundness without beginning and without end is the Lord, who always was and always shall be and who made all those things. That is why the world has been embodied in a round form.'

He speaks of a monstrous bird: 'A bird of enormous size, which is called Hiruath in the lands of India. Its form is so huge that when it spreads its wings in flight, seeking the monsters of the ocean, their shadow is as wide as three days' journey in winter by sea or land. Mountains of sand and gravel hatch the egg that it drops in laying. A brig with sails and oars is made from half of that egg after it opens. It carries seven thousand soldiers with their weapons and provisions across the sea. And there are a great number of the host in this assembly here who passed over the Red Sea in the half of that egg. Do not cast doubt upon God concerning the number of His miracles, like a child in a dark house.'

He speaks of hell: 'So great is the fire and the burning and the heat that, if all the liquids in the world, the clouds and streams and rivers and seas throughout the world, were poured into the valley of torments, it would not be quenched, for it is the anger of God which boils in the infernal regions. . . . . So great is the darkness that, if some of it were cast into the world, the size of the pupil of a man's eye, all the birds of the air and men and animals on earth that it would find would not see glimmer or light for death.'

He speaks of God: 'Such are the beauty and glory of His face that, if all the souls of hell were to look upon the glory of His face, they would not feel the sorrow or pain or suffering of hell. Such is the holiness of His form that all who should look upon

His face could not sin afterward. Such is the glory and dignity and brightness of His face, that when the nine ranks of heaven shine forth, and every angel will be seven times brighter than the sun, and when the souls of the saints shine forth in equal splendor, and the sun is seven times brighter than it is now, then will shine above them all the glory of the face of the great King who made every creature, so that the light of the Lord shall surpass the angels and the stars of heaven and the souls of the saints as the light of the sun and its glory surpasses the other stars.'[20]

AISLINGE MEIC CON GLINNE

The Vision of Mac Con Glinne

Just as the hymns and sequences of the church were parodied by the troubadours, so the Irish Visions are the occasion for an extraordinary outburst of fancy and malice in the 'Vision of Mac Con Glinne,' which was composed in the twelfth century, but is apparently constructed upon an earlier original, from which the anticlerical motive was perhaps absent, a popular tradition about a legendary land of abundance. So at least it seems from the study by Wollner, prefixed to Meyer's edition.[21] The text as we have it in *LB* is, however, the work of a wandering scholar with a grudge against the church, and he gives full play to his humor. There is a shorter recension in a Dublin manuscript, Trinity College H. 3.18 (sixteenth century), of which the language is later; but the narrative, which differs in many details, is more coherent and represents an earlier tradition. It is included in Meyer's edition.

Cathal,[22] king of Munster, was possessed by a demon of gluttony, so that he ate immense quantities of food. There was at the time a scholar named Ainiér Mac Con Glinne who was famous for his gifts of satire and eulogy. One Saturday evening, as he was pursuing his reading at Roscommon, a longing came upon him to give up learning for poetry. He decided to go as a

20. M. R. James has sought to identify the sources of 'The Evernew Tongue,' and suggests that it has borrowed in part from the Lapidaries and Bestiaries, and is in that respect unique among apocrypha. He also shows that it follows the Greek as against the Latin Acts of Philip in the record of the saint's martyrdom (*JTS*, XX [1919], 9–13).

21. K. Meyer, *The Vision of Mac Conglinne* (London: Nutt, 1892).

22. Cathal mac Fínguine was king of Munster in the early eighth century and plays a part in the story of the Battle of Allen (ed. Stokes, *RC*, XXIV, 41. Cf. O'Donovan, *Three Fragments of Irish Annals* [Dublin, 1860], pp. 32–50).

poet to the court of Cathal, in the hope of getting plenty to eat there, for he loved good food. On the morrow he set out for Cork, and by nightfall he arrived at the guesthouse of the monastery. He found the door open, in spite of wind and rain, and no one in attendance. The blanket was full of lice and fleas. The bathtub had not been emptied since the previous night, nor even the heating-stones taken out.

Since no one came to wash his feet, the scholar washed them himself in the dirty bath and lay down to sleep. But the lice and fleas were as many as the sands of the sea or as sparks of fire or the dewdrops on a May morning or the stars of heaven, and he could not rest. He took out his psalter and began to sing the psalms, 'and the learned and the books of Cork relate that the sound of the scholar's voice was heard a thousand paces beyond the city, singing his psalms, through spiritual mysteries, in dia-psalms and syn-psalms and decades, with *paters* and canticles and hymns at the end of each fifty.'

The abbot, Manchín, sends a servant with the guest's ration, which consists of a cup of whey-water. Mac Con Glinne satirizes this meager fare and declines it. His conduct is reported to the abbot, who orders him to be stripped, beaten, and thrown into the river Lee, and left to sleep naked in the guesthouse. In the morning he shall be judged by the abbot and monks of Cork and shall be crucified for the honor of the abbot himself, of St. Finnbarr, and of the church. The first part of this sentence is carried out, and next morning the monks assemble in the guesthouse. The abbot will have him crucified at once, but he asks for a trial; and, though they plead against him[23] with much wisdom and learning, they cannot find anything in his sayings for which he deserves crucifixion. He is led out to his doom without the sanction of law, but he asks leave to eat his viaticum before he dies and binds the abbot with sureties and pledges.

His satchel is brought to him, and he takes out two wheaten loaves and a piece of bacon. He takes tithes of the bread and

23. There is no mention of a judge or any procedure. In so irreverent a parody, there was no need for exactness.

meat and considers paying them to the clergy or bestowing them in alms;[24] but he decides that none has greater need than himself, and, as for the monks of Cork, they are curs, thieves, and dung-hounds, and he will not have the devil accuse him, when he crosses the line, of paying tithes to them. So the first morsel he eats is the tithe. He finishes eating and is led away, but he continues to delay his execution by insisting on drinking water drop by drop from the pin of his brooch. At last he agrees to go in humility. An ax is given him, and he is made to cut his passion-tree and bear it on his back to the green of Cork.

As the monks are about to crucify him, Mac Con Glinne asks a boon of Manchín, namely, that he may have a last feast and fine raiment before going to his death. Manchín denies him this and says that, as the evening is far advanced, he shall be stripped of the scant clothing he wears and tied to a pillar, as a first punishment before the great punishment of the morrow. The monks bind him to the pillar and retire to supper, leaving him to fast. At midnight an angel appears to him and reveals a vision.

In the morning, when Manchín and his monks arrive, Mac Con Glinne begs leave to relate the vision. Manchín refuses, but the monks will hear it, and he proceeds to relate it. The prelude is a rhymed genealogy of Manchín in terms of food:

> 'Bless us, O cleric, famous pillar of learning,
> Son of mead, son of juice, son of lard,
> Son of stirabout, son of pottage, son of fair radiant fruit,
> Son of smooth, clustering cream, son of buttermilk, son of curds,
> Son of beer, glory of liquors, son of pleasant bragget,
> Son of twisted leek, son of bacon, son of butter,
> Son of full-fat sausage,' and so forth.

24. Meyer points out that this mention of the payment of tithes, which occurs only in the late recension, refers no doubt to the introduction of tithes by the Synod of Kells in 1152. They were not previously enforced in Ireland.

The vision which follows is a verse parody upon the Voyage tales. He set out in a boat of lard on a lake of new milk.

> 'The fort we reached was fair, with earthworks of thick custard, beyond the lake. Its bridge was of butter, its wall of wheat, the palisade was of bacon.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Smooth pillars of old cheese, beams of juicy bacon, in due order, fine rafters of thick cream, with laths of curds supported the house.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Behind was a spring of wine, rivers of beer and bragget, every full pool had a flavor. A flood of smooth malt over a bubbling spring spreads over the floor.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I saw the chieftain in a mantle of beef-fat with his fair noble wife. I saw the server at the cauldron's mouth, his flesh fork on his shoulder.'

We are told that there was much more in the vision than the text relates; and when Mac Con Glinne had finished, Manchín announced that it had been revealed to him that this vision would cure the king of his disease and that the scholar must go to king Cathal at once. Mac Con Glinne claims a reward. 'Are not thy body and soul reward enough?' says Manchín. And the scholar answers that he cares not for his life, for Heaven awaits him, with its nine orders, the Cherubim and Seraphim, and all the faithful chanting in expectation of his soul. He must have as reward the abbot's cloak. Manchín refuses, but the monks insist, and the cloak is placed in the custody of the bishop of Cork pending the successful cure of Cathal.

It would be too long to follow here the excellent humor of the story of the cure. Mac Con Glinne contrives to oblige the unhappy king to fast for two nights. He then orders a feast and has Cathal tied to the wall and brings in the luscious food. As he proceeds to eat it himself, the king roars and bellows and or-

ders his death. Now Mac Con Glinne recites his vision in two poems (Is this an echo of Loeg's recital in *Serglige Con Culainn?*) which are fresh compositions on the same theme, new parodies of the *echtrae* motif. To these he adds a fable, again in parody, of the visits to mortals by persons of the Tuatha Dé Danann; but here, too, food is the theme. This fable is a masterpiece of humor and eloquence. In prose and verse the author mocks at the heroic and mythological sagas, the wonders of the Other World, and the fair maidens whose anatomy they describe in such detail. Even the *filid* who recorded the tales are satirized, for the author solemnly retails conflicting versions of various episodes, the learned saying one, the books of Cork another, in mockery of the variants frequently given in the sagas. The satire is sustained at great length with unfailing merriment and with gluttonous descriptions of the food-paradise to which the scholar has journeyed. Meanwhile, we are left to imagine the distress of the hungry king.

