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ON THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF SOME *CÍN DROMMA SNECHTAI* TEXTS¹

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The corpus with which this article is concerned is that collection of texts which Rudolf Thurneysen, in his ground-breaking essay of 1912, held to be derived from the lost manuscript known as *Lebor Dromma Snechtai* or *Cín Dromma Snechtai* (hereafter *CDS*). Thurneysen's original canon comprised fourteen items.² Ten of these are shared by the manuscripts London, British Library MS Egerton 88 and Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23.N.10:

*Audacht Morainn,*³
Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig,
Compert Chon Culainn,
Compert Mongáin,
Echtrae Chonlai,
Forfess Fer Fálchae,
Immram Brain,
Scél Mongáin,
Togail Bruidne Uí Derga,
Verba Scáthaige.

To these Thurneysen proposed adding the poem 'Fil and grian Glinne Aí', not found in 23.N.10 but ascribed to *CDS* in Egerton 88; the stories *Scél asa mberar combad hé Find mac Cumail Mongán* and *Tucait Baile Mongáin*, lacking in 23.N.10 but present in Egerton 88, and grouped together with *Compert Mongáin* and *Scél Mongáin* in three other manuscripts; and *Echtrae Macha*.⁴ He also noted that the saga *Tochmarc*

¹ This article was written at the Institute of Irish Studies in the Queen's University of Belfast, where I held a research fellowship during the academic year 1993–4; I am grateful to the Institute for having offered me this support. I am grateful also to the editors of *Ériu*, whose searching and perceptive comments on an earlier version of this paper have led to its substantial improvement. I am of course solely responsible for all errors which remain, and indeed for the general position taken in the paper as a whole.

² 'Cín Dromma Snechta', *Zu ir. Hss.*, I, 23–30.

³ Thurneysen expressed some misgivings regarding the *Audacht's* inclusion, as he considered it to be later than the other *CDS* texts (op. cit., 29); its most recent editor, however, has presented a strong case for assigning it to the very beginning of the eighth century (Fergus Kelly, *Audacht Morainn* (Dublin 1976), xxix–xl).

⁴ I am not persuaded that Thurneysen was correct in assigning this story to *CDS* (op. cit., 29). Although *Echtrae Macha* evidently has an Old Irish basis, it exhibits several later features: *na* as nom. pl. masc. article (Kuno Meyer's edn, 'The Dindsenchas of Emain Macha', *Archiv* 3 (1907), 325–6: 325.9–10); *-astar* as 3 sg. pret. ending of a non-deponent verb (*ssniastar* 325.18); loss of deponent flexion in a verb in *-ig-* (*condahualgnigset* 326.1); and univerbation (*no fhoglatiss* 325.30, *facbais* 326.4). None of these usages appears elsewhere in the *CDS* corpus, nor for that matter do they characterise the versions of *CDS* texts in 23.N.10: the only comparable innovation which I have been able to find there is *rofagaiph* for *forácaib* in *Compert Mongáin* (Kuno Meyer's edn, in K. Meyer and A. Nutt,

Étaíne cites *CDS*, indicating that some version of that story was also present there.⁵

Thurneysen, Vernam Hull and Proinsias Mac Cana subsequently presented arguments for including three further texts in the list:

Compert Chonchobuir,⁶

Immacallam Choluim Chille 7 ind Óclaig,⁷

Immacallam in Druad Brain 7 inna Banfátho Febuil.⁸

Below I shall be considering the possible affiliations of several of the items in this body of material.⁹ At the outset I should perhaps state explicitly that in undertaking this inquiry I did not take it for granted that the texts in question derive from a compilation made in the early eighth century,¹⁰ nor indeed from a codex bearing the name *Cín Dromma Snechtai*.¹¹ My starting-point was simply Thurneysen's dictum that they 'bilden ... eine altertümliche Gruppe';¹² I shall be attempting to identify

The voyage of Bran (London 1895–7), I, 43.19). When these linguistic considerations are set beside the fact that *Echtrae Macha* is not found in Egerton 88, the grounds for its inclusion in *CDS* seem slender.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, 23. The version of *Togail Bruidne Uí Derga* in LU assigns to it three *remscéla* or 'foretales', whose protagonists are apparently Étaín, Eochaid Airem, Midir, and the Mac Óc. This would seem to be further evidence for the existence of an Étaín cycle in *CDS*; I will return to this topic below.

⁶ Thus Vernam Hull, 'The conception of Conchobar', *Irish Texts* 4 (1934), 4–12: 6–7.

⁷ Thus Proinsias Mac Cana, 'On the "prehistory" of *Immram Brain*', *Ériu* 26 (1975), 33–52: 37–8.

⁸ Thus Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, 17–18; cf. James Carney, 'The earliest Bran material', in J. J. O'Meara and B. Naumann (eds), *Latin script and letters A.D. 400–900* (Leiden 1976), 174–93: 175.

⁹ I shall therefore not be considering the scattered genealogical and pseudohistorical citations discussed by Thurneysen, *Zu ir. Hss.*, I, 23–5; cf. Séamus Mac Mathúna, *Immram Brain: Bran's Journey to the Land of the Women* (Tübingen 1985), 425–48. Mac Mathúna sees the text called 'The Quarrel of Finn and Oisín' (ed. Meyer, *Fianaigeacht* (Dublin 1910), 22–7) as a strong candidate for inclusion in *CDS* because it occurs in both 23.N.10 and London, British Library MS Harleian 5280. But this argument does not seem strong: of the nineteen items shared by these two manuscripts, only three others belong to *CDS*.

¹⁰ Thurneysen originally assigned *CDS* to this period, then changed his mind and argued for a date in the tenth century ('Baile in Scáil', *ZCP* 20 (1936), 213–27: 217–18); this new position was, however, ably refuted by Gerard Murphy ('On the dates of two sources used in Thurneysen's *Heldensage*', *Ériu* 16 (1952), 145–56: 149–51). More recently Mac Mathúna has argued at considerable length for a tenth- or eleventh-century date (*Immram Brain*, 421–69). It should be noted that these arguments ultimately relate only to the language of *Immram Brain* itself and to the doctrine of one of the pseudohistorical passages which claim *CDS* as their authority (note in particular his concluding remarks, pp 467–9). Even if Mac Mathúna is correct with regard to these two texts—and I believe that this may be questioned—this has no necessary bearing on the age of the rest of the *CDS* material.

¹¹ In fact I do not doubt that this is the case; but it is not a point which I am concerned to argue here. It may be noted that Máire West has recently expressed scepticism regarding the received interpretation of the crucial heading (which she follows Tomás Ó Concheanainn in calling a 'colophon') [*Incipiatur nunc cin Droma Snechtai* etc. in Egerton 88 ('Leabhar na hUidhre's position in the manuscript history of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* and *Orgain Bruidne Uí Dergae*', *CMCS* 20 (1990), 61–98: 91–8); her arguments deserve discussion, but this cannot be undertaken here.

¹² *Zu ir. Hss.*, I, 28.

significant relationships within this group, and to gain a clearer idea of its nature on this basis.

I. THE MONGÁN TALES

We may begin by considering the four Mongán stories. They have come down to us as a group, always in the same sequence, in four manuscripts: *Lebor na hUidre*, the Yellow Book of Lecan, 23.N.10, and Dublin, Trinity College MS H.4.22; only *Compert Mongáin* and *Scél asa mberar...* occur in Egerton 88, and only *Compert Mongáin* and *Scél Mongáin* in Dublin, Trinity College MS H.3.18. That they share a single protagonist, can all be assigned to the Old Irish period, and in most cases survive together naturally suggests that they share a common origin; I believe that further connections between the stories point to their having had a single author. In the discussion which follows, citations will refer to the pages and lines of Meyer's editions.¹³

(a) *Scél Mongáin* begins with the words *Día mboí dano Forgoll fili la Mongán fecht n-and* 'Once, then, when Forgoll the poet was with Mongán' (52.16). In fact Forgoll plays no role whatever in *Scél Mongáin*; he is, however, one of the main characters in the preceding tale, *Scél asa mberar*, and the use of *dano* appears to indicate that this allusion to the poet is in fact a reference to what has gone before.

(b) The phrase *airecol n-amrae* ('wondrous chamber' or 'chamber of wonders') occurs in both *Scél Mongáin*, 53.6, and *Tuait Baile Mongáin*, 56.18, but not, so far as I know, elsewhere.

(c) All four stories (like the other prose pieces from *CDS*) have a marked scarcity of sentence connectives, a feature discussed by Proinsias Mac Cana;¹⁴ adopting simpler criteria than Mac Cana's, I have limited myself to noting the presence or absence of *ocus* between sentences. There are almost no instances of this use of *ocus* in *Scél Mongáin* and *Tuait Baile Mongáin*, the two shorter tales.¹⁵ In the other two there is an interesting distribution. *Compert Mongáin* has no instances in the first half of the text (fifteen lines) and thirteen in the second (approximately seventeen lines): seven of these occur in a single cluster (43.13–17), and there are smaller clusters at 43.5–6, 10–11. *Ocus* is considerably rarer as a sentence connective in *Scél asa mberar*: there are two instances at 46.7,

¹³ *Voyage of Bran*, I, 42–58; cf. Vernam Hull, 'An incomplete version of *Immram Brain* and four stories concerning Mongán', *ZCP* 18 (1930), 409–24; and Mac Mathúna, *Immram Brain*, 472–9.

