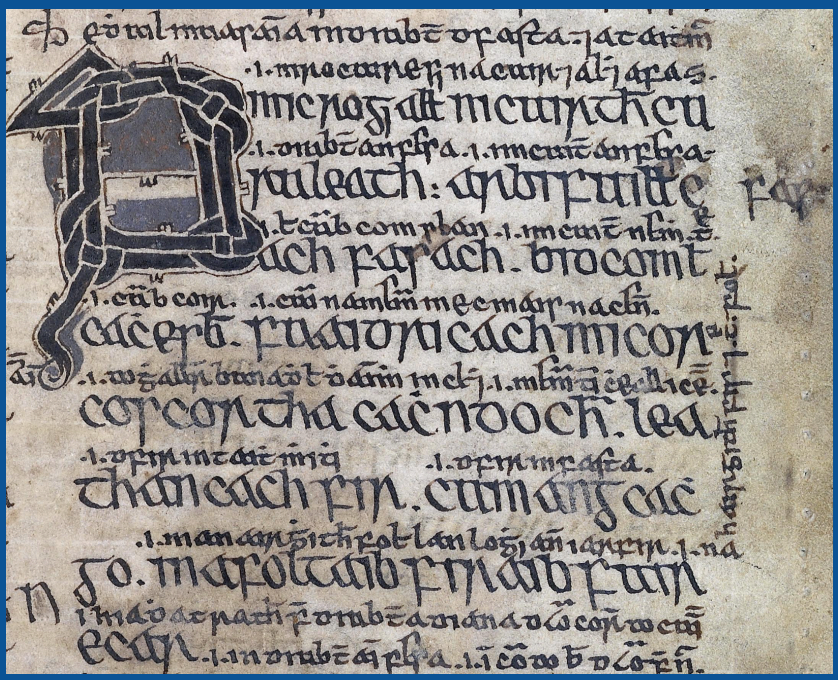
Fír Fesso

A Festschrift for

Neil McLeod



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Neil McLeod

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Contents

Three Versified Medical Recipes Invoking Dían Cécht[1]

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THE three poems edited and translated below are found in an Irish medical compendium of mainly herbal recipes and charms for various ailments, broadly arranged in the head-to-toe order typical of medical manuals throughout the medieval period. The text is preserved in what was originally a single manuscript, but now survives as fragments in two separate, composite manuscripts, namely RIA MS 24 B 3 (445) 33–93 and RIA MS 23 N 29 (467), ff 1–9.[2] In addition to the inherent interest that didactic poems such as these offer for the history of medical learning in Ireland, close analysis of their features and manuscript context demonstrates that these compositions reflect scientific and pedagogical trends current elsewhere in Europe during the late-medieval period. However, they also stand as a testament to the interdisciplinary nature of scholarly endeavour in medieval Ireland, where a broad range of subjects such as medicine, law, history and mythology can be seen to coalesce in interesting ways.

The bulk of the medical compendium in which these poems survive was copied around the last quarter of the fifteenth and the first decade of the sixteenth century by Connla Mac an Leagha, a member of the hereditary family of physicians of that name, and apparently a practising physician himself.[3] No single author is cited as an authority for the compendium as a whole, which rather appears to be a compilation or florilegium drawing on various sources. A handful of individual recipes contain attributions to well-known classical medical authorities, including Dioscorides, Hippocrates and Galen, and it is clear that its compiler was familiar with Irish translations of certain Latin medical works produced after the eleventh century, such as the *Viaticum* of the Salernitan physician Constantine the African, who died in 1098 (for specific examples, see Hayden forthcoming). However, the majority of the medical recipes in the compendium would appear to be distinctly 'popular' in nature, insofar as they represent—to employ a sense of the term used

[1] I am grateful to Liam Breatnach and David Stifter for discussing various aspects of this article with me, and for suggesting several important improvements. I alone am responsible for any errors or shortcomings that might remain.

[2] These fragments are not recognised as forming a single text in the published catalogue of Royal Irish Academy manuscripts: see *RIACat* 1183–5 and 1220–1222 (noting only their similarity). The catalogue description is based largely on the observations of O'Curry 1841–3, i, 258–261. More recently, Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha has produced the following revised collation of the two fragments, which clearly shows their origin as a single text (noted in print by Stifter 2005, 161):

RIA MS 24 B 3 (445) 33–70

RIA MS 23 N 29 (467) ff 1–4

RIA MS 24 B 3 (445) 71–74

RIA MS 23 N 29 (467) ff 6–9

RIA MS 24 B 3 (445) 75–93

[3] On the Mac an Leagha kindred and the colophons written in this manuscript by Connla, see Walsh 1947. For a more recent assessment of the hereditary medical families of medieval Ireland, see Ó Muraíle 2016.