'At the pleasure of the recital and the enumeration of the many and various delicious foods in the presence of the king, the lawless beast that lay in the entrails of Cathal son of Fínguine came up so that it was licking its lips outside his mouth.' The scholar was now bringing each tempting morsel to the lips of the king, and at last the demon of gluttony darted from his mouth, seized one of the morsels, and hid under the cooking-pot. The pot turned over and caught it. 'Thanks be to God and St. Brigid!' said Mac Con Glinne, putting his right hand over his mouth and his left over the mouth of Cathal. Linen sheets were put around Cathal's head, and he was borne away. The house was then cleared and burnt to the ground, but the demon escaped and perched upon a neighboring house. Mac Con Glinne called upon him to do reverence. The demon replied that he must, although he would not. If he had been suffered to remain three half-years longer in Cathal's mouth, he would have ruined all Ireland. If it were not for the wisdom of the monks of Cork and for the multitude of their bishops and confessors (this is a last thrust), if it had not been for the righteousness and hon-

or of the king and the virtue, wisdom, and learning of Mac Con Glinne himself, he would have leaped into that scholar's throat, so that he would have been driven through Ireland with whips and scourges, until he was taken off by hunger. Mac Con Glinne made the Sign of the Cross against the demon with his gospel-book, and the demon flew into the air to join the host of hell. Cathal rewarded Mac Con Glinne with cows and cloaks and rings and horses and sheep, and the abbot's cloak to boot.

The story ends with a testimony to the virtue of the vision as revealed by the angel to Mac Con Glinne and by him to the king (a final parody upon formulae such as the *marbnaid* which closes *Altrom Tige Dá Medar*[25]), and a statement of the reward that is due to whomsoever shall recite it.

25. See p. 72.

VIII

Irish Poetry

IN IRISH, as in Sanskrit, the distinction between verse and poetry is important. Verse was used in recording law, history, genealogy, lists of kings, and the feast days of the church, without any intention other than that of composing a text suitable for memorization. I do not doubt that the Irish recognized the distinction observed in Sanskrit between *kāvya* ('poetry') and *smṛti* ('tradition'), though I cannot cite any authority. And it may prove difficult to maintain it in particular cases. The *filid*, who graduated through a training of twelve years, were the great national poets and enjoyed special privileges in society.[1] One of their duties was to record the historical traditions, and many of their 'historical' poems have come down to us. But most of these are hardly poetry. However, they also preserved the heroic sagas, in which there are some lovely poems, composed, no doubt, by *filid*.

The bards, who in early times were an inferior class, emerge after the Norman invasion, which caused the decline of the old order of *filid*, as the only professional poets, and their work must be judged as poetry. They were often attached as court-poets to one of the noble houses, and many poems are in honor of members of the family.[2] Many others are the expression of joy or grief or piety or pride. They are also occasional, not written for the purpose of mere instruction, and are often lyric in temper.[3]

1. They were probably heirs to the same Indo-European heritage as the Brahmins of India (see 'The Archaism of Irish Tradition,' *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, XXVIII [1948], in press).

2. For the nature of this connection between the poet and his lord see Eleanor Knott, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn*, I (London, 1922), xli.

3. There is a good account by E. C. Quiggin, 'Prolegomena to the Study of the Irish Bards 1200–1500,' *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, V (1911), 89; see also J. Vendryes, *La*

We shall consider, first, the early lyric poetry, all of it anonymous or piously ascribed to fictitious authors, then the bardic poetry, and then the late lyrics which O'Rahilly and Flower have made known.

Ireland has produced no great epic poem. The poetry of the sagas, which has already been considered, is epic in theme, but the effort is not sustained. It is an artistic device used with great effect to increase the emotional power of the prose narrative. The nearest approach to epic form in the early period is the account in the great *Táin* of the fight between Cú Chulainn and Fer Diad, in which the verse passages make up almost half the text.[4] There are, indeed, two poems of epic stature. *Saltair na Rann* ('The Psalter of Quatrains'), written *ca.* A.D. 987, tells in verse the story of the Old Testament and the life of Christ; but it is rather to be classed with the verse histories and festologies than with the imaginative work of poets.[5] 'The Voyage of Snédgus and Mac Riagla,' which has already been discussed, is the single example of an old tale that was first composed in verse alone, the prose narrative deriving from it. But it is not of epic length, and it is a modest performance. These two attempts at epic poetry remain landmarks on a journey that was never completed. The fenian ballads which first appear in the Modern Irish period are indeed the stuff of epic poetry; but the age of greatness was then long past in Ireland. The time was out of joint, and there was no Dante or Milton to give them epic form. In the eighteenth century Michael Comyn composed his *Laoi Oisín i dTír na nÓg* ('Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth'), in the tradition and form of the ballads. Brian Merriman's astonishing *Cúirt An Mheadhán Oidhche* ('The Mid-

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Poésie de cour en Irlande et en Galles (Paris, 1932); D. Corkery, 'The Bardic Schools,' in his *The Hidden Ireland* (Dublin, 1925), chap. iii.

4. Cú Chulainn's lament for Fer Diad has been finely rendered into English by Sigerson in his *Bards of the Gael and Gall* (London, 1907).

5. See St. John D. Seymour, 'The Book of Adam and Eve in Ireland,' *PRIA*, Vol. XXXVI, Sec. C, 121.

night Court'), written in 1780, is the work of a man capable of epic poetry, but he did not attempt an epic theme.[6]

Early Lyric Poetry

The history of Irish poetry has not been written. The forms of the prosody are fairly well known, but the development from the earliest alliterative form through forms with rhythm and rhyme to the syllabic rhymed quatrain without regular rhythm, which remained the established form for a thousand years—this matter has not been fully investigated. Nothing of its kind has been added to Thurneysen's article in the *Revue celtique*, VI, 326–47, written in 1884, although the great mass of the material has been edited since that date, much of it by Thurneysen himself, much by Kuno Meyer. The metrical tracts edited by Thurneysen[7] are of great interest, and Meyer sought to establish a chronological sequence of forms. According to him, the earliest form had neither rhythm nor rhyme, depending solely on a link (*Bindung*) connecting small groups of words and consisting of alliteration.[8] Then an irregular rhythm was introduced,[9] and, later, rhyme came into Irish from the Latin hymns.[10] An intermediate stage, with regular rhythm and a seven-syllable line but no rhyme, is well established.[11] Thurneysen has since shown that the third stage, quasi-rhythmical verse, with rhyme but no fixed number of stresses or syllables, is as early as the sixth century.[12] Bergin has shown that a peculiar rhythmical stanza existed beside the regular meters, in the form called *Brúilingeacht* and that this later gave rise to the song-

6. For Comyn and Merriman see Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland*.

7. *Mittelirische Verslehren*, *IT*, III, 1–182.

8. *AID*, II, 4. Meyer suggests that this short-lived verse-form was practiced only in Leinster and cites a tradition (I, 7, n. 1) that rhyme was first practiced in that territory.

9. *Ibid.*, n. 1.

10. *Ibid.*, I, 6.

11. *Ibid.*, I, 4, n. 6.

12. *ZCP*, XIX, 193–209.

meters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[13] And the suggestion has been made that one common meter is of Welsh origin.[14]

The earliest surviving poems are, then, mere alliterative groups without rhyme or rhythm and date from the sixth century. Then rhyme appears toward the end of the sixth century, but there is still no fixed number of stresses or of syllables. The fragments that have come down to us in these earliest forms are largely historical or encomiastic and not of great literary value, although there are some lively satires. Then in the seventh century regular rhythm appears, combined with rhyme in many metrical varieties. And a lyric note comes into the poetry, which is illustrated in some examples quoted hereafter. Meanwhile a rhythmical line without rhyme, in the form

\ ⏑ \ ⏑ \ ⏑ ⏑

is widely used in legal tracts and in rhetorical passages in the sagas. It was apparently a favorite form for the purpose of memorization and survives in the sagas into the Middle Irish period.

Finally, perhaps in the eighth century, the syllabic count becomes dominant, and there is no regular ictus, the word-accent serving only for alliteration and rhyme; and this system, in many meters, was maintained into the seventeenth century.

From the first appearance of rhyme, experiments were made in a remarkable variety of patterns, and a study of Meyer's *Bruchstücke der älteren Lyrik Irlands* shows the delight that these early poets found in different combinations of rhythm and rhyme. The ultimate substitution of a purely syllabic system for the earlier rhythmical system is a strange development in a language having a strong stress accent. Thurneysen, in the article already cited, derived the Irish syllabic measures from the trochaic tetrameter catalectic of the Latin hymns, e.g., St. Hilary's *Hymnus in laudem Christi*, beginning '*Ymnum dicat turba*

13. Osborn Bergin, 'On the Origin of Modern Irish Rhythmical Verse,' *Mélanges offerts à Holger Pedersen* (*Acta Jutlandica*, IX [1937]), pp. 280–86.

14. Cecile O'Rahilly, *Ireland and Wales* (London, 1924), p. 134.

fratrum / ymnum cantus personet / Christo regi concinentes / laudem demus debitam.'[15]

I shall not attempt to trace the history of Irish poetry but shall rather try to illustrate its quality. To do this by means of translations may seem an almost hopeless undertaking for poetry so rich in ornament of alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhyme. But it has been shown by the translators that the attempt is not vain. Of these translators, Kuno Meyer is easily the chief, and one cannot do better than to borrow freely from his work. In the Introduction to his *Ancient Irish Poetry* he says: 'In Nature poetry the Gaelic muse may vie with that of any other nation. Indeed, these poems occupy a unique position in the literature of the world. To seek out and watch and love Nature, in its tiniest phenomena as in its grandest, was given to no people so early and so fully as to the Celt. Many hundreds of Gaelic and Welsh poems testify to this fact. It is a characteristic of these poems that in none of them do we get an elaborate or sustained description of any scene or scenery, but rather a succession of pictures and images which the poet, like an impressionist, calls up before us by light and skilful touches. Like the Japanese, the Celts were always quick to take an artistic hint; they avoid the obvious and the commonplace; the half-said thing to them is dearest.'

Here are some early fragments which illustrate the varying forms and the human quality of the lyric poetry from the seventh and eighth centuries. The sea:

\ ⌣ \	Fégaid úaib	Look out
\ ⌣ \	sair fo thúaid	to the northeast
⌣ \ \	in muir múaid	over the mighty sea
\ ⌣	mílach:	alive with fish:
\ ⌣ \	adba rón	the home of seals
\ ⌣ \	rebach rán	sporting in splendour,
⌣ \ \	ro gab lán	its tide
\ ⌣	línath	is full.