¹⁴ 'Mongán mac Fiachna and *Immram Brain*', *Ériu* 23 (1972), 102–42: 110–13.

¹⁵ Of the three cases which I have noted in *Scél Mongáin* (53.1, 3, 7), the first occurs in a context where syntax renders use of a conjunction almost unavoidable: *Asbert friss dúis i mbad diuit ocus i mbad maith a tharus*, literally 'He spoke to him to ascertain whether his journey would be honest and whether it would be good'. So far as I can see there are no cases in *Tuait Baile Mongáin*.

8,¹⁶ and the remaining five come close together in the final twelve lines of the story (48.9, 11 (*bis*), 14, 15). This seems to be an example of the stylistic device, noted by Mac Cana in *Immram Brain*, whereby a tale is rounded off with a string of linked sentences;¹⁷ in *Compert Mongáin*, however, the use of *ocus* in the second half of the text is by no means limited to its conclusion.

(d) Manannán is called a *fer deligthe* (*Compert Mongáin*, 42.8) and *fer sainigthe* (*ibid.*, 43.9); Mongán's student emissary encounters a *lánamain sainredach* in the *síd* of Cnoc Báne (*Scél Mongáin*, 53.10); and Mongán and his followers find a *márfessiur deligthe* in an Otherworld hall (*Tuait Baile Mongáin*, 56.2). In all of these cases adjectives meaning 'special, particular' are applied to supernatural personages, perhaps in the sense 'remarkable'. I am not aware of any instances of such a usage in other accounts of meetings with immortals;¹⁸ for that matter, *deiligthe* itself appears to be a fairly rare adjective, and *DIL* furnishes no other instances of *deiligthe*, *sainigthe*, or *sainredach* being employed in a similar fashion elsewhere.¹⁹ Granted that the dictionary's collections cannot be assumed to be comprehensive, it is striking that terminology consistently applied in these stories to denizens of the Otherworld should be so difficult to parallel elsewhere.²⁰

Some of these shared features are more striking than others; taken collectively, however, they lend some further support to the case for seeing all four tales as the work of a single author.

II. TUCAIT BAILE MONGÁIN AND BAILE CHUINN CHÉTCHATHAIG

Comparisons of the type made in the preceding section are of course out of the question in considering these two texts: *Tuait Baile Mongáin* is a brief and almost entirely unornamented prose narrative, while *Baile*

¹⁶ Like the example in *Scél Mongáin* mentioned in the previous note, these appear in indirect discourse: *Asbert in fili nodnáirfed dia áithgiud, ocus no áerfad a athair ocus a máthair ocus a šenathair, ocus dochechnad fora n-uscú* 'The poet said that he would satirise him for contradicting him, and that he would satirise his father and his mother and his grandfather, and that he would enchant their waters'.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, 112.

¹⁸ To cite only Old Irish evidence, there are no examples in *Baile in Scáil*, *Compert Chon Culainn*, *Echtrae Chonlai*, *Immram Brain*, *Noinden Ulad*, Version B of *Serglige Con Culainn*, *Tochmarc Étaíne*, or *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*. The version of *Baile in Scáil* in Oxford, Bodleian MS Rawl. B 512 does, however, have a comparable construction, saying of Lug that 'his eminence (?) was great' (*ropu mor a delgnaidhe*; Thurneysen, 'Baile in Scáil', 220 §6).

¹⁹ More precisely, *sainigthe* is not cited in any other personal descriptions, while *deiligthe* in the sense 'excellent, distinguished' is attested only here, in an account of the golden calf (*SR* 4112), and as part of an alliterating string in one of the Middle Irish poems added to the tale of Loegaire mac Crimthainn (*shuag dían deligthe diglach*, LL 35942). The only cases which I can find of *sainredach* being applied to persons in the sense 'excellent' occur at *MI*. 37 a 18, b 10, 16, in the context of an extended discussion of the adjective *singularis*.

²⁰ Underscoring this consistency is the fact that in the only case in the Mongán stories when a remarkable figure is *not* one of the people of the *síd*, Cailte's return from the dead in *Scél asa mberar* (47.15–16), no such adjective is applied to him.

Chuinn Chétchathaig is a prophetic litany composed in riddling diction. That a connection does in fact exist between them emerges clearly, however, when they are examined in conjunction with a third work, the ninth-century *Baile in Scáil*.²¹

That *Baile in Scáil* is related to *Baile Chuinn* was proposed already by Thurneysen:²² in the former Conn himself predicts the reigns of all of his successors, making frequent use of the imagery of ‘drinking’ kingship; while in the latter Conn is present in the hall of the god Lug, as his successors are served with ale one by one by a woman identified with sovereignty. Lug’s prophecies while the ale is being dispensed are given separately following the narrative.

The resemblances between *Baile in Scáil* and *Tucait Baile Mongáin* are more detailed. I hope to publish a fuller discussion of this subject on another occasion, but the main points may be given here; first, a brief summary of the two stories will probably be helpful.

In *Baile in Scáil* Conn arises one day before dawn at Tara, and goes onto the rampart accompanied by his three druids and his three poets. A stone cries out beneath Conn’s foot. Conn asks his chief poet what this means, but the latter refuses to explain until 53 days have elapsed: he then tells the king that the stone has foretold all of his successors, but that he himself is not destined to explicate its prophecy. A mist comes upon them suddenly, so that they cannot tell where they are going. A horseman approaches, first attacking them but then bidding them welcome. They find themselves in a plain containing a golden tree (*bile*) and a house with a rooftree of the alloy *findruine*. Within are a young woman sitting beside a vat of ale with various associated vessels, and a ‘phantom’ (*scál*) who tells them that he is Lug. As the woman serves the ale she asks to whom it should be given, and in answering her Lug names every king who will rule in Tara until the end of the world. Conn and his followers enter Lug’s shadow, and see the supernatural hall no longer; but Conn keeps the vessels from which the ale was dispensed.

In *Tucait Baile Mongáin* Mongán’s wife asks him to tell her of his ‘adventures’ (*imthechta*), and he agrees to do so once seven years have passed. At the end of this time they attend an assembly convened by Diarmait mac Cerbaill at the hill of Uisnech in Mide. A great storm comes upon them there. Mongán, accompanied by six followers, his *senchaid* and his wife, leaves the hill and comes suddenly upon a richly appointed house with a bronze roof, containing among other things seven vats of wine. He becomes intoxicated, and tells his adventures to his wife: this is his ‘ecstatic utterance’ (*baile*). They awake next morning to find

²¹ For the text see Meyer, ‘*Baile in Scáil*’, *ZCP* 3 (1901), 457–66; ‘Das Ende von *Baile in Scáil*’, *ZCP* 12 (1918), 232–8; ‘Der Anfang von *Baile in Scáil*’, *ZCP* 13 (1921), 371–82; and Thurneysen’s edition (as in n. 9 above). The narrative section has been translated by Eugene O’Curry, *Lectures on the manuscript materials of ancient Irish history* (Dublin 1861), 385–90; and paraphrased by Myles Dillon, *The cycles of the kings* (Oxford 1946), 11–14.

²² *Zu. ir. Hss.*, I, 48–9.

that they are back in Mongán's own stronghold of Ráith Mór Maige Line in Dál nAraide, and that a year has passed.

It will be obvious that the two accounts have much in common. In both, a king with a small entourage is lost in bad weather on a hill connected with the Uí Néill kingship, then stumbles upon a supernatural hall in which he is lavishly entertained.²³ In *Baile in Scáil* the house has a metal ridgepole; in *Tucait Baile Mongáin* the house has a metal roof.²⁴ In both stories a long and apparently unmotivated delay intervenes between an initial question and the answer's disclosure under remarkable circumstances. In *Baile in Scáil* Conn and his six followers hear Lug recite a *baile* to the woman; in *Tucait Baile Mongáin* Mongán's six followers and his *senchaid* hear Mongán recite a *baile* to his wife.

I propose accordingly that *Tucait Baile Mongáin* was, like *Baile in Scáil*, based on the lost narrative introduction to *Baile Chuinn*. In some respects it may indeed resemble this source more closely than *Baile in Scáil* does: *Baile Chuinn* is evidently recited by Conn, even as Mongán recites the *baile* in *Tucait Baile Mongáin*; while in *Baile in Scáil* it is Lug who utters the prophecy as the mortal king stands by. I shall argue below that *Baile Chuinn* and *Echtrae Chonlai* are companion pieces: in this connection it may be significant that in *Tucait Baile Mongáin*, as in *Echtrae Chonlai*, the site of supernatural revelation is not Tara but Uisnech.

Tucait Baile Mongáin differs most conspicuously from *Baile in Scáil* in having Mongán rather than Conn as its central figure. In fact the story moves from the midlands to Ulster in an explicit and evidently deliberate way: Mongán attends a royal assembly held by the king of the southern Uí Néill,²⁵ has Otherworld experiences closely resembling those of Conn,

²³ That an Uí Néill site serves as the starting-point in both cases would be banal enough, were it not that only one of the two tales has an Uí Néill protagonist. Stumbling upon an Otherworld hall after being overtaken by bad weather, although it would seem to be a natural narrative device, has no Old Irish parallels of which I am aware; the only Middle Irish instance known to me occurs in *Echtrae Chormaic*, a story in which close verbal correspondences point to direct derivation from *Baile in Scáil* (ed. W. Stokes, 'The Irish Ordeals', *IT* 3.1, 183–229: 195 §32). In *Compert Chon Culainn* (ed. R. Thurneysen, *Zu ir. Hss.*, I, 31–41: 35 §2), as in later Finn tales (e.g. LL 29181ff; *Feis Tighe Chonáin*, ed. M. Joynt (Dublin 1936), 2), it is the darkness of night which disorients the travellers.

²⁴ Metal roofs or ridgepoles do not seem to be attested elsewhere in Old or Middle Irish, even in the lavish descriptions of the splendours of the Otherworld in *Immram Brain*, *Serglige Con Culainn*, *Tochmarc Étaíne*, the story of Loegaire mac Crimthainn, and the later *immrama*.

²⁵ This assembly is stated to have been held 'in the year of the death of Ciarán the carpenter's son, and of the slaying of Tuathal Maelgarb, and of the accession to kingship of Diarmait [mac Cerbaill]' (*Tucait Baile Mongáin*, 56.10–12). These events are assigned to the same year by the *Annals of Tigernach* (RC 17, 138), *Chronicon Scotorum* (s.a. 544), the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* (s.a. 547), and a marginal note in the *Annals of Ulster* (s.a. 549, corrected dating); but not by the main text of the *Annals of Ulster* (s.aa 544–5, 549) or the *Annals of the Four Masters* (s.aa 538–9, 548). *Ann. Tig.* and *Chron. Scot.* speak of a great assembly held at Tailtiu in the same year; cf. LL 35711–13. Both the Tailtiu and the Uisnech assemblies are mentioned in *Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill*, which agrees with *Tucait Baile Mongáin* in describing a great storm during the latter which left behind

and then finds himself magically transported back to Dál nAraide. Something similar may be happening in *Scél asa mberar*, where the plot turns upon a dispute between Mongán and the poet Forgoll: the latter asserts that one of Finn's battles was fought in Leinster, but Mongán is vindicated in his claim that it took place in his own territory at Ollarba. The earliest references to Finn associate him exclusively with Leinster, eastern Munster, and the midlands;²⁶ it is this tradition, represented in the story by a master-poet, which Mongán successfully challenges.

Both *Tuait Baile Mongáin* and *Scél asa mberar*, then, can be read as texts in which southern traditions are appropriated by a northern author.

III. THE *IMMACALLAM* TEXTS, *IMMRAM BRAIN*, AND THE MONGÁN TALES

As noted above, it has been argued that the dialogue texts *Immacallam Choluim Chille 7 ind Óclaig* and *Immacallam in Druad Brain 7 inna Banfátho Febuil* should be accepted as having formed part of *CDS*, even though neither belongs to the body of material shared by Egerton 88 and 23.N.10.²⁷ Further arguments in support of this view emerge from a consideration of the *Immacallma* on the one hand and certain texts with a secure place in the *CDS* canon on the other—specifically *Immrám Brain* and the Mongán tales. In discussing *Immacallam Choluim Chille* and *Immacallam in Druad* I shall to a great extent be following the lead of Proinsias Mac Cana and James Carney, who dealt with these works in two important articles published some twenty years ago.

Immacallam Choluim Chille begins with an extended title: 'The conversation between Colum Cille and the youth at Carn Eolairg; some say that he was Mongán mac Fiachnai'. The dialogue follows without further introduction: Colum Cille asks a youth (*óclach, iuuenis*) whence he has come, and receives the reply that he comes 'from strange lands, from familiar lands' to learn from the saint 'the sod upon which died, and the sod upon which were born, knowledge and ignorance'.²⁸ Colum Cille then asks about Lough Foyle, beside which they are standing;²⁹ the

'twelve chief streams' (*dá prímglaísi déc*; S. H. O'Grady (ed.), *Silva Gadelica* (London 1892), I, 73–4; cf. *Tuait Baile Mongáin*, 56.13–14).

²⁶ The oldest surviving mention of Finn and Cailte relates them to the kings of the Laigin (M. A. O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae*, vol. 1 (Dublin 1976), 22). See further the early Fenian materials listed by Meyer, *Fianaigeacht*, xviii–xxii, where the action is set in an area ranging roughly from Tipperary to Westmeath.

²⁷ Cf. nn 7, 8 above.

²⁸ Dublin, TCD MS H.3.18, one of the two manuscripts which contain this text, adds in the margin the phrase *7 fot forsa n-adnuic* (literally 'and the sod on which buries'), but with no indication of the point at which it should be inserted in the text (Paul Grosjean (ed.), 'S. Columbae Hiensis cum Mongano heroe colloquium', *Analecta Bollandiana* 45 (1927), 75–83: 79 n. 6). It is very possibly a secondary addition: use of *for* 'on' where one would expect *fo* 'under', and of *-adnuic* 'buries' where one would expect *-adnacht* 'was buried', may be due to mechanical parallelism with *fót forsa mbeba 7 fót forsa ngénair*, present in both manuscripts and translated above.

²⁹ He speaks only of 'this lough which we see'; this is presumably Lough Foyle as

youth describes it as having been a fertile and prosperous region, and alludes to his own previous existences in the shapes of various animals. The saint's final question concerns what lies beneath 'this sea to the east of us': the youth describes men, beasts and monsters. They then go out of the hearing of the monks so that Colum Cille can make inquiries concerning 'the heavenly and earthly mysteries'. At the end of this conversation the youth disappears, and Colum Cille refuses to disclose any of what was said to his followers.

Mac Cana has noted various respects in which this cryptic little text seems to have influenced *Immram Brain*; a few further points may be added to his observations.

(a) When Colum Cille asks 'Whose was it formerly, this lough which we see?',³⁰ the youth replies by describing a prosperous and fertile territory. Bran and his crew meet Manannán on the high seas, and he tells them that what seems to them to be water appears to him as a flowering plain (*Immram Brain*, §§33–43 in Mac Mathúna's edition). In both cases, a mortal who sees only water is told by a supernatural informant of a beautiful country occupying the same space.³¹

(b) In describing the region now covered by Lough Foyle, the youth says that 'it was full of drink, it was full of rush couches (?), it was full of silver, it was full of chariots' (*ba ólach, ba osrach, ba airgtech, ba cairptech*).³² Three adjacent quatrains in *Immram Brain* name one of the Otherworld islands as *Airctech* (§12), speak of the drinking of wine (*óol fino* §13), and describe chariots of gold, silver, and bronze (§14). That this juxtaposition is merely coincidental is rendered less likely by the rarity of the adjective *airgtech* 'of silver, possessing silver': *DIL* has only three other examples, two from glossaries³³ and a third which makes internal rhyme with *cairptech*.³⁴ Rhyme with *cairptech* is clearly a factor in the

Carn/Carrac Eolairg is probably to be identified as Magilligan Point, a promontory at the lough's mouth.

³⁰ The question is introduced by the word *cóich*, which normally means 'whose?' in Old Irish. Mac Cana (op. cit., 37) points out that *cóich* is used to mean 'who?' in the early *Amra Coluim Chille*, and that may indeed be its sense here also; cf. F. Kelly, 'A poem in praise of Colum Cille', *Ériu* 24 (1973), 1–34: 11 §4. On the other hand, 'whose?' is not inappropriate given that the question relates to a sunken kingdom; cf. discussion of *Immacallam in Druad* below.

³¹ Cf. Mac Cana, "'Prehistory'", 50.

³² Grosjean's edn, 78.14–15, 80.1–2.

³³ *Corm. Y* §851, where it is included in a list of adjectives ending in *-ach/-ech* which denote possession; and the treatise on Latin declension in Dublin, Trinity College MS H.2.13, where *argenteus* is glossed *airgedach* (W. Stokes (ed.), *Irish glosses* (Dublin 1860), 19 §607). Lack of syncope in the latter case suggests that this may, like many of the other words in that tract, be a nonce formation.