15. Meyer adopts this explanation (*Ancient Irish Poetry* [London, 1911], p. xiii). It does not well fit the facts that the earliest fragments of rhymed poetry in Irish show no resemblance to this Latin model (rhyme is also supposed to be of Latin origin), whereas the later seven- and eight-syllable lines in Irish are nonrhythmical, in contrast to the regular rhythm of the Hymn of St. Hilary.

A blackbird sings:

⏑ \ \ int én bec	The little bird
⏑ \ \ ro léic fet	has blown his whistle
⏑ \ \ \⏑⏑ do rind guib glanbuide:	from the point of his bright, yellow beak:
⏑ \ \ fo-ceird faíd	he sends a song
⏑ \ \ ós Loch Laíg	over Loch Láig,
\⏑ \ \⏑⏑ lon do chraíb chrand-maige	a blackbird on a branch in the well wooded plain.

And again:

Och, a *luin*, is *buide* duit	Ah, blackbird, thou art satisfied
cáit sa *muine* a *fuil* do *net:*	where-ever thy nest is in the thicket:
a *díthrebaig* nad *clind cloc*	hermit that clinkest no bell,
is *bind boc síthamail t'fet.*	sweet, soft, peaceful is thy note
	[trans. Meyer].

That stanza marks the abandonment of rhythm for rhyme alone, and the ample compensation that was found. And so does this on the nimble bee:

Daith *b*ech *buide* a húaim i n-*úaim*,	Nimble is the yellow bee from cup to cup,
ní *súail* a *uide* la *gréin*,	he makes a great journey in the sun,
fó for *f*uluth sa *mag már*,	boldly he flits into the wide plain,
dag a dagchomul 'na *chéir*	then safely joins his brethren in the hive.

A rainstorm at night:

Úar ind adaig i *Móin Móir*,	Cold is the night in Móin Mór,
feraid *d*ertain ní *d*er*óil:*	the rain pours down in flood:
dorddán fris-tib in *gáeth glan*	a deep roar against which the wind laughs high
géssid ós *ch*aille *c*lith*ar*	sounds from the sheltering wood.

Here there is no internal rhyme, and alliteration is the only internal ornament. The end-rhyme is unrhythmical, the normal form in Welsh, from which perhaps it was borrowed into Irish. It has a peculiar charm but later became so popular in Ireland that it lost its savor. Another example in the same meter may be given here, for it is in the same mood; but it cannot be earlier

than the ninth century, since the warriors of Norway are mentioned:

Is acher in gaíth innocht,	Bitter is the wind tonight,
fu-fúasna fairgge findfolt:	It tosses the ocean's white hair:
ní ágor réimm mora minn	I fear not the coming over the Irish Sea
dond láechraid lainn ó Lothlainn	of fierce warriors from Norway.

A miserly patron is satirized in a jocose meter:[16]

ro cúala	I have heard
ní tabair eochu ar dúana:	he does not bestow horses for poems:
do-beir aní as dúthaig dó,	he gives what fits his kind,
bó.	a cow!

The wife of Aed mac Ainmirech, king of Ireland († 598), laments her husband:

Batar inmuini in trí toíb	Dear to me were the three sides
frisná fresciu *aithirrech*	which I hope not to visit again:
toíbán Temro, toíb Taillten	the side of Tara, the side of Teltown
toíb Áedo maicc *Ainmirech*	and the side of Áed son of Ainmire.

A love-song:

\ ⌣ \	Cride hé,	He is a heart,
\ ⌣ \	daire cnó:	an acorn from the oakwood:
\ ⌣ \	ócán é	he is young,
\ ⌣ \	pócán dó	a kiss for him!

This quatrain is a good example of the half-said thing:

Mac ríg *Múaide mid* samraid	The son of the king of the Moy in midsummer
fúair i *fid úaine ingin:*	found a girl in the green wood:
tucc dó mess *ndub* a *draignib*,	she gave him black fruit from thorn-bushes,
tuc *airgib sub* for *sibnib*.	she gave an armful(?) of strawberries on rushes.

16. A happy parody was addressed to Kuno Meyer by Sir Walter Raleigh, which concludes:

'Let none carp
If you get the biggest harp:
May the cloud on which you sit
Fit.'

Professor D. Nichol Smith has reminded me that verses by Raleigh in this meter are quoted by W. P. Ker, *The Dark Ages* (London, 1904) in his discussion of Irish poetry.

A pet crane:

Ar *corrucán* cumraide
ollurcbál ar *nglanbaile:*
nís fúar *cóem* a comdile,
ciaso *dóer* is *dagduine*

My dear little crane
is the glory of my goodly home:
I have not found so good a friend,
though he is a servant he is a gentleman.

The dactyllic endings give the meter a gaiety which fits well.

Here are two quatrains which appear on the margin of a manuscript of Priscian, preserved at St. Gall in Switzerland. The manuscript is of the ninth century. We can see an Irish monk sitting in the garden at work. He pauses in delight and writes these lines:

Dom-farcai *f*idbaide *f*ál
fom-chain *l*oíd *l*uin—lúad nad *cél.*

A hedge of trees surrounds me,
a blackbird's lay makes music—I shall tell it.

Húas mo *l*ebrán, ind *línech*
fom-chain *trírech* inna n-*én.*

Above my well-ruled book
the trilling of the birds makes music.

Fom-*ch*ain *c*oí *m*enn *m*edair *mass*

The clear-voiced cuckoo sings me a lovely chant

hi mbrott *glas* de *d*indgnaib *d*oss.
Dé bráth—nom *ch*oimmdiu *coíma*—
caín-scríbaimm fo *roída ross!*

in her grey cloak from bush to bush.
God's Doom!—may the lord protect me!—
happily I write under the shade of trees.

Another is reading a manuscript of Cassiodorus and writes a note: 'Pleasant is the glittering of the sun today upon these margins, because it flickers so.'[17] It is the 'pied beauty' that Gerard Hopkins saw.

With a few exceptions[18] the earliest verse has survived only in fragments; and for longer poems we must pass to the period from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, but the temper is the same.

One of the best of these longer poems is put into the mouth of Marbán, a hermit who was brother to Gúaire, a king of Connacht famous for his hospitality. Gúaire reigned in the seventh century, but the poem is much later, perhaps of the tenth century. Marbán had retired into a hermitage, living sim-

17. See Robin Flower, *The Irish Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 42.

18. See p. 172.

ply and alone; and on one occasion, we are told, Gúaire went to persuade his brother to return to his court and to the life of a warrior. Here is Marbán's answer:

I have a shieling in the wood,
None knows it save my God:
An ash-tree on the hither side, a hazel-bush beyond,
A huge old tree encompasses it.

. . . . . .

The size of my shieling tiny, not too tiny,
Many are its familiar paths:
From its gable a sweet strain sings
A she-bird in her cloak of the ousel's hue.

. . . . . .

A hiding mane of green-barked yew
Supports the sky:
Beautiful spot! the large green of an oak
Fronting the storm.

A tree of apples—great its bounty!
Like a hostel, vast!
A pretty bush, thick as a fist, of tiny hazelnuts,
A green mass of branches.

A choice pure spring and princely water
To drink:
There spring watercresses, yew-berries,
Ivy-bushes thick as a man.

Around it tame swine lie down.
Goats, pigs,
Wild swine, grazing deer,
A badger's brood.

. . . . . .

Swarms of bees and chafers, the little musicians of
the world,
A gentle chorus:
Wild geese and ducks, shortly before summer's end,
The music of the dark torrent.

An active songster, a lively wren
From the hazel-bough,
Beautiful hooded birds, woodpeckers,
A vast multitude!

Fair white birds come, herons, seagulls,
The cuckoo sings between—
No mournful music! dun heathpoults
Out of the russet heather.

The lowing of heifers in summer,
Brightest of seasons!
Not bitter, toilsome over the fertile plain,
Delightful, smooth!

The voice of the wind against the branchy wood
Upon the deep-blue sky:
Falls of the river, the note of the swan,
Delicious music!

The bravest band make cheer to me,
Who have not been hired:
In the eyes of Christ the ever-young I am no worse
off
Than thou art.

. . . . . .

GUARE

I would give my glorious kingship
With the share of my father's heritage—
To the hour of my death I would forfeit it
To be in thy company, my Marvan.

[trans. Kuno Meyer]

This poem expresses distinctly religious feeling. The sensitiveness to form and color and sound that is apparent here, the delight in detail, recur in songs of summer and winter, which Kuno Meyer first made known:

Summer Has Come

Summer has come, healthy and free,
Whence the brown wood is aslope;
The slender nimble deer leap,
And the path of seals is smooth.

The cuckoo sings sweet music,
Whence there is smooth restful sleep;
Gentle birds leap upon the hill,
And swift grey stags.

Heat has laid hold of the rest of the deer—
The lovely cry of curly packs!
The white extent of the strand smiles,
There the swift sea is.

A sound of playful breezes in the tops
Of a black oakwood is Druim Daill,
The noble hornless herd runs,
To whom Cuan-wood is a shelter.

Green bursts out on every herb,
The top of the green oakwood is bushy,
Summer has come, winter has gone,
Twisted hollies wound the hound.

The blackbird sings a loud strain,
To him the live wood is a heritage,
The sad angry sea is fallen asleep,
The speckled salmon leaps.

The sun smiles over every land,—
A parting for me from the brood of cares:
Hounds bark, stags tryst,
Ravens flourish, summer has come!

Song of Summer

Summer-time, season supreme!
Splendid is colour then.
Blackbirds sing a full lay
If there be a slender shaft of day.

The dust-coloured cuckoo calls aloud:
Welcome, splendid summer!
The bitterness of bad weather is past,
The boughs of the wood are a thicket.

Panic startles the heart of the deer,
The smooth sea runs apace—
Season when ocean sinks asleep,
Blossom covers the world.

Bees with puny strength carry
A goodly burden, the harvest of blossoms;
Up the mountain-side kine take with them mud,
The ant makes a rich meal.

The harp of the forest sounds music,
The sail gathers—perfect peace;
Colour has settled on every height,
Haze on the lake of full waters.

The corncrake, a strenuous bard, discourses,
The lofty cold waterfall sings
A welcome to the warm pool—
The talk of the rushes has come.

Light swallows dart aloft,
Loud melody encircles the hill,
The soft rich mast buds,
The stuttering quagmire prattles.

The peat-bog is as the raven's coat,
The loud cuckoo bids welcome,
The speckled fish leaps—
Strong is the bound of the swift warrior.

Man flourishes, the maiden buds
In her fair strong pride.
Perfect each forest from top to ground,
Perfect each great stately plain.

Delightful is the season's splendour,
Rough winter has gone:
Every fruitful wood shines white,
A joyous peace is summer.

A flock of birds settles
In the midst of meadows,
The green field rustles,
Wherein is a brawling white stream.

A wild longing is on you to race horses,
The ranked host is ranged around:
A bright shaft has been shot into the land,
So that the water-flag is gold beneath it.

A timorous, tiny, persistent little fellow
Sings at the top of his voice,
The lark sings clear tidings:
Surpassing summer-time of delicate hues!

Summer Is Gone

My tidings for you: the stag bells,
Winter snows, summer is gone.

Wind high and cold, low the sun,
Short his course, sea running high.

Deep-red the bracken, its shape all gone—
The wild-goose has raised his wonted cry.

Cold has caught the wings of birds;
Season of ice—these are my tidings.

A Song of Winter

Cold, cold!
Cold to-night is broad Moylurg,
Higher the snow than the mountain-range,
The deer cannot get at their food.

Cold till Doom!
The storm has spread over all:
A river is each furrow upon the slope,
Each ford a full pool.

A great tidal sea is each loch,
A full loch is each pool:
Horses cannot get over the ford of Ross,
No more can two feet get there.

The fish of Ireland are a-roaming,
There is no strand which the wave does not pound,
Not a town there is in the land,
Nor a bell is heard, no crane talks.

The wolves of Cuan-wood get
Neither rest nor sleep in their lair,
The little wren cannot find
Shelter in her nest on the slope of Lon.

Keen wind and cold ice
Have burst upon the little company of birds,
The blackbird cannot get a lee to her liking,
Shelter for its side in Cuan-wood.

Cosy our pot on its hook,
Crazy the hut on the slope of Lon:
The snow has crushed the wood here,
Toilsome to climb up Ben-bo.

Glenn Rye's ancient bird
From the bitter wind gets grief;
Great her misery and her pain,
The ice will get into her mouth.

From flock and from down to rise—
Take it to heart!—were folly for thee:
Ice in heaps on every ford—
That is why I say 'cold'![19]

19. Kuno Meyer, *Four Old-Irish Songs of Summer and Winter* (London, 1903), reprinted in his *Selections from Ancient Irish Poetry* (London, 1911).

Gerard Murphy has pointed out the tradition of love for nature and for animals in the accounts we have of the early Irish saints and hermits.[20] St. Adamnán's *Vita Sancti Columbae*, written in the seventh century, contains incidents which recall the Fioretti; and the spirit of the early Franciscans was, in a measure, anticipated in Ireland. It seems that this awareness of the whole of creation as the work of God—a delight in the forms and sounds which are an occasion for praising and thanking the Providence which gave them—is the source of much of the nature poetry.[21] Some of the poems are piously attributed to St. Colmcille.

And there is the other motif, that of the hermitage, solitude which brings one nearer to nature, the sound of the waves, the wind among the reeds, the seagull's cry. Here is a twelfth-century poem which expresses it:

> Delightful to me to be on an island hill, on the crest of a rock, that I might often watch the quiet sea;
> That I might watch the heavy waves above the bright water,
> as they chant music to their Father everlastingly;
>
> That I might watch its smooth, bright-bordered shore, no gloomy pastime, that I might hear the cry of the strange
> birds, a pleasing sound;
>
> That I might hear the murmur of the long waves against the rocks, that I might hear the sound of the sea, like mourning beside a grave;
>
> That I might watch the splendid flocks of birds over the well watered sea, that I might see its mighty whales, the greatest wonder.

20. 'The Origin of Irish Nature Poetry,' *Studies*, XVII (1928), 39–50, 230–44.

21. See Robin Flower, *The Irish Tradition*, pp. 40–66. Seán O Faoláin, in the Preface to his excellent anthology, *The Silver Branch* (New York, 1938) (p. 23), saw only paganism in the nature poems, but he must have half-closed his eyes.

That I might watch its ebb and flood in their course, that my name should be—it is a secret that I tell—'he who turned his back upon Ireland';

That I might have a contrite heart as I watch, that I might repent my many sins, hard to tell;

That I might bless the Lord who rules all things, heaven with its splendid host, earth, ebb and flood;

That I might scan one of the books to raise up my soul, now kneeling to dear heaven, now chanting the psalms;

Now gathering seaweed from the rocks, now catching fish,
now feeding the poor, now in my cell;

Now contemplating heaven, a holy purchase, now a little labour, it would be delightful.[22]

The hermit poetry of Ireland is well discussed by Kenneth Jackson. Closely associated with it is the poetry of exile, for the same ascetic idea which inspired the hermits led other monks to go into exile for Christ's sake, *peregrinam ducere vitam*. They went first to Scotland, then to the Continent, separating themselves forever from home and incidentally bringing back to

22. Text in T. F. O'Rahilly, *Measgra Dánta* (Cork, 1927), p. 120; a translation by Kenneth Jackson, *Early Celtic Nature Poetry* (Cambridge, 1936), p. 9. Verses from an eleventh-century poem in praise of the sea may be quoted here from Meyer's edition, *Otia Merseiana*, II (Liverpool, 1900), 82. The meter is of special interest, a five-line stanza consisting of a normal *deibhidhe* quatrain with a fifth line ending in a trisyllable, which rhymes in *rannaigheacht* with the second:

is lán ler, is lomnán muir,
is álaind in etharbruig
ro lá curu in gáeth ganmech
im Inber na Dá Ainmech:
is lúath luí re lethanmuir

'The ocean is in flood, the sea is full,
delightful is the home of ships,
the sandy wind has made whirls
around the River-Mouth of the Two Showers:
swiftly the rudder cleaves the broad sea.

Ní sadail sein, súan garg saír,
co mbruthbúad co mbarannbáig:
fordath eala fordatig
Mac Míled cona muintir,
gluaster mong mná Manannáin.

This is not cosy, rough repose for a nobleman,
with fierce triumph, with angry strife:
the swan's colour covers
The Son of Míl with his people,
the tresses of Manannán's wife are tossed about [i.e., Ireland is covered with snow, the sea is rough].'

Europe the learning which had been lost in the desolation made by the Goths and Visigoths. First, it was St. Colmcille in the sixth century, who founded Iona, an abbey which grew and flourished into the Middle Ages and which became the religious center of Scotland. From there St. Aidan went in the seventh century to found Lindisfarne, whose monks converted Northumbria to Christianity. In the sixth century, too, St. Columbanus, abbot of Bangor, set out for France and founded the monasteries of Annegray, Luxeuil, and Fontaine before crossing the Alps into Italy. At Bobbio he made a foundation which was to surpass all the others in fame and achievement.[23]

This was the beginning of the great Irish movement on the Continent which lasted into the eleventh century; but in the later period the motive of exile was no longer purely ascetic, for the Vikings were plundering the monasteries at home and the Irish themselves followed their example, so that the Continent became a place of refuge rather than of penance.[24] Later still, English oppression under the Tudors and Stuarts drove Irishmen into exile and, finally, poverty at home, so that the motif persists into the modern folk songs. We shall find it in the bardic poetry. It is first expressed in the well-known 'Farewell to Ireland,' attributed to St. Colmcille, which dates from the twelfth century:

> Delightful to be on the Hill of Howth
> Before going over the white-haired sea:
> The dashing of the wave against its face,
> The bareness of its shores and of its border.
>
> Delightful to be on the Hill of Howth
> After coming over the white-bosomed sea;
> To be rowing one's little coracle,
> Ochone! on the wild-waved shore.

23. 'Bobbio . . . . which in days to come was to be a place of light and learning as well as of zeal and piety' (F. J. E. Raby, *Secular Latin Poetry* [Oxford, 1934], p. 165). There is a good account of the part played by the Irish church in the preservation of ancient culture in S. J. Crawford, *Anglo-Saxon Influence on Western Christendom* [London, 1933], pp. 88 ff.

24. For the history of Irish monasticism abroad see L. Gougaud, *Christianity in Celtic Lands* (London, 1932), pp. 129–84. He quotes the statement of Lightfoot that 'it was not Augustine, but Aidan, who was the true apostle of England' (p. 137).

Great is the speed of my coracle,
And its stern turned upon Derry:
Grievous is my errand over the main,
Travelling to Alba of the beetling brows.

My foot in my tuneful coracle,
My sad heart tearful:
A man without guidance is weak,
Blind are all the ignorant.

There is a grey eye
That will look back upon Erin:
It shall never see again
The men of Erin nor her women.

I stretch my glance across the brine
From the firm oaken planks:
Many are the tears of my bright soft grey eye
As I look back upon Erin.

My mind is upon Erin,
Upon Loch Lene, upon Linny,
Upon the land where Ulstermen are,
Upon gentle Munster and upon Meath.

. . . . . .

Melodious her clerics, melodious her birds,
Gentle her youths, wise her elders,
Illustrious her men, famous to behold,
Illustrious her women for fond espousal.

. . . . . .

Carry with thee, thou fair youth,
My blessing and my benediction,
One half upon Erin, sevenfold,
And half upon Alba at the same time.

Carry my blessing with thee to the West,
My heart is broken in my breast:
Should sudden death overtake me,
It is for my great love of the Gael.

Gael! Gael! beloved name!
It gladdens the heart to invoke it:
Beloved is Cummin of the beauteous hair,
Beloved are Cainnech and Comgall.

Were all Alba mine
From its centre to its border,
I would rather have the site of a house
In the middle of fair Derry.

It is for this I love Derry,
For its smoothness, for its purity,
And for its crowd of white angels
From one end to another.

It is for this I love Derry,
For its smoothness, for its purity;
All full of angels
Is every leaf on the oaks of Derry.

My Derry, my little oak-grove,
My dwelling and my little cell,
O living God that art in Heaven above,
Woe to him who violates it!