³⁴ *I tír Rois Argait airgtig/ forsín crích cairptig cétnai*, in Eochaid ua Flainn's poem 'Éistet aes echnai oíbin' (ed. R. A. S. Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (London 1938–56), 4, 264.2319–20, 5, 422.3050–1). Besides rhyme and alliteration, use of the adjective in this case would have been suggested naturally enough by the mention of *Ros Argait* (= *Argatros*) itself. Mention should also be made of explanations of the epithet of the legendary king Énna Airt(h)ech involving silver shields (thus LL 2308–9); most spellings

word's use in *Immacallam Choluim Chille* also; not, however, in *Immram Brain*, where I suggest that its presence is due to the *Immacallam*'s influence.

(c) Both the youth in the *Immacallam* and the woman in the *Immram* come 'from strange lands' (*a tírib ingnad*);³⁵ it is said of both when they depart that onlookers 'did not know whither they went';³⁶ and both indicate the geographical location of Otherworld regions.³⁷ Both the youth in the *Immacallam* and Mongán in the *Immram* pass through a series of animal metamorphoses;³⁸ and both disclose 'mysteries' (*rúna*).³⁹ While most of these features can be matched elsewhere,⁴⁰ no such cluster of correspondences links either tale with any other.

Immacallam in Druad consists of eight quatrains, divided into two sections by the rubric *Respondit banfaith* 'The prophetess answered' following the fourth. In the first half, which seems to be placed in the mouth of Bran's druid, the speaker boasts of his knowledge, recalls 'drinking in Bran's stronghold (*i ndún Brain*) in the cold winter', and speaks of a 'pure spring in which is the knowledge (?) of a troop of a hundred women' and of the great value of 'the treasures of the troop of women ... which are in the side of Srúb Brain'.⁴¹ In the second half the prophetess remembers her youth in the court of Bran's father Febul, and contrasts the prosperous kingdom across which she used to ride with the waters which have covered it: *Indid glassfairrce chlochach/Mag Febuil a finnscothach* 'For Mag Febuil of the white flowers is a grey stony sea'.

of this name, however, show a lenited dental, indicating that the connection with silver is secondary.

³⁵ Grosjean, 78.8, 79.23–4; Mac Mathúna, §1.

³⁶ Grosjean, 79.10, 81.1 (*Ní fetatar cia luid*); Mac Mathúna, §31 (... *a nnád fetatar cia luid*).

³⁷ Grosjean, 78.22–3, 80.10 (*frinn anair*); Mac Mathúna, §25 (*frinn aniar*).

³⁸ Grosjean, 78.15–17, 80.2–4; Mac Mathúna, §§53–4.

³⁹ Grosjean, 79.5–6, 80.17–18; Mac Mathúna, §52. Cf. Mac Cana, "'Prehistory'", 51–2.

⁴⁰ On the first two points see Mac Cana, "'Prehistory'", 38–40. A series of metamorphoses is also attributed to Tuán mac Cairill (cf. J. Carey, 'Scél Tuáin meic Chairill', *Ériu* 35 (1984), 93–111: 101–2), and to the swineherds in *De Chophur in Dá Muccida* (ed. E. Windisch, *IT* 3.1.230–78); in the latter case, however, the statement that 'they used to transform themselves into every shape, like Mongán mac Fiachnai' (*nos delbtais in cech richt, amal no bíth Mongán mac Fiachnai*, 243.8–9, cf. 235.16–17) indicates that this is not a wholly independent witness.

⁴¹ The word which I have tentatively rendered as 'knowledge' appears in the MSS as *sais*, *sáss*; Carney translated it as 'equipment', apparently equating this with the *séuit* 'treasures' mentioned immediately thereafter. In the Old Irish period *sás* appears, however, to have been used exclusively in the sense 'snare'; and even when its usage broadened considerably later it seems still to have been employed to mean specifically 'tools, implements', not 'equipment' in a more general sense. I suggest that the MS readings reflect earlier *soes*, *sós*, variant spellings of *sous* 'wisdom, knowledge, inspiration', and that what we have here is an example of the traditional association of poetic ability with sources of water. A further possibility, to be mentioned only with some diffidence, is that *cuire* has different senses in the adjacent phrases *sous cuirei céit mban* and *séuit in banchuiri*: with the former cf. the image of the *coire sofis* 'cauldron of knowledge' in the treatise 'The cauldron of poesy' (ed. Liam Breatnach, *Ériu* 32 (1981), 45–93: §§2, 4, 7, 10).

In a brilliant analysis, Carney suggested that these quatrains reflect a lost tale (for which he suggested the title *Echtrae Brain*) in which Bran was incited by his druid to seize the treasures kept by Otherworld women in a well or spring;⁴² in revenge the waters burst forth and inundated his kingdom, which became the present Lough Foyle.

Carney's case, supported by a wide range of comparanda adduced from elsewhere in the literature, is a very persuasive one; for our present purposes, however, it will be sufficient to consider *Immacallam in Druad* alone. Here we find several elements which recur in *Immram Brain*: the figures of Bran and Febul themselves, Bran's stronghold or *dún*,⁴³ the promontory of Srúb Brain (modern Stroove), a splendid 'company of women' (*banchuire*) beyond a barrier of water,⁴⁴ and—as in *Immacallam Choluim Chille*—a contrast between the flowery plain of the past and the salt water of the present comparable with the opening of Manannán's poem.⁴⁵

The author of *Immram Brain* may of course have known stories about Bran's adventures and the origins of Lough Foyle. If so, however, it seems curious that he tells us nothing about Bran which cannot be accounted for on the basis of *Immacallam in Druad*; it is curious too that while Manannán's speech in the *Immram* is comparable with that of the youth in *Immacallam Choluim Chille*, he makes no reference to the inundation which is implicit in the youth's account. His omissions, in other words, parallel those of the *Immacallma*, suggesting that it was these texts which were his sources.⁴⁶

From *Immram Brain* §§49–51 we learn that Manannán was Mongán's father: he begot him on a woman named Caintigern in Mag Line, and Fiachnae acknowledged him as his son. A further allusion to these events is made at §57 with the statement *Sech is Monindán mac Lir/a athair, a fithithir* 'For Manannán mac Lir is his father and teacher'. This account corresponds closely to *Compert Mongáin*, which tells how the god came to Ráith Mór Maige Line and begot Mongán on Fiachnae Lurga's wife while he was absent in Britain. Further resemblances to these quatrains

⁴² Cf. the crown of Brión, hidden at the bottom of a spring by the king of Síð Cruachan in *Echtra Nerai* (ed. Kuno Meyer, *RC* 10 (1889), 212–28: 218); and the vessel of Badarn, kept by women of the *síde* at the bottom of a spring in *Scél na Fír Flatha* (ed. Whitley Stokes, 'Irish Ordeals', 191).

⁴³ Cf. *Immram Brain* §2: *Imluid Bran láa n-and a oenur i comocus dia dún* 'One day Bran walked alone near his stronghold'. As Carney points out, a placename *Dún mBrain* may be implicit here 'according to a common early Irish practice' ('Earliest Bran material', 184); on the other hand, *dún Brain* in *Immacallam in Druad* §2a is itself not necessarily a proper name.

⁴⁴ *Immacallam in Druad* §3c; cf. *Immram Brain* §20. On the shift in locale from the bottom of a well to a transoceanic paradise see Carney, *op. cit.*, 185–6.

⁴⁵ In particular compare *Immacallam in Druad* §§6a, 7d *Áildí maige no-réidmis ... Mag Febuil, a findscothach* with *Immram Brain* §33 *Is mag scothach imma-réid*.

⁴⁶ We may contrast the traditions about the origins of Lough Neagh, discussed by Carney on p. 185 of the article cited above. Here the poem which is our earliest source for the story, although full of difficulties, clearly speaks of a flood (e.g. *fūaim ind locha dar cach dū* 'the roar of the lake across every place', *ZCP* 8 (1912), 308.9), and references to this inundation are abundant in later literature.

in *Immram Brain* may be noted in other Mongán tales: *Caintigern*, the name of Mongán's mother in *Immram Brain*, recalls *Breóthigern* and *Findtigern*, the names assigned to his wife in *Scél asa mberar* (46.14) and *Tucait Baile Mongáin* (56.7) respectively; and the statement *Móidfea sognáis cach síde* 'I will boast of the courteous one of every síd (?)' (*Immram Brain* §52)⁴⁷ may remind us of the situation in *Scél Mongáin* where the people in each síd visited by a poor scholar greet him warmly for Mongán's sake.

That the connection between *Immram Brain* and the Mongán tales is textual, not merely a matter of shared tradition, can, I think, be argued on linguistic grounds.