Beloved are Durrow and Derry,
Beloved is Raphoe with purity,
Beloved Drumhome with its sweet acorns,
Beloved are Swords and Kells!

Beloved also to my heart in the West
Drumcliff on Culcinne's strand:
To gaze upon fair Loch Foyle—
The shape of its shores is delightful.

Delightful it is,
The deep-red ocean where the sea-gulls cry,
As I come from Derry afar,
It is peaceful and it is delightful [trans. Meyer].

Other lovely poems in which the same feeling for nature appears will be found in some of the later sagas, notably in *Buile*

Ṡhuibni[25] and *Caithréim Cellaig*.[26] But we have seen that from a very early time the moods of love and anger and sorrow were also expressed in verse. There is an old story, edited by Kuno Meyer forty-five years ago[27] and never reprinted so far as I know, 'The Meeting of Liadain and Cuirithir,' which tells of a sorrowful love; and the lament of Liadain for her lover excels anything of its kind in Irish. The text is perhaps of the ninth century, and the story recalls the tragic history of Abélard and Héloise, although we are told only enough to justify the verse passages.

COMRAC LIADAINE OCUS CHUIRITHIR

The Meeting of Liadain and Cuirithir

A poet and a poetess are lovers. The woman enters a convent, and her lover pursues her. They place themselves under the guidance of St. Cummine the Tall. At first he permits them to converse, but not to look upon each other. Later he allows them to sleep together, with a child between them lest they should do wrong. It is an instance of the practice of *consortium*, which was a recognized form of asceticism in early Ireland and elsewhere.[28] They fail in this test, and Cuirithir is sent to another monastery. Liadain goes in search of him, and says:

'Joyless
The bargain I have made!
The heart of him I loved I wrung.

'Twas madness
Not to do his pleasure,
Were there not the fear of Heaven's King.

'Twas a trifle
That wrung Cuirithir's heart against me:
To him great was my gentleness.

25. See above, pp. 97, 99; see also S. Ó. Faoláin, *The Silver Branch*, pp. 106–18.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

27. *Liadain and Curithir: An Irish Love-Story of the Ninth Century* (London: Nutt, 1902).

28. See L. Gougaud, 'Consortia mulierum,' *Ériu*, IX, 147.

A short while I was
In the company of Cuirithir:
Sweet was my intimacy with him.

The music of the forest
Would sing to me when with Cuirithir,
Together with the voice of the purple sea.

Would that
Nothing of all I have done
Should have wrung his heart against me!

Conceal it not!
He was my heart's love,
Whatever else I might love.

A roaring flame
Has dissolved this heart of mine—
Without him for certain it cannot live'

[trans. Meyer].

In another poem, perhaps of the tenth century, an old woman remembers the pleasure of youth and love and scorns old age. She has taken the veil and awaits death surrounded by withered hags like herself:

Ebb-tide to me as of the sea!
Old age causes me reproach.
Though I may grieve thereat—
Happiness comes out of fat.

I am the Old Woman of Beare,
An ever-new smock I used to wear:
Today—such is my mean estate—
I wear not even a cast-off smock.

It is riches
Ye love, it is not men:
In the time when we lived
It was men we loved.

. . . . . .

My arms when they are seen
Are bony and thin:
Once they would fondle,
They would be round glorious kings.

When my arms are seen,
And they bony and thin,
They are not fit, I declare,
To be uplifted over comely youths.

The maidens rejoice
When May-day comes to them:
For me sorrow is meeter,
For I am wretched, I am an old hag.

. . . . . .

I do not deem it ill
That a white veil should be on my head:
Time was when many cloths of every hue
Bedecked my head as we drank the good ale.

. . . . . .

The wave of the great sea talks aloud,
Winter has arisen:
Fermuid the son of Mugh to-day
I do not expect on a visit.

. . . . . .

Youth's summer in which we were
I have spent with its autumn:
Winter-age which overwhelms all men,
To me has come its beginning.

Amen! Woe is me!
Every acorn has to drop.
After feasting by shining candles
To be in the gloom of a prayer-house!

I had my day with kings
Drinking mead and wine:
To-day I drink whey-water
Among shrivelled old hags.

. . . . . .

O happy the isle of the great sea
Which the flood reaches after the ebb!
As for me, I do not expect
Flood after ebb to come to me.

There is scarce a little place to-day
That I can recognise:
What was on flood
Is all on ebb [trans. Meyer].

Bardic Poetry

All the poetry we have considered up to now is anonymous, and we can only guess at the quality of the authors. The nature poetry is evidently the work of the monks and illustrates the important fact, emphasized by Kuno Meyer,[29] that in Ireland there was no struggle between Latin and the vernacular for the rank of a literary language. On the contrary, the native tradition received a new impulse from the coming of Latin learning and the practice of writing. The spirit of Cassiodorus, not that of St. Gregory, animated the Irish monks. Classical and theological learning went hand in hand, and with them the old learning that had been handed down orally by the *filid*. The preservation of the sagas is largely the work of the monasteries.[30] The secular poetry that has been quoted—satire, love-song, and lament—was probably composed by the professional learned class, *jeux d'esprit* of the *filid* and bards, whose proper concern,

29. *Ancient Irish Poetry*, Introd., pp. viii–ix.

30. The *Book of the Dun Cow* was written at Clonmacnoise by Mael Muire († 1106), grandson of Conn na mBocht, an anchorite of that monastery. His ancestors for two hundred years had been bishops, abbots, or confessors of Clonmacnoise, Armagh, and Louth. The *Book of Leinster* was written at Terryglass. On the part played by the monks in the preservation of Irish sagas see R. Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage* (Halle, 1921), p. 72.

apart from memorizing the sagas, was rather the recording of history and genealogy and the praise of their patrons.[31] In their professional capacity they did not remain anonymous, and we have the names of poets as early as the sixth century, as well as fragments of their work, preserved for the most part by quotation in the annals and genealogical tracts and in the metrical tracts which are veritable anthologies of early bardic poetry.

There are, moreover, several early poems in the encomiastic tradition which have fortunately been preserved complete. One of the earliest Irish examples of any extent is the famous 'Eulogy of Colum Cille' (*Amra Choluim Chille*) in the *Liber hymnorum*, which is also contained in the *Book of the Dun Cow*. It was composed by Dallán Forgaill after the death of St. Colmcille († 597) and is written in the archaic form, which consists of mere sequences of alliteration without regular rhythm and without rhyme. The form is called *reicne déchubaid* and is defined as a sequence of two or three alliterating words followed by a word which does not alliterate (*LU*, p. 402). The text is very obscure, but a short passage with a tentative translation will serve for illustration:

Ní dísceoil duae Néill. Ní uchtat óenmaige mór mairg. Mór deilm ndíulaing ris ré asneid Colum cen bith cen chill. Coí india duí dó sceo Nera. In fáith Dé dé Dé Sion sudioth is nú nad mair. Ní marthar lend. Ní less anma ar suí ardoncondiath. Conróetur bíu bath. Ardonbath bo ar n-airchend adilgen. Ardonbath ba Fíadat foídiam.

'The rampart of Niall is not silent. The great sorrow is not the lamentation of a single plain. A great cry hard to endure is the story when you tell that Colum is without life, without a church. How shall a fool tell of him, even Nera? The prophet of God sitting at the right hand of the God of Sion now lives no more. He does not abide with us. Our sage who has been

31. This is not the place for a discussion of the office of the *fili*. Some members of this class had judicial functions. The annals distinguish three sorts of *ollam* (the highest grade of *fili*): *ollam re filidecht*, *ollam re brethemnas*, *ollam re senchas*, i.e., of poetry, law, and history (see O. Connellan, *Imtheacht na Tromdháimhe* (Dublin, 1860), Introd.; H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, I (Cambridge, 1932), 601; G. Murphy, 'Bards and Filidh,' *Éigse*, II [1940], 200).

hidden from us is no help to the soul. He who protected the living is dead. He has gone from us in death who was our leader in time of necessity. He has gone from us in death who was our messenger to the Lord.'

Meyer has collected other poems in this archaic form, which probably belong to the sixth century.[32] Most of them are quite short. One in praise of Labraid Loingsech, attributed to Ferchertne Fili, is quoted in full in the story of Dinn Ríg (p. 76). There is another on the same theme, attributed to Find Fili, a legendary king of Leinster, which may be presented here:

'Moen the only one, since he was a child—it was not the action of a great king—he slew kings, a noble cast, Labraid the grandson of Lorc.

The warriors of the Gáliáin took lances into their hands; from that they are called Laigin, the valiant host of the Gáliáin.

They won battles as far as the seashores of the lands of Érimón. After his exile, the exiled one seized the lordship of the warriors of the Gael.

A griffin overran unknown country, the grandson of Loegaire Lorc, higher than all men save only the holy King of heaven.

Gold brighter than the sun, he overcame men and gods, the one god is Móen son of Áne, the only king.'[33]

These Irish encomiums are remarkably like the early bardic poems preserved in the Gupta inscriptions; and it is my belief that here, as elsewhere, an ancient common inheritance has been preserved in India and in Ireland. It may be said that the praise of a king by his court-poet must always be in much the same terms. But the similarity of social position, the elaborate technique, the deliberate obscurity of language, which characterize both the Indian *kavi* and the Irish *fili*, are hardly accidental. We know that the Celts of Gaul had bards whose office was the same as that of the Irish bards, and I suggest that when Posi-

32. *AID*, Vol. II. 33. *Ibid.*, II, 10.

donius saw them standing in the assemblies chanting the praises of their patrons[34] he was witnessing an ancient Indo-European custom.[35]

Four other early panegyrics have been edited by Meyer, who would place them in the seventh century;[36] and from a somewhat later time comes the poem in praise of Aed which is preserved in the Codex S. Pauli in Carinthia[37] and the two poems to Cerball, king of Leinster (†909), preserved in the *Book of Leinster*.[38] Several others dating from the time of Brian Bórama have been published;[39] but it is only from the thirteenth century onward that these bardic poems have been widely preserved.