(a) Vernam Hull pointed out that the form of the 3 sg. masc./neut. emphasising pronoun is *-sa* rather than *-som* in *Immram Brain* (§61 *nís n-aicilded-sa*, §62 *don-árfas-sa*), *Compert Mongáin* (*asbert-sa*, 2 exx),⁴⁸ and *Scél asa mberar* (*asberad-sa*).⁴⁹ Noting that *-sa* appears as 3 sg. masc. and 3 pl. emphasising pronoun in two marginal notes to a column in the Würzburg glosses (Wb. 9 b 7, 17), that three further examples occur in the compilation known as 'The Monastery of Tallaght',⁵⁰ and that three more may possibly be attested in other texts,⁵¹ Hull proposed that *-sa* as a synonym of *-som* was an 'archaic' form, displaced by its less ambiguous equivalent in the course of the Old Irish period.⁵²

Whether third person *-sa* can be called 'archaic' in any strict sense is doubtful, as most if not all of the examples proposed by Hull belong to the eighth century. In any case, I am concerned here not with the question of date but with that of distribution. *Immram Brain* has no instances of

⁴⁷ I am grateful to Liam Breatnach for pointing out to me that the consensus of the manuscripts clearly points to *móidfe* (< *móidfea*) as the original reading here, rather than the *moíthfed* posited by Mac Mathúna. *Sogná(i)s* is otherwise attested as a noun 'good customs, good behaviour' and as an adjective 'well-behaved, polite' (*DIL* s.v. '2 so', cols 309.79–83, 311.40–3); I take the present instance to be a substantial usage of the adjective, and the general sense to be that Mongán knew how to behave when a guest of the immortals. *Gnás* can mean 'company, companionship, intimacy' as well as 'customs, behaviour'; an alternative rendering could accordingly be 'I will boast of (his) good companionship in every síd'.

⁴⁸ The MS readings vary, as there was a strong tendency to emend the rare and ambiguous *-sa* to *-som* or *-side*. In the present case the instance at 42.12 is *-sa* in 23.N.10 and NLI G7, otherwise *-som*; at 42.15 *-sa* appears in both and also in LU, with variants *-som*, *-side*.

⁴⁹ Meyer's edn, 47.6: *-sa* in LU and NLI G7, otherwise *-sium*, *-sam*.

⁵⁰ Ed. E. J. Gwynn and W. J. Purton, *PRIA* 29C (1911), 115–79: the forms are *asrubartsai* 129.11, *asrubartsa* 144.12, *conaralúsa* 145.21.

⁵¹ These occur in *Féilire Oengusso* (*a nuall-sa* Prol. 304); in the Finn tale *Bruiden Átha Í* (ed. V. Hull, 'Two tales about Finn', *Speculum* 16 (1941), 322–53: *fo·chichert-sa* 324.34); and in the monastic rule *Riaguil in Choimded* (ed. J. Strachan, 'An Old-Irish metrical rule', *Ériu* 1 (1904), 191–208: *asbertsa* 196 §12a). Hull's argument (op. cit., 14–15) that in *Echtrae Chonlai* the form *ní aiccesa* 'they were not seen' (see H. P. A. Oskamp's edn, *Études Celtiques* 14 (1974), 207–28: 225 [6]) should be analysed as *ní aicces-sa* 'he was not seen' does not seem convincing; it is almost immediately preceded by the phrase *ataconnarcatar uadib* 'they saw them (going) away from them'. I have, however, noted one further example in the CDS version of *Compert Chon Culainn*: *he-sse, Zu ir. Hss.*, I, 37.12.

⁵² 'The enclitic emphasizing pronoun of the third person masculine and neuter in Archaic Irish', *Language* 16 (1940), 12–16.

-som, in *Scél asa mberar* there is one,⁵³ and in *Scél Mongáin* there are two:⁵⁴ taking the *Immram* and the Mongán tales together, -sa stands to -som in a ratio of 5:3. Nothing approaching this proportion is attested elsewhere. As I have mentioned, the two instances in the Würzburg glosses occur in the margin of a single column; while I would hesitate to count all of the instances of -som in the glosses, there are eleven on that folio alone. ‘The Monastery of Tallaght’ has 26 examples in its first ten paragraphs, and similar observations can be made concerning the texts where -sa occurs only once.⁵⁵ On the rare occasions when third-person -sa appears in other sources, then, it does so as an isolated departure from the authors’ normal usage; in the *Immram* and the Mongán stories it is at least as common as the standard form. I believe this state of affairs to be significant, and suggest that it is the idiosyncrasy of a single author.

(b) Another usage which may perhaps belong in the same category is the employment of -fil rather than -tá with prepositions in relative clauses. There are two examples in *Immram Brain* (*i fil* §19 and *fors’ fil* §43), one in *Scél Mongáin* (*hi fil* 53.3–4), and perhaps another in *Scél asa mberar* (*dia fil* 45.29).⁵⁶ The usual Old Irish construction is attested twice in the *Immram* (*i tá* §§20, 34), but nowhere in the Mongán tales.

This usage of -fil is best attested in Middle Irish; and indeed Séamus Mac Mathúna, who characterises it as ‘tenth century at the earliest’, cites it as evidence for the late date which he has proposed for the *Immram*.⁵⁷ The situation is not clear-cut, however, as Kathleen Mulchrone has called attention to two more Old Irish instances: ‘*condatfil* in a poem attributed to Daniél ua Liathaiti (died 863), and *forsandanfil* in a quatrain preserved in *Sanas Chormaic*.⁵⁸ This evidence is valuable, but still represents the testimony of sources from the very end of the Old Irish period: as matters stand, the examples in the *Immram* and the Mongán stories look like nearly isolated innovations, perhaps antedating the other earliest attestations by a century or more.

One more suggestion may be made before moving on to the next section. The extended title of *Immacallam Choluim Chille* is, as I have mentioned, ‘The conversation of Colum Cille and the youth at Carn Eolairg; some say that he was Mongán mac Fiachnai’. Carney raised the

⁵³ *Asrubairt-som* 48.1. In this instance the pressure in course of transmission to emend -sa to -som would have been particularly strong, as *asrubairt* (< Old Irish *asrubart*) ‘he said’ contrasts with *asrubart* (< Old Irish *asruburt*) ‘I said’ in the following clause.

⁵⁴ *Fris-seom* 53.17, *berid-som* 54.2.

⁵⁵ Examples in *Fél.* at Prol. 57–60, 257–60, Sept. 2, Oct. 28, Epil. 165; in *Bruiden Átha Í* at lines 3, 5, 7, 8 (twice), 14, 23 of Hull’s edition; in *Compert Chon Culainn* at *Zu ir. Hss.* I, 34.15, 36.9, 38.9, 11, 12. The single instance of -sa in *Riagail in Choimded* occurs in a quatrain peculiar to that poem’s second recension; the only example of -som, common to both recensions, appears at p. 195 §11 of Strachan’s edition.

⁵⁶ This occurs in a clause found only in LU; the same clause also contains a neuter article (*a scél-sa*), however, suggesting that it is fairly old and hence perhaps ascribable to the tale’s original form.

⁵⁷ *Immram Brain*, 415.

⁵⁸ ‘Notulae quaedam’, *Celtica* 5 (1983), 143–4. I am grateful to Liam Breatnach for bringing this article to my notice.

possibility that this was not in fact the supernatural youth's original identity,⁵⁹ and the hint is worth pursuing. If we except the single statement under consideration, there is so far as I know nothing to associate Mongán with Lough Foyle apart from a few later stories based on *Immacallam Choluim Chille* itself;⁶⁰ nor indeed would there be any *a priori* reason to expect such an association, as Mongán's kingdom of Dál nAraide was nowhere near the lough. I believe that the identification of the youth with Mongán is secondary, as Carney thought; and I suggest that the clause *Asberat alaili bad é Mongán mac Fiachnai*⁶¹ was added by the author of the Mongán tales so as to include the *Immacallam* within the Mongán dossier.

The youth is also identified with Mongán by implication in *Immram Brain* §§53–4, where, as I have noted above, a series of metamorphoses is ascribed to Mongán which may be based upon those in *Immacallam Choluim Chille*. This raises a further and intriguing possibility: if the equation of the youth and Mongán was an innovation by the author of the Mongán stories, but was also accepted by the author of the *Immram*, then the latter must either (a) have drawn upon a collection of texts which included both the *Immacallam* and the Mongán tales, or (b) have been himself the author/redactor of the Mongán tales. The grammatical features which these tales share with the *Immram* seem to me to support the second of these hypotheses.

IV. ECHTRAE CHONLAI AND IMMARAM BRAIN

That close resemblances link *Echtrae Chonlai* and *Immram Brain* has been regularly noted; but the interpretation of these resemblances has varied, and they have never been systematically explored. Writing in 1895 and basing his views largely on translations, Alfred Nutt said of the two stories that their 'similarities of artistic handling are sufficient to allow the surmise that possibly both tales may be due to the same writer'. In the final analysis, however, he distanced himself from this view:

It would nevertheless be unsafe, in my judgment, to claim a common authorship for both tales. Rather must they be looked upon as products of one school, in which old traditions were handled in a particular spirit and with an evident desire to make them palatable in orthodox eyes.⁶²

⁵⁹ 'Earliest Bran material', 192: 'The mysterious youth came to be identified with Mongán mac Fiachna, but I would suggest tentatively that in the original composer's mind, although preserved without identification, he probably came out of the water and may have been a manifestation of Manannán mac Lir'.

⁶⁰ On these see Mac Cana, "'Prehistory'", 34–5.

⁶¹ H.2.17: *Asberat alaile bod Mogg...iachna* (Grosjean's edn, 78.4); H.3.18: *Asberat alailiu bod e Moggan mac Fichnaoi* (79.19).

⁶² *Voyage of Bran*, I, 148–9.

Discussing *Immram Brain* in his 1955 *Studies*, Carney remarked that ‘*Echtra Chondla Chaim* is an obvious derivative of *Immram Brain*’;⁶³ he did not, however, enlarge upon his reasons for considering the derivation to have been in this direction, and by 1976 was repeating Nutt’s conjecture that the two texts came from a single pen.⁶⁴ For David Dumville the similarities do not go beyond what could be explained on the hypothesis that ‘before the present [*Immram Brain*] was created there existed a mythological story, analogous to *Echtrae Conli*, of which the extant tale is a confused and rewritten remnant’.⁶⁵ In what may be the most recent discussion of *Echtrae Chonlai* Kim McCone has not commented explicitly on the nature of its relationship with *Immram Brain*, but from his statement that the former is ‘generally regarded as the oldest extant *echtrae*’ it may be inferred that he does not believe that the latter supplied its basis.⁶⁶

In what follows I shall present those passages in the two texts which admit of close comparison, preparatory to making my own suggestions regarding the true character of their relationship.

(a) When the woman first appears to Conlae, we are told that ‘he saw a woman in strange clothing’ (*co n-accai in mnaí i n-étuch anetargnaid*, Oskamp’s edn, 221 [1]);⁶⁷ the Otherworld woman in *Immram Brain* appears to the entire company in Bran’s palace, so that ‘they saw a woman in strange clothing’ (*co n-accatar in mnaí i n-étuch ingnad*, §2). Descriptions of the clothing of Otherworld women can be cited easily enough from elsewhere in the literature;⁶⁸ but I know of no other texts in which we find instead of such a description the simple statement that the woman’s attire was ‘strange’, ‘foreign’ or ‘unfamiliar’—nor indeed of other sources in which such terms are used of it at all.

(b) Conn asks his son to whom he is speaking, ‘for no one could see the woman save Conlae alone’ (*uair nád accai nech in mnaí acht Conlae a oenur*, 221–2 [2]); when the woman appears to Bran’s followers ‘they could all see the woman’ (*adcondarcatar uili in mnaí*, §2). The context for the second of these statements is Bran’s inability to see the source of the music which lulled him to sleep at the very beginning of the tale, hence specific to *Immram Brain*; emphasis on the woman’s visibility or invisibility is nevertheless shared by, and so far as I know peculiar to, the two texts under consideration.

(c) After eating the magic apple which she had left for him, Conlae

⁶³ *Studies in Irish literature and history* (Dublin 1955), 292–3.

⁶⁴ ‘Earliest Bran material’, 193: ‘*Echtrae Conli*... is in some way closely related to *Immram Brain*, and could, indeed, have been created by the same author’. Cf. *ibid.*, pp 186 n. 29, 190–1.

⁶⁵ ‘*Echtrae* and *immram*: some problems of definition’, *Ériu* 27 (1976), 73–94: 86.

⁶⁶ *Pagan past and Christian present in early Irish literature* (Maynooth 1990), 79.

⁶⁷ Oskamp’s edition is cited for purposes of reference; I have, however, provided a normalised text.

⁶⁸ E.g. *Serglige Con Culainn* (ed. M. Dillon (Dublin 1953)), lines 72–4; *Baile in Scáil* (Thurneysen’s edn), 219 §6; *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (ed. E. Knott (Dublin 1936)), lines 6–14; *Tochmarc Becfola* (ed. M. Bhreathnach, *Ériu* 35 (1984), 59–91), 72 §1.

begins to pine for the woman: 'then longing seized Conlae for the woman whom he had seen' (*gabais éolchaire iarum inní Conlae immon mnaí adchonnaire*, 223 [4]); after Bran and his men have been for a while in the Otherworld 'longing seized one of them, i.e. Nechtan mac Collbrain' (*gabais éolchaire fer ndúib .i. Nechtan mac Collbrain*, §63). *DIL* does not provide any other instances of the phrase *gaibid éolchaire X*.

(d) In her concluding description of the Otherworld, the woman says to Conlae, 'I see the sun is setting; although it is far, we will reach (there) before night' (*Adcíu tairindi in grén/ cid cén riefem ria n-adaig*, 225 [5]); Manannán tells Bran that 'it is not far to the Land of Women... you will reach it before sunset' (*ní cian co Tír inna mBan ... riefe re fuiniud ngréne*, §60).

From the above it will be evident that, besides the thematic elements which *Echtrae Chonlai* and *Immram Brain* so obviously share—a supernatural object whose bestowal draws the hero into the Otherworld, an immortal woman who utters poems exhorting him to join her in a paradisaical land beyond the sea,⁶⁹ prophecies of the coming of Christianity—the two stories have many points in common on the level of close detail. I have already stated my belief that these resemblances reflect *Echtrae Chonlai*'s influence upon *Immram Brain*; I shall now endeavour to set out my reasons for holding this view.

Immram Brain is a relatively long text, containing diverse elements almost certainly drawn from a variety of sources;⁷⁰ *Echtrae Chonlai* is very brief, and relatively uncomplicated. It is easy enough to imagine the latter as one of the texts on which the former drew; but it is more farfetched to suppose that the author of *Echtrae Chonlai* made such eclectic use of *Immram Brain*, extracting isolated ideas from several sections of the tale.

More specifically, I have argued above that *Immram Brain*'s sources included the colloquy texts *Immacallam Choluim Chille* and *Immacallam in Druad*, together with traditions about Mongán: from these its author took the figure of Mongán himself, Manannán, Bran, Febul, the metamorphosis sequence, the juxtaposition of land- and water-imagery, and various words and phrases. If *Echtrae Chonlai* is a derivative of *Immram Brain*, one might expect at least some of this northern material to be reflected there as well. But in fact this is not the case: what *Immram Brain* shares with *Echtrae Chonlai* and what it shares with the colloquies and Mongán tales have no apparent overlap.

I have argued elsewhere that the references to a sea voyage in *Echtrae Chonlai* are secondary, and that in the story's original form the woman

⁶⁹ It may be noted that women do not exercise this narrative function elsewhere in Old and Middle Irish literature: contrast the figures of Lug (*Baile in Scáil*), Oengus mac Aeda Abrat (*Serglige Con Culainn*), Flann ua Fidaig (*Tochmarc Becfóla*), Fiachna mac Retach ('Adventure of Loegaire mac Crimthainn'), and Manannán (*Echtrae Chormaic*). The most conspicuous example in the modern period—Niamh in the *Laóí Oisín i dTír na nÓg*—is, as I hope to show elsewhere, directly based on the woman in *Echtrae Chonlai*.

⁷⁰ On this question see further the remarks of Dumville, '*Echtrae* and *immram*', 83–6.

was portrayed simply as coming from a *síd*.⁷¹ If this thesis is correct, and a relationship of derivation exists between *Echtrae Chonlai* and *Immram Brain*, then the latter is more likely to have been the borrower: otherwise we would be obliged to postulate an apparently unmotivated elimination of all reference to an overseas Otherworld by the *Echtrae*'s author, followed by this theme's reinsertion at a later stage of the tale's transmission.

Finally, I think that it is instructive to compare *Immram Brain* with *Tucait Baile Mongáin*. I have argued that in the case of the latter we see a tale set in the midlands—the lost narrative which served as an introduction to *Baile Chuinn*, and was the model for *Baile in Scáil*—being adapted and transplanted so as to have Mongán as its hero and a denouement in Dál nAraide. I suggest that in *Immram Brain* the same thing has been done using *Echtrae Chonlai*: elements from the story of a midland prince have been used to supplement cryptic legends concerning Mongán and Lough Foyle, and to produce a tale set in the north.

I will now turn to a consideration of the connections between *Echtrae Chonlai* and *Baile Chuinn*, together with the wisdom text *Audacht Morainn*: some of the points to emerge from this analysis will further support the position advanced above.

V. 'THE MIDLAND GROUP'

I have suggested that *Baile Chuinn* and *Echtrae Chonlai* were used in similar ways by the author of *Immram Brain* and the Mongán tales; I would now like to put forward the view that he derived them from a single source.

Some broad similarities may be noted at the outset. *Echtrae Chonlai* opens at the royal site of Uisnech, and the evidence of *Tucait Baile Mongáin* suggests that the story introducing *Baile Chuinn* may have begun there as well.⁷² In *Baile Chuinn*, Conn predicts the future of his dynasty, beginning with the reign of his son Art; in *Echtrae Chonlai*, another of his sons renounces princely rank to depart into the Otherworld, and Conn is left with Art alone. The two texts may in fact be seen as complements of one another: in one the earthly sovereignty of the forebears of the Uí Néill is affirmed while in the other it is transcended, in each case in the person of one of the sons of Conn Cétchathach.