It appears that the *filid*, as well as the bards, wrote encomiastic poems on occasion. We have seen one example by Dallán Forgaill, who was chief poet (*ríg-ollam*) of Ireland; and Ferchertne is described in *Mesca Ulad* as *rígollam de rígollamnaib Ulad 7 chúlchométaid do Chonchobar ó théit i crích a bidbad* ('one of the chief poets of Ulster and rearguard for Conchobar when he goes into enemies' country'). Whether they were composed by *filid* or by bards, who enjoyed less prestige and were perhaps in early times the court-poets of the lesser nobles, these encomiums belong to the same genre.

From the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries the professional poets were perhaps the most powerful secular influence in Irish society and were, accordingly, the object of severe repressive measures on the part of the English government.[40] The order of *filid* had disappeared, and the bards, who are credited with the development in the eighth or ninth century of the

34. *Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum*, III, ed. C. Müller (Paris, 1849), 259.

35. This is the opinion also of G. Dumézil (see his *Servius et la Fortune* [Paris, 1943]).

36. *AID*, I, 14–58.

37. *Thesaurus palaeohibernicus*, II (Cambridge, 1903), 295.

38. Ed. Meyer (*RC*, XX, 7; XXIX, 210).

39. See Quiggin, "Prolegomena," p. 13.

40. The best general account of the bardic poets and their work is that by Eleanor Knott in her Introduction to *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn*, I, xxxiii–xlv, where, indeed, she suggests that their political influence has been overrated (p. xliv).

metrical system known as *dán díreach*,[41] alone held the field. They had special schools, continuing the old tradition common to *filid* and bards, and members of their order were attached to the monastic schools, so that the monks might be instructed in the native literature.[42] Gerard Murphy maintains that these court poets were *filid* who had assumed bardic functions.[43] If this is so, one would have to say not that the order of *filid* had disappeared but that their office had changed. Murphy does not say that *filid* and bards merged into one class, but this is perhaps what happened. It seems to me that the O'Higgins, O'Husseys, and Macawards could be shown to be *filid* in the same strict sense[44] only if it were shown either that their ancestors belonged to that class prior to the Norman invasion or that they enjoyed the status of *filid* under the Brehon Law. Eochaidh O Heoghusa (O'Hussey) does indeed claim the rank and privileges of an *ollamh*, the highest grade of *fili*, in a poem written *ca.* 1589, quoted by O'Grady, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1926), page 475. But it may be questioned whether the claim is to be taken literally. The very statement of it might rather argue that he is appealing to an ancient and obsolete tradition. The reference to an O'Daly as *ollamh* in *The Annals of the Four Masters*, *s.a.* 1139, may indeed be evidence in favor of Murphy's view.[45]

A good idea of the quantity and quality of this later bardic poetry can be got from O'Grady's *Catalogue*. Quiggin gave a more comprehensive account in his "Prolegomena," but a great

41. Thurneysen, *IT*, III, 167.

42. Cú Chonnacht Ua Dálaigh, chief *ollamh* in poetry, died at Clonard (*FM*, *anno*, 1139). It is not said that he practiced his profession there, and he may have retired to the monastery in old age. There is no doubt, however, that the native literature was cultivated in the monasteries.

43. See n. 31.

44. The question arises as to when the term first occurs in the general sense of 'poet.' The forthcoming fasciculus *F* of the Academy's *Dictionary* will throw light upon it.

45. Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh († 1387) claims that Dálach, the ancestor of the great family of poets, was a pupil of the famous Colmán mac Lénéni, founder of the abbey of Cloyne, who died in 604 (see *ZCP*, XIX, 195). The only *fili* of that name known to me is the druid Dálach mentioned in a poem on the *dinnshenchas* of Connacht (*LL*, fcs. 27*a*1; see also O'Curry, *On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish* [London, 1873], II, 10).

deal has been published since. The most recent survey is by Vendryes, *La Poésie de cour en Irlande et en Galles*. Much of the poetry is mere encomium and would be intolerable, were it not for the exquisite polish that the poets were able to give it. But the strict metrical rules which they observed did not deaden the spirit, and, when the theme invites it, there is passion as well as dignity and eloquence in many of the poems.

In order to have some appreciation of the art, one must know the rules, and it will be well to state them here.[46] The ornaments of *dán díreach* are four: rhyme (*comhardadh*), assonance (*amus*), consonance (*uaithne*), and alliteration (*uaim*).

a) For rhyme the stressed vowels must be identical, and every consonant after the stressed vowel must be of the same class and quality each to each. The consonants are divided into six classes: *b, d, g; p, t, c; ph*(*f*), *th, ch; bh, dh, gh, l, mh, n, r; ll, m*(*m*), *nn, ng, rr; s*. A consonant rhymes only with one of its own class, and palatal rhymes only with palatal, nonpalatal with nonpalatal.[47] Rhyme may be final or internal or between the final of one verse and a word in the interior of the next—the last is a particular ornament called *aicill*. When two or more words in a verse rhyme with corresponding words in another verse, no nonrhyming stressed word may interrupt the sequence of rhymes.

b) Assonance is a mere identity of stressed vowels without regard to the consonants, or even to the syllabic length of the word. A monosyllable may assonate with a word of two or more syllables.

c) Consonance is the subtlest of these ornaments. Words consonate if the vowels are of the same quantity (they must be different vowels), the corresponding consonants of the same class, and the final consonants of the same class and quality. As in the case of rhyme, only consonants after the stressed vowel are concerned. The initial consonant counts only for alliteration. Thus *múr* consonates with *gníomh*, *inríogh* with *comhlán*.

46. This summary is based upon Eleanor Knott, *Irish Syllabic Poetry* (Cook, 1928), pp. 4–10. Stern gave illustrations of the five principal meters (*ZCP*, II, 365–69).

47. A consonant or group of consonants is palatal when followed by *e* or *i*, nonpalatal when followed by *a*, *o*, or *u*.

d) At least one alliteration is required in each verse of all strict meters. Stressed words beginning with the same consonant, or each with a vowel, alliterate. No nonalliterating stressed word may interrupt the sequence of alliteration. The radical counts for alliteration, so that nazalization never affects it. Lenition affects it only for *f*, *p*, *s:* under lenition *f* is silent, and the following sound counts for alliteration; *ph* alliterates only with itself repeated or with *f; sh* alliterates only with itself repeated.

Now let us take one of these meters for illustration. The form called *Séadna* is a stanza of four verses, 8^2, 7^1, 8^2, 7^1: the finals of lines b and d rhyme, and the final of c rhymes with the stressed word preceding the final of d. There are two additional internal rhymes in the second couplet, there is alliteration in each verse, the final of d alliterating with the preceding stressed word. The final of a alliterates with the first stressed word of b. A fine specimen of this meter is Gilbride Macnamee's address to Cathal Redhand O'Conor, king of Connacht († 1224):

Táinig an Croibhdherg go Cruachain a chomhardha adchíu 'na láimh, fríoth ó airmbertaibh na n-érlamh tairrngertaigh críoch bhférghlan bhFáil.	The Redhand has come to Croghan, I see his badge in his hand; through the achievements of the patrons the promised one of the verdant lands of Fál has been found.
Táinig mar do thairrnghir Berchán baisdherg Cruachna cert ar rús, do ghabh um Charn Fhraoich a ríghe, do bhalbh gaoith na tíre ar dtús.	The Redhand of Croghan has come as Berchán foretold, certain our knowledge, he had assumed his kingdom by Carn Fraich, he has first stilled the storm.
. . . . .	. . . . .
Ruithnedh an éasga an úair ghontar i ngruaidhibh Connacht ó'n Chéis, aighthe an tshluaigh mar gríos na gréine an uair bhíos Éire dá éis.	The radiance of the moon is in the cheeks of Connaughtmen from Kesh when he is wounded; the faces of the host are as the scorching of the sun when Ireland is pursuing him.
. . . . .	. . . . .
Eirghe moch i maidin shamhraidh do sheilg fhiadh don erla chas, drúcht ar an bhfeór, lon ag labhra, reódh ar ndol a anma as.	When the prince with curling hair rises betimes on a summer's morning to hunt deer, there is dew on the grass, the blackbird sings, the frost has yielded its strength.
. . . . .	. . . . .

Uille guch abhla re talmhain
i ttír Chathail Chruachna hAoi:
gach coll úr re héigin innte
léigidh a ghlún fillte faoi.

The arms of each apple-tree are weighed to the ground in the land of Cathal of Cruachan Ai, each bright hazel therein perforce bends down.

Gach cnú chorr ag cur a blaoisce
fá bhun shlaite ar shlios túir:
gráinne buidhe ag cur a chochaill
fá bhun mhuine fhochaim úir.[48]

Each smooth nut puts forth its shell at the end of its branch on the margin of the cornland: the yellow grain dons its husk underneath a fresh bending brake.

. . . . . .

One of the greatest surviving examples of technical skill is a poem by one Angus O'Daly, written *ca.* A.D. 1300. It is addressed to a fortress erected by Hugh O'Conor at Cloonfree, County Roscommon. Here each line contains two and often three internal rhymes.[49] Another O'Daly, Muireadhach Albanach, so called because he spent many years in Scotland, in exile for the murder of the steward of his patron (he is the ancestor of the MacVurichs), is the author of a lament for his wife that is worth quoting. It was written early in the thirteenth century.[50] The meter is *Rannaigheacht Mhór* (7^{I}, 7^{I}, 7^{I}, 7^{I}):

M'anam do sgar riomsa a-raoir,
calann ghlan dob ionnsa i n-uaigh;
rugadh bruinne maordha mín
is aonbhla lín uime uainn.

My soul parted from me last night; a pure body that was dear is in the grave; a gentle stately bosom has been taken from me with one linen shroud about it.

Do tógbhadh sgath aobhdha fhionn
a-mach ar an bhfaongha bhfann;
laogh mo chridhise do chrom,
craobh throm an tighise thall.

A white comely blossom has been plucked from the feeble bending stalk; my own heart's darling has dropped, the fruitful branch of yonder house.

M'aonar a-nocht damhsa, a Dhé,
olc an saoghal camsa ad-chí;
dob álainn trom an taoibh naoi
do bhaoi sonn a-raoir, a Rí.

I am alone to-night, O God; evil is this crooked world that Thou seest; lovely was the weight of the young body that was here last night, O King.

48. Text and translation by Quiggin, *Miscellany presented to Kuno Meyer* (Halle, 1912), p. 168. The poem contains thirty-six quatrains.

49. MacKenna, *Díoghluim Dána* (Dublin, 1938), p. 411, No. 119.

50. Text and translation by Bergin (*Studies*, XIII [1924], 427). Five hundred years later one of his descendants, Niall Mór, was still composing bardic poems (see p. 182).

Truagh leam an leabasa thiar,
mo pheall seadasa dhá snámh;
tárramair corp seada saor
is folt claon, a leaba, id lár.

Sad for me (to behold) yonder couch,
my long pallet . . . . ; we have seen a
tall noble form with waving tresses
upon thee, O couch.

. . . . . .

Here is an elegy written *ca.* 1500 by Tadhg Óg Ó Huiginn on his elder brother and teacher, Ferghal Ruadh. It is in the meter called *Deibhidhe*, which is characterized by unrhythmical rhyme (7^x, 7^{x+1}, 7^x, 7^{x+1}), the stanza consisting of two rhymed couplets:

Anocht sgaoilid na sgola,
leabtha uadha a n-aontomha:
do-ghéna lucht gach leabtha
déra re hucht n-imtheachta.

To-night the schools disperse; thereby are beds left widowed; the folk of each bed will shed tears at parting.

Iomdha ag loighe, lór do sgís,
aréir san bhaile a mbímís:
gion gur goire um nóin anocht
loighe dhóibh iná dúsacht.

Many lay down—how weary!—
last night in the home where I dwelt,
though this eve they are more like to
watch than to lie down.

Glóir an bhaile 'na mbíodh sinn—
a hionnamhail ní fhaicim,
a Dhé, do neamhghlóir aniogh;
seanmóir don té do thuigfeadh.

The glory of the home I dwelt in—O
God! I see nought so inglorious today;
it is a sermon to one who could
understand.

. . . . . .

A lucht do bhí 'na bhaile,
lér mian ceard is comhnaidhe,
do bhí adhbhar far fhuath libh
labhradh na gcuach do chluinsin.[51]

O ye who were in his dwelling, in
quest of art and residence, well might
ye loathe to hear the utterance of
the cuckoos.[52]

. . . . . .

An address to a harp begins with these beautiful stanzas:

A chláirsioch Chnuic Í Chosgair
chuirios suan ar síorrosgaibh,
a nuallánach bhinn bhlasda,
ghrinn fhuaránach fhorasda.

O harp of Cnoc Í Chosgair that
bringest sleep to eyes long wakeful,
thou of the sweet and delicate moan,
pleasant, refreshing, grave.

51. Text and translation by Bergin (*Studies*, XIII [1924], 85).

52. The schools used to break up about the twenty-fifth of March (translator's note).

A chlár buadha as bláith mínlearg,
a mhonghárach mhéirfhírdhearg,
a cheóladhach do chealg sinn,
a dhearg leómhanach láinbhinn.

O choice instrument of the smooth, gentle curve, thou that criest under red fingers, musician that hast enchanted us, red harp, high-souled, perfect in melody.

A bhrégadh eóin a healta,
a fhionnfhuaradh aigionta,
a dhonn bhionnfhoclach bhallach,
lonn iongantach iodhlannach.[53]

Thou that lurest the bird from the flock, that coolest the heart, brown, sweet-speaking speckled one, fervent, wondrous, passionate.

. . . . . .

Some of the finest of these bardic poems are among the latest, cries of sorrow and anger at the downfall of Ireland after the Battle of Kinsale in 1601. The flight of O'Neill and O'Donnell, the earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell, in 1607, with a great company of nobles of Ireland, was a message of utter despair; and the poets knew, some of them at least, that all was lost. The following lament, written in 1609, is by Fear Flatha Ó Gnímh:

Beannacht ar anmain Éireann,
inis na gcéimeann gcorrach:
atá Treabh Briain na mbogglór
dom dhóigh ar dhobrón torrach.

A blessing upon the soul of Ireland, island of the faltering steps; methinks Brian's Home of the soft voices is pregnant with sorrow.

Ionann is éag na Fódla
ceilt a córa 's a creidimh,
táire a saormhac 's a saoithe,
más fíor laoithe ná leitir.

The same as the death of Fódla is the suppression of her right and her faith, the degradation of her free sons and her scholars, if lays or letters are true.

Deacair nach bás don Bhanbha
d'éis an tréid chalma churadh
do thriall ar toisg don Eadáil
mo thruaighe beangáin Uladh.

It were hard for Banbha not to die after that gallant company of champions who went journeying to Italy—alas for the princes of Ulster!

Ní leigeann eagla an ghallsmaicht
damh a hanstaid do nochtadh:
atá an chríoch réidhse ríNéill
do chrú fíréin dá folcadh.[54]

Fear of the foreign law does not permit me to tell her sore plight; this smooth land of royal Niall is being washed with innocent blood.

. . . . . .

53. Text and translation by Bergin (*Studies*, XII [1923], 273).

54. Text and translation by Bergin (*Studies*, XV [1926], 437); text also in O'Rahilly, *Measgra Dánta*, p. 148.

O'Neill and O'Donnell both died in Rome and are buried there in the Church of San Pietro in Janicolo. In 1608, Owen Roe Macaward, hereditary bard to O'Donnell, wrote his famous poem, addressed to the earl's sister Nuala, whom he imagines weeping alone beside the grave. Mangan's verse translation is the best interpretation:

A bhean fuair faill ar an bhfeart
truagh liom a n-aghthaoi d'éisteacht!
da mbeath fian Ghaoidheal id' ghar
do bhiadh 'gut chaoineadh cong-
namh.

O woman of the Piercing Wail, who
mournest o'er yon mound of clay
With sigh and groan,
Would God thou wert among the
Gael!
Thou wouldst not then from day to
day
Weep thus alone.

Fada go bhfuighthi an fhaill
dá mbeath thiar a dTír Chonaill;
láimh le sluaigh Bhoirche dá mbeath
ní foighthe an uaigh go huaigneach.

'Twere long before, around a grave
In green Tirconnell, one could find
This loneliness;
Near where BeannBoirche's banners
wave,
Such grief as thine could ne'er have
pined
Companionless.

I nDoire, i nDruim Chliabh na gCros,
i nArd Macha is mór cádhos,
ní bhfuighthi lá an feart ar faill
gan mná do theacht fá thuaraim.

On Derry's plains—in rich Drum-
cliff—
Throughout Armagh the Great, re-
nowned
In olden years,
No day could pass but woman's grief
Would rain upon the burial-ground
Fresh floods of tears!

. . . . . .

Do hísleóchthaoi ó ingnibh scor
an cnoc 'n-ar crochadh Peador,
nó bhiadh an teach gan ghair nguil
dá mbeath láimh le Fiadh Fionntuin.

Oh! horse's hoofs would trample
down
The mount whereon the martyr-
saint
Was crucified.
From glen and hill, from plain and
town,
One loud lament, one thrilling
plaint,
Would echo wide.

. . . . . .

Dá mhac ríogh don fhréimh sin Chuinn
atá ar gach taobh d' Ó Dhomhnuill—
na trí cuirp re síneann sibh
fír-earr ar n-uilc a n-oidhidh;[55]

Two princes of the line of Conn
Sleep in their cells of clay beside
O'Donnell Roe.
Three royal youths, alas! are gone,
Who lived for Erin's weal, but died
For Erin's woe!

. . . . . .

These are but a few examples from the great mass of bardic poetry that has been preserved; and two of the most famous names, Donnchadh Mór Ó Dálaigh and Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn, are not among those quoted. The tradition was common to Ireland and Gaelic Scotland, for the two countries were one so far as culture and the literary language are concerned, down to the end of the sixteenth century. A Scottish poet, Giolla Críost Brúilingeach, writes a poem in praise of MacDermot of Moylurg († 1458) in Connacht, which is purely Irish in form and feeling. Indeed, the tradition lasted longer in Scotland than in Ireland. Niall Mór MacVurich, hereditary bard to the Mac Donalds, composed an elegy in strict bardic form on Donald of Moydart, who died in 1686, and another, one of the last of its kind, on Allan of Clanranald, who was killed at Sherrifmuir in 1715.[56] I have chosen what seems to me best of the poetry that I know. Only a few scholars know the whole of it well. The poems edited by Bergin in *Studies*, Eleanor Knott's edition of Tadhg Dall, and the six volumes edited by Father Lambert McKenna which will be found listed in Best's bibliographies, would provide for an anthology. Miss Knott's Introduction gives a full account of the language, ideas, and style of bardic poetry; and Father McKenna's Introduction to Philip Bocht Ó Huiginn includes a good analysis of the ideas of the religious poets. It is worth mention that the first Irish text to be printed

55. Compare the poem of Ainnrias Mac Marcuis, edited and translated by Eleanor Knott (*Ériu*, VIII, 191), which begins:

Anocht is uaigneach Éire,
do-bheir fógra a fír-fhréimhe
gruaidhe a fear 's a fionn-bhan flioch;
treabh is iongnadh go huaignioch.

Ireland is lonely tonight, the banishment of her true race makes men and women weep; strange that such a home should be desolate.

56. Cameron, *Reliquiae Celticae* (Inverness, 1892), II, 244–59. There is an elegy on one James MacDonald, who died in 1738 (*ibid.*, p. 274).

in Ireland was a poem by Philip Bocht beginning *Tuar feirge foighide Dé.* It was published as a single sheet by Seón Uisér (Ussher) of Dublin in 1571, printed in Anglo-Saxon type. The only known copy is in the library of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

Later Lyric Poetry

It was not only by professional bards celebrating the glory of Irish princes or lamenting their deaths, or by monks in praise of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, that bardic poetry was written. Some of the most charming verse of this period was written by laymen, prominent among them Gerald, earl of Desmond († 1397), on lighter themes.[57] The *Book of the Dean of Lismore* contains a number of love-poems attributed to Isabella, countess of Argyle, who lived in the early sixteenth century.[58] These amateurs did not hold themselves bound strictly by the rules prescribed and were satisfied to avail themselves of the freedom permitted in *óglách*as or 'apprentice poetry.'