A third CDS text which may be grouped with those just mentioned is *Audacht Morainn*: a series of gnomic instructions in the art of kingship, introduced by a brief paragraph of narrative. Here the central figure is not Conn but his ancestor Feradach Find Fechnach, to whom the famous judge Morann relays advice through the agency of his pupil

⁷¹ 'Echtrae Conlai: A crux revisited', *Celtica* 19 (1987), 9–11.

⁷² Cf. the discussion in section II above. Contrast *Echtrae Chonlai*, *Baile in Scáil*, *Echtrae Chormaic*, *Tochmarc Étaíne* and *Tochmarc Becfola*, in all of which Tara serves as the point of departure; I am not aware of any other texts in which Uisnech serves this function.

Neire. The précis *Togail Bruidne Uí Dergae*, the story of the death of a still earlier king of Tara, is a fourth *CDS* text with a midland focus.

These pieces share a striking linguistic feature: the old form *-ten-/-den-* for the 3 sg. fem. infixed pronoun in Classes B and C.⁷³ Gerard Murphy called attention to the instances *coten-ībau* ([4], [11]) and *conden-dāilfa* ([6]) in *Baile Chuinn*;⁷⁴ and in noting *coten-ocaib*, *inten-aice* in *Audacht Morainn* §59 Fergus Kelly pointed out that the usage is shared by the two works.⁷⁵ The only other clear examples with nasalization known to me also appear in texts of the *CDS* ‘midland group’. Tomás Ó Cathasaigh has identified at least one in *Togail Bruidne Uí Dergae*, where it appears in the *figura etymologica*: *nach orcen dingóath i nÉre, nonden-ortis-sium lais* ‘any destruction which he might choose in Ireland, that they would wreak it with him’;⁷⁶ and there is an instance in *Echtrae Chonlai* in the phrase *náchen-accatar* ‘and they could not see her’.⁷⁷

There is no trace of this form in *Immram Brain* or the Mongán tales, or for that matter elsewhere in the *CDS* corpus; by contrast, we find *con[d]a-accai in n-insi* ‘until he saw the island’ (*Immram Brain* §61) as well as *ata-gládestar*, *nuda-bert* in the *CDS* version of *Compert Chon Culainn*.⁷⁸ The presence of an early usage in *Echtrae Chonlai* which is absent from *Immram Brain* strengthens the case for the latter’s dependence on the former rather than vice versa; it is also interesting that the four *CDS* texts concerned with the Tara kingship share a form lacking in the other materials in the collection.

As noted above, it is not just the rest of *CDS* which fails to provide further examples of *-ten-/-den-*: I know of no others in Irish literature as a whole. Counterexamples from the seventh and early eighth centuries are *cota-oat* (referring to *ainimm*) in the *Aipgitir Chrábaid*;⁷⁹ *no-da-ben* (referring to *indéoin*) in the ‘Irish Gospel of Thomas’;⁸⁰ and *do-de-gúiset* and *no-de-dlútha* (referring to *rechtgae*) in *Críth Gablach*.⁸¹ That the ‘midland group’ examples are isolated even in the earliest literature

⁷³ Thurneysen, who does not appear to have been aware of these instances, speaks as if the nasalizing form had not survived in Old Irish: ‘Infixed *s*, both sg. and pl., may or may not cause nasalization, whereas *a* always geminates. Originally nasalization was confined to the acc. sg. fem., gemination to the acc. pl.; but the two pronouns, owing to their identity of form, were completely confused’ (*Gramm.* §451).

⁷⁴ ‘Two sources’, 151.

⁷⁵ *Audacht Morainn*, xxxi–ii.

⁷⁶ ‘On the *Cín Dromma Snechta* version of *Togail Bruidne Uí Dergae*’, *Ériu* 41 (1990), 103–14: 112. Cf. pp 108 and 111 n. 29, where two further potential examples are discussed: in the first of these, however, the presence or absence of nasalization is not revealed by the orthography, while in the second the infixed object may be masculine.

⁷⁷ Oskamp’s edn, 222 [3]: nasalization is indicated in four out of the five manuscripts used by Oskamp, and four preserve the *e*-vocalism. Discussion in Calvert Watkins, ‘Notes on Celtic and Indo-European morphology and syntax’, *Lochlann* 3 (1965), 286–97: 286–7; I am grateful to Liam Breatnach for bringing this reference to my attention.

⁷⁸ Thurneysen’s edn, 37.9, 10.

⁷⁹ Ed. Vernam Hull, *Celtica* 8 (1968), 44–89: 60.26.

⁸⁰ Ed. James Carney, *The poems of Blathmac son of Cú Brettan* (London 1964), 89–105: 98 §26c.

⁸¹ Ed. D. A. Binchy (Dublin 1941), line 516.

suggests that they may have more in common than age alone: I suggest that they can be seen as an archaising stylistic feature, and that the examples which have survived reflect the idiosyncratic usage of a single author. The linguistic evidence can be supplemented by a consideration of the midland group's apparent historical background.

(a) The provenance and approximate date of *Baile Chuinn* were established by Gerard Murphy, in a succinct and persuasive analysis which has found general acceptance since its publication in 1952:

A glance at *Baile Chuind*... would suggest to a historian that it was a seventh-century document. Every king in it is clearly identified down to Fínnachta, who reigned from 675 to 695, whereas, from Fínnachta on, the kings are referred to by vague kennings. Indeed it may be said that the vagueness begins with Fínnachta himself. He is called *Snechta fína*, not *Fínsnechta* or *Fínnachta*. One is tempted to conclude that he was not yet king, merely *ríg-damna*, when the *Baile* was composed, perhaps when his cousins Sechnasach (†671) and Cend Faelad (†675) were his rivals for the throne: clear identification of the kings preceding Fínnachta would then amount to certainty; the slight ambiguity of *Snechta fína*, to probability; and the complete vagueness of the following references, to ignorance.⁸²

Murphy has, I think, demonstrated *Baile Chuinn*'s connection with the reign of Fínnachta Fledach mac Dúnochada beyond reasonable doubt. His view that the text may have been written shortly before Fínnachta's accession is, on his own representation, more conjectural, and other explanations for the riddling treatment of the name could be proposed—*Snechta Fína* 'Snow of wine' might, for instance, be intended to suggest a particularly close association between Fínnachta and the imagery of drinking which dominates the prophecy as a whole. Tomás Ó Cathasaigh has recently cited a suggestion of Francis John Byrne's which would place the *Baile* late in Fínnachta's reign rather than just prior to its commencement: Byrne sees the reference immediately following *Snechta Fína* to 'kingship from Niall to Niall; the descendant of Niall is everyone's Niall' (*flaith hō Nīell co Nēll; Nīell cāich ūa Nēill*, [19]–[20]) as perhaps referring to Niall mac Cernaig Sotail (died 701), who may have made a bid for power during Fínnachta's brief abdication in 688–9.⁸³

(b) In his seminal analysis of *Echtrae Chonlai*, James Carney suggested that the tale had been composed as reading practice for pupils in a monastery; he went on to state that 'the young monastic student, reading this tale, is faced with a problem very similar to Conle's. He is asked to give up all that is familiar for the sake of eternal life...'.⁸⁴ I believe that

⁸² 'Two sources', 149–50.

⁸³ Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, 'The threefold death in early Irish sources', *Studia Celtica Japonica* N.S. 6 (1994), 53–75: 69; cf. Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *Ireland before the Vikings* (Dublin 1972), 108–9.

⁸⁴ 'The deeper level of early Irish literature', *Capuchin Annual* (1969), 160–71: 165.

Carney has here, as so often, put his finger upon the heart of the text; but I am not so certain that *Echtrae Chonlai*'s vivid portrayal of the rivalry of contrasting worlds was aimed at 'the young monastic student'. As I hope to demonstrate in detail elsewhere, the story is one of considerable complexity and sophistication; and as I have noted above, its apparent links with *Baile Chuinn* suggest that kingship is one of its governing themes.

In light of these considerations, it may be significant that Fínnechta took holy orders (*clericatus*) in the year 688, resuming the kingship, however, in the following year;⁸⁵ his is in fact the first abdication of this kind to be recorded in the annals.⁸⁶ *Echtrae Chonlai*, a tale which revolves around the conflicting attractions of earthly kingship and transcendent immortality, might quite conceivably have been written in response to this act, especially if it was an unusual one at the time when Fínnechta undertook it. This can of course be no more than a suggestion, but I think that it is one worth taking seriously; and it is interesting that it should tally with Byrne's proposal for the date of *Baile Chuinn*.

I propose accordingly that the midland group dates from the reign of Fínnechta Fledach mac Dúnochada, perhaps specifically from the years 688–9. If this reading of the evidence is correct, it provides us not only with a date for the midland group itself but also with a *terminus post quem* for those *CDS* texts which drew upon it.

VI. TOCHMARC ÉTAÍNE

There are two indications that some form of *Tochmarc Étaíne* was to be found in *CDS*.