Here is a poem by Niall Mór MacVurich. It has the unforgettable quality that belongs to good poetry and brings us close to humanity. It is preserved in the Red Book of Clanranald (Cameron, *Reliquiae Celticae*, II, 290):

> Farewell to last night! The memory will not fade. Though I were to die for it, I wish that it were beginning now.
>
> There are two in this house tonight whose eyes cannot hide their secret; though they are not mouth to mouth, each looks with longing at the other.
>
> Silence gives meaning to the language of the eyes; and silence of the lips cannot keep the secret that a glance betrays.

57. A collection of thirty poems by him, still unpublished, is preserved in the *Book of Fermoy* (see *RIA Cat.*, p. 3110).

58. See Quiggin, "Prolegomena," p. 39.

Ah, gentle eyes, the slanderers of love have sealed my lips. Watch what my eyes are saying, as you sit over there:

'Keep night around us! Would that we could stay like this for ever! Do not let morning in! Arise and put out the light of day!'

Ah, Mary, gracious mother, queen of scholars, come and take me by the hand—Farewell to last night!

Pierce Ferriter was one of the bravest and noblest of the Irish leaders in the Cromwellian campaign. He was taken treacherously, in violation of a safe-conduct, according to tradition, and hanged, together with a bishop and a priest, in 1653.[59] He was a good poet in both styles, the old bardic meters and the later song meters that took their place; and some of his poems belong to the class that we are now considering. Here is one of them:

> Lay down your arms, fair maid, unless you wish to wound us all: unless you lay them down, I shall have you bound by law.
>
> If you would lay them down, then hide your twisting hair, hide your white throat that lets no man go in peace.
>
> You may think that you have never killed a man, north or south: the light from your eyes' glance has slain them, though you wield neither knife nor axe.
>
> You may think that your knee is blunt and that your hand is cold: they have wounded all who have seen them; shield and spear could not serve you better.
>
> Hide your white bosom from me, let me not see your bare side: for the love of Christ let no man see your breast that shines like hawthorn.
>
> If you are satisfied with all this conquest, before I am driven into the grave, you who are robbing me of life, lay down those arms!

59. There is an account of Ferriter in Father Dinneen's edition of his poems, *Dánta Phiarais Feiritéir* (Dublin, 1903).

This kind of poetry was being written as early as the fourteenth century. The earliest poet of the genre is the famous Gearóid Iarla, as he is called in Irish, Gerald Fitzgerald, fourth earl of Desmond, who was Lord Justiciar in 1367. Many of his poems are still unpublished, but here is one that is well known in which he defends women:

He that blames women is a rogue! It is unseemly to slander them. So far as I can see they do not merit all this reproach.

Their words are fair, their voices gentle, and I like them well. Only a wretch will call them cruel. He that blames women is a rogue!

They do no murder nor deceit, nor any horrid wrong; they harm no monk or friar. He that blames women is a rogue!

How else but through a woman's care came bishop or king into the world, or the great prophets who knew no sin? He that blames women is a rogue!

I was in bondage to love, for they like a man sound and slender: they would not tire of me. He that blames women is a rogue!

A man that is old and grey and fat is not their choice for making love: they like him young and sturdy, even if he is poor. He that blames women is a rogue!

Cúchonnacht Ó Cleírigh, one of a great family of poets and scholars, makes fun of those who say they are out of their wits and dying of love:

Love is no painful sickness; what they say of it is false: no man was ever healthy that was not in love with a woman.

I shed no tears for love of her who holds me captive: I have no thought of death; love rather keeps me alive.

Through my love for the swan-like maid I am stout and well: I eat plenty and sleep in peace; music still gives me pleasure.

I can distinguish night from day, I can tell a boat from a ship, and black from white in spite of all my love.

I know that a horse is not a deer, and that the mountain is not the sea, and I know great from small, and that a seal is not a fly.

The dearest woman under the sun—I shall conceal it no longer—my love for her has not left me senseless. I swear I am not in pain.

The originals of these translations and many other love-poems[60] will be found in O'Rahilly's *Dánta Grádha*, to which Flower supplied an Introduction, where he says of them: 'It is not the direct passion of the folksingers or the high passion of the great poets, but the learned and fantastic love of European tradition, the *amour courtois* which was first shaped into art for modern Europe in Provence, and found a home in all the languages of Christendom, wherever a refined society and the practice of poetry met together.'

In the course of the seventeenth century the Irish and Scottish traditions became distinct. With the collapse in Ireland of the bardic schools, which resulted from the disappearance of the patrons upon whom the poets depended, and to some extent perhaps from direct action on the part of the government, the classical language common to Ireland and Scotland for three hundred years was cultivated no longer. The break was not immediate. In both Scotland and Ireland the prose writers and the poets of the seventeenth century maintained the tradition for a while. Indeed, Geoffrey Keating, writing in the early part of that century, did for the Irish language what St. Jerome in his day had done for Latin. His firm and graceful prose is perhaps the simplest and most flexible and eloquent in all the history of Irish, unless it be that of his contemporary, Florence Conry. But Conry's achievement is more limited than that of Keating.

60. Frank O'Connor has made fine verse translations of some of them in *The Fountain of Magic* (New York, 1939), pp. 42–49; Robin Flower has done well with others in *Love's Bitter Sweet* (Dublin, 1925); cf. his last book, *The Irish Tradition*, chap. v.

Keating's *History* (*Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*) tells the story of Ireland from the earliest times down to the coming of the Normans; his three other prose works are all devotional, so that it is only as a poet that he falls within the scope of this chapter. As a poet he is not negligible. He had been trained in the bardic tradition and is one of those that wrote in both styles, *Dán Díreach* and *Amhrán*. Others of his time that deserve mention are Pádraigín Haicéad and Dáibhídh Ó Bruadair.[61] A little later came Egan O'Rahilly († 1726), the last considerable name, it seems to me, if we take quantity and quality together; for there are three others whose single poems deserve a place of honor in any record—Brian Merriman († 1805), who wrote 'The Midnight Court'; Michael Comyn († 1760), author of 'The Lay of Oisín in the Land of the Young'; and Eileen O'Leary, whose passionate lament for her husband, Art O'Leary, killed by government troops in 1773, has a human quality that is rare in Modern Irish poetry. But, in the eighteenth century, Ireland was prostrate and without hope, and the poets who could still find heart to write were so limited in their opportunity and experience that they could do little more than join rhymes together; yet they did this with a fluency and skill that compel admiration. The likable rascal, Owen Roe O'Sullivan († 1784), is deservedly the best known of them. Some of his finest poems are in the form known as *aisling*, a vision in which the poet sees a maiden in distress. She is Ireland, waiting for her spouse, Prince Charles, to return and deliver her. Gerard Murphy has shown that this allegorical form appears in a Latin poem of the thirteenth century,[62] so that a subliterary tradition seems here to come to the surface. Carolan († 1738) was a remarkable musician, but his poetry is poor stuff. The last of his kind was Raftery († 1835), who was illiterate, for he had been blind from childhood. There is wit and gaiety in his songs, but no more.[63] Mean-

61. There is a good discussion of Ó Bruadair by Gerard Murphy, 'Royalist Ireland,' *Studies*, XXIV (1935), 589.

62. *Éigse*, I, 44.

63. The best account of the poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is Daniel Corkery's *The Hidden Ireland* (Dublin, 1925).

while, the nameless authors of the folk songs were making the beautiful songs that have come down from mouth to mouth—*Róisín Dubh*, from which Mangan made his "Dark Rosaleen"; *Donnchadh Bán*, which Yeats has used in "Cathleen Ni Houlihan"; *Maidin Luain Chingcíse*, *An Chúilfhionn*, *An Droighneán Donn*, *Máirín de Barra*, *Úna Bhán*, and many another; and the story-tellers were reciting the folk tales that still delight us.

A new epoch begins in the nineteenth century with the discovery of Irish folklore, and upon that foundation a new Irish literature is being established. Whether it can survive is doubtful in view of the rapid decline of the spoken language despite all efforts to preserve it; but it is an exciting reflection that the most remarkable books recently published in Irish are the work not of writers who have acquired a knowledge of Irish at second hand by study but of Irish-speaking peasants, heirs to the old tradition from which most Irishmen have long since been cut off. At any rate, it is not yet time to write the history of this period.[64]

If there is nothing in Irish literature of the epic stature of Homer or the grandeur of Vergil, there are qualities that some Irishmen at least will hold equally precious—an incandescent vision, a wildness of imagination, sensibility to sound and color and form, sometimes perhaps perceived as signs of an ideal beauty; and human passion, love, sorrow, or anger, often expressed with a sincerity and directness that can still persuade us.[65] Irish tradition has, moreover, an archaic character that gives it special interest and importance. Just as the language itself has preserved some primitive Indo-European features, so the literature enshrines traditions that seem rather Indian than European and may be peripheral survivals of an ancient Indo-European inheritance. Celtic literature—for Welsh and Irish are

64. See M.-L. Sjoestedt-Jonval, 'La Litérature qui se fait en Irlande,' *Études celtiques*, II, 334.

65. 'We have often thought a book surpassing the *Arabian Nights* might be made by a writer of genius who would weld into a continuous narrative the tales of the Gods, the Fianna and the Red Branch, so full of beauty, mystery and magnificence that, as the raw material for romance, there is hardly anything to equal them in the legendary literature of other countries' (Æ, *The Living Torch*, p. 104).

closely related, and a knowledge of Irish is indispensable for the study of Welsh—is one of the five ancient literatures of Europe. Those who are interested in the past will find in it much that is valuable for the history of ancient institutions and much that helps to explain the medieval mind. But the Middle Ages in Ireland are medieval with a difference. The intellectual and cultural changes that mark the Middle Ages and the period of the Renaissance in western Europe did not extend to Ireland. Here the Heroic Age lasted in literature and in society, side by side with Christianity, down to the sixteenth century.

Then suddenly came the attempt to force upon the most conservative people in Europe the ideas of the Reformation, and the result was the destruction of the old Irish world. This explains the remarkable association today in the Irish mind of nationalism and the idea of political freedom with the Catholic church.

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