(a) In a lengthy section, which seems itself to have been interpolated from another version of the story, a variant text of the chant uttered by the men of the *síd* as they toil to fulfil Eochaid's demands is cited 'as the Book of Druim Snechtai relates' (*amal atbeir Lebor Droma Snechta*).⁸⁷

(b) In the LU version of *Togail Bruidne Uí Dergae*, that story's 'foretales' or *remscéla* are enumerated as *Tesbaid Étaíne ingine Aillello* 'The Disappearance of Étaín daughter of Ailill', *Tromdám Echdach Airemon* 'The Burdensome Company of Eochaid Airem', and *Aisnéis Síde Maic Óc do Midir Breg Léith ina Síd* 'The Description of the Mac

⁸⁵ *AU*, s.a. 688: *Finsnechta clericatum suscepit*; *ibid.*, s.a. 689: *Finsnechta reuertitur ad regnum*. Cf. *Chron. Scot.*, s.aa 684, 685; *Ann. Tig.* (*RC* 17.210); *AFM*, s.a. 685.

⁸⁶ Cf. the cases of Cellach mac Ragallaig (*AU*, s.a. 705), Bécc Bairrche (*ibid.*, s.a. 707), Selbach of Dál Riata (*ibid.*, s.a. 723), Eochaid (*ibid.*, s.a. 731), and the two vocations of Domnall Midi (*ibid.*, s.aa 740, 744); *Ann. Tig.* adds for 724 a reference to Nechtan, king of the Picts (*RC* 17 (1896), 231). Not mentioned in the annals, but disapprovingly noted by Adomnán, is the considerably earlier stint in the priesthood of Aed Dub mac Suibni (died 588); cf. A. O. and M. O. Anderson (eds), *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (Oxford, rev. edn 1991), 64–6.

⁸⁷ Osborn Bergin and R. I. Best (eds and trans.), 'Tochmarc Étaíne', *Ériu* 12 (1934–8), 137–96: 182, part III, par. 12.

Óc's *Síd* by Midir of Brí Léith in his *Síd*'.⁸⁸ It may be noted that this threefold division does not correspond to that of the version of *Tochmarc Étaíne* which we possess: *Tesbaid Étaíne* and *Aisnéis Síde Maic Óc* probably both dealt with events covered in the first part of the surviving *Tochmarc Étaíne*, while *Tromdám Echdach* is likeliest to have been related to the third.⁸⁹

From both of these pieces of evidence it is apparent that the account of Étaín's adventures in *CDS* differed from that in the *Tochmarc Étaíne* with which we are familiar; and indeed *Tochmarc Étaíne*, apparently a late Old Irish text extensively reworked in the Middle Irish period,⁹⁰ would seem on first reading to have little in common with the *CDS* materials which we have been considering. Certain aspects of the tale, however, recall the adaptation of earlier material in *Tucait Baile Mongáin*, suggesting that *Tochmarc Étaíne* also is descended from a text or texts which passed through the hands of the *CDS* redactor.

Étaín is said to have been born again as daughter 'of the wife of Étar the champion, from Inber Cíchmaine in the province of Conchobor' (*mna Édair in cathmiled o Inbér Chichmaine a coiced Concobuir*).⁹¹ The only other explicit assertion regarding Inber Cíchmaine's location, a note concerning the death of Maine Toe, does not, however, situate it in Ulster but equates it with *Inber Dorcha* in Brega.⁹² The author of *Tochmarc Étaíne* may accordingly have shifted a midland location northward, even as *Tucait Baile Mongáin* shifts the locale of Mongán's ecstasy from Uisnech to Dál nAraide, *Scél asa mberar* links Finn with Ulster rather than Leinster, and *Immram Brain* applies elements from a midland tale to its recasting of Lough Foyle legends; it is noteworthy that, in the account of Eochaid's marriage to Étaín in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, he finds her not in Ulster but on the *síd* of Brí Léith in Tethba.⁹³

A location even further to the south and west, which I do not know how to reconcile with the statements just cited, appears in Midir's poem 'Étaín indiu sund amne':

*Etain andiu sund amné.
óc Sídh Ban Find iar nAilbe.*

⁸⁸ LU 8007–9.

⁸⁹ Cf. Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', 139; R. Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage* (Halle 1921), 657. The variant chant mentioned above may well come from *Tromdám Echdach*; it is perhaps significant that it contains the words *airdere damrad/ trom in choibden* 'splendid oxen, heavy the company', where the collocation *damrad/trom* recalls the title.

⁹⁰ This was the opinion of Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, 598. He wrote before the discovery of the version in the Yellow Book of Lecan had made it possible to edit the text in its entirety; in their edition, however, Bergin and Best adhered to Thurneysen's view ('Tochmarc Étaíne', 139).

⁹¹ Bergin and Best's edn, 156, part I, par. 21.

⁹² This passage is printed from Dublin, RIA MS Stowe C.i.2. by E. J. Gwynn, *Met. Ds.*, 4, 423; his discussion of Hogan's rather misleading presentation of the other onomastic evidence is also valuable here.

⁹³ Knott's edn, 1–2.

eter macu beca dí
for bru Indbir Chichmaini.

Étaín is here today
 at SídBan Find west of Ailbe;
 she is among small boys
 on the shore of Inber Cíchmaine.⁹⁴

A close link between Étaín and SídBan Find (Slievenamon in Tipperary) is also implied by events later in the tale: she and Midir fly thither in the form of swans, and Eochaid twice tries to dig it up in his efforts to recover her.⁹⁵

We do not possess the *CDS* version of *Tochmarc Étaíne*, and suggestions based on the story in its surviving form must inevitably be very tentative ones. It is, however, intriguing to find there what appear to be traces of the same kind of geographical transposition which characterises tales firmly rooted in the corpus: evidence which, as far as it goes, suggests that an earlier form of *Tochmarc Étaíne* formed part of the *CDS* midland group, and was rewritten by the author of the *Mongán* tales and *Immram Brain*.

If the foregoing strands of argument are pieced together, we obtain a hypothetical picture of some of the activity which brought the *CDS* corpus into being—activity which may reasonably be regarded as the work of a single author/redactor/editor. I believe that the creator of *CDS* assembled texts relating to the origins of Lough Foyle (*Immacallam Choluim Chille* and *Immacallam in Druad*) and a dossier of materials written late in the reign of Fínechta Fledach (*Baile Chuinn*, *Echtrae Chonlai*, *Audacht Morainn*, *Togail Bruidne Uí Dergae*), and then used these as the basis for compositions of his own (*Immram Brain*, the *Mongán* tales, the *CDS* Étaín stories). The midland group, and almost certainly the Lough Foyle texts also, are to be assigned to the seventh century; I am at present inclined to follow the consensus which has obtained to date in seeing the later tales, and *CDS*'s compilation, as belonging to the eighth.

I have not dealt in this paper with the genealogical and pseudohistorical fragments assigned to *CDS*, nor with the Ulster Cycle texts which it appears to have contained.⁹⁶ It may be noted, however, that the subject-matter of these would tend to confirm the collection's northern provenance—a provenance also strongly indicated by the compiler's northern adaptations of midland materials, and of course by the traditional association of the collection with *Druim Snechtaí* in County

⁹⁴ Bergin and Best's edn, 158, part I, par. 23; cf. LU 10670–3.

⁹⁵ Bergin and Best's edn, part III, par. 15–16.

⁹⁶ These are *Compert Chon Culainn*, *Compert Chonchobuir*, *Forfess Fer Fálchae*, and *Verba Scáthaige*; perhaps also 'Fil ann grian Glinne Aí', as an introductory paragraph in Oxford, Bodleian MS Rawlinson B 512 links it with the events of *Togail Bruidne Da Choca* (Meyer's edn, 46).

Monaghan. In the case of the Ulster Cycle pieces, the northern connection is self-evident; it also seems noteworthy that, in an account of the arrival of the Gaels attributed to *CDS* by LL, they are said to have made their first attempt to land in Dál Riata.⁹⁷ Whether *CDS*'s place of origin can be determined more precisely seems uncertain. Proinsias Mac Cana has put Bangor forward as a candidate, citing traditions which link it with *Druim Snechtai*.⁹⁸

More work is needed on all of the *CDS* texts, and the results of such work will inevitably modify the scenario sketched above. I hope that this preliminary study may be useful in encouraging scholars to consider the individual texts against the background of the group as a whole; and that I may have identified some of the processes which brought the latter into being.

⁹⁷ Vernam Hull (ed.), 'The Milesian invasion of Ireland', *ZCP* 19 (1932), 155–60: 156. A Dál Riata landing is also spoken of in the Irish section of *Historia Brittonum* (Edmond Faral, *La légende arthurienne* (Paris 1929), 3.13); in *Lebar Gabála* the first landing is in Munster, and Éremón and the other chieftains of the Northern Half subsequently land at the mouth of the Boyne (e.g. LL 1687–8).

⁹⁸ 'Mongán mac Fiachna', 103–6. A Bangor origin for *EC* was suggested by Carney, 'Deeper level', 190.