by Tony Hunt in relation to Anglo-Norman medical texts of the thirteenth century—a kind of 'non-theoretical medicine exclusively concerned with the therapeutic administration of naturally occurring *materia medica*' (Hunt 1990, ix). Much as is the case for the majority of Anglo-Norman recipes examined by Hunt, the Irish cures found in this compendium cite no particularly exotic ingredients or very specific measures, and include only very simple instructions for preparation. Most are also of anonymous origin; on the rare occasion that a particular individual is cited as a source for a particular recipe, little or no historical context is provided. For example, one remedy for a chest affliction is said to have been obtained from an unnamed 'abbot of Bangor', whose identity is seemingly just assumed to be known to the audience of the text.[4]

An even more striking feature of this medical compendium is the fact that the majority of attributions for specific points of doctrine cite figures known from the medieval Irish mythological tradition, in particular narratives concerning the Túatha Dé Danann and their involvement at the mythical battle of Mag Tuired—a body of material that clearly enjoyed a significant degree of popularity throughout both the early and later medieval periods.[5] The mythological figure most frequently cited in the compendium is the healer Dían Cécht, whose authority is invoked at least eleven times in both verse and prose contexts. In a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon elsewhere, I have argued that the interest in mythological tradition manifested in the medical compendium may reflect the specific locality of its scribe, Connla Mac an Leagha, who was based in the lordship of Magh Luirg (now the baronies of Boyle and Frenchpark, Co. Roscommon), and thus in close proximity to Lough Arrow, Co. Sligo, the location where the mythical Second Battle of Mag Tuired was thought to have taken place (Hayden forthcoming).

It is noteworthy, furthermore, that versified recipes of the kind presented here in fact constitute a substantial proportion of the overall contents of Connla Mac an Leagha's compendium, which in its entirety consists of a total of 81 pages of often dense (and not always easily legible) script. I have thus far identified 34 separate poems in the text, varying in length from a single stanza to 23 quatrains; future work on the compendium may well uncover more. The poems are not confined to one particular section of the compilation, but include recipes for ailments of the head, eyes, teeth, lungs, chest, spleen and stomach, as well as some for specific problems such as urinary disease or tumors. Occasionally multiple metrical compositions are clustered together, as is illustrated by the portion of the text dealing with pulmonary ailments, which begins with a sequence of five poems. In general, however, prose and verse material appears to be mixed together within individual sections of the text, following no immediately discernible order apart from that imposed by the overarching *a capite ad calcem* arrangement of the compendium as a whole. The task of determining where each metrical composition

[4] RIA MS 24 B 3, 64.32–33. For further discussion of this and similar citations, see Hayden forthcoming.

[5] The earliest version of the narrative *Cath Maige Tuired* 'The [Second] Battle of Mag Tuired', probably first composed in the ninth century but reworked in the eleventh or twelfth, has been edited and translated by Gray 1982; for discussion of the text and its themes, see for example Ó Cathasaigh 1983, Carey 1989–90, McCone 1989, Pettit 2013 and McLeod 2015. An Early Modern Irish version of the tale has been edited by Ó Cuív 1945; for an illuminating study of this version, which highlights the continued interest in the narrative within scholarly circles at the end of the fourteenth century, see Hoyne 2013.

begins and ends is facilitated by the consistent use of the Irish metrical feature known as *dúnad* 'closure',[6] as well as the scribe's tendency to repeat the first word or initial letters of a poem at its end. On occasion, however, verse passages are marked even more explicitly than this: for example, the scribe differentiates individual items in the aforementioned cluster of five poems on pulmonary ailments by repeatedly writing the word *dúan* 'poem' in the margin of the manuscript on page 60 of RIA MS 24 B 3. Elsewhere, he introduces poems on the ailment known as *aillse* 'tumor' or 'cancer' by stating that he is presenting a remedy *tre medaracht* 'through metre' or *tre filidecht* 'through poetry'.[7] Almost all of the poems in the compendium, at least so far as I have been able to establish, are written in *deibhidhe*, one of the most common metres used by Irish poets throughout the medieval period, and essentially characterised by quatrains of heptasyllabic lines with rhyme between lines a/b and c/d respectively.[8]

In the following editions of three of the poems from this collection, expansions are indicated by italics, and length-marks, where not found in the manuscript, have been supplied using a macron over vowels. Word-division and punctuation are editorial. Emendations designed to improve either the sense or the form of the text are discussed in the accompanying commentary. Translations are my own.

POEM 1: A RECIPE FOR CHEST AILMENT (RIA MS 24 B 3, 60.17–24)

1 Indis ā f[h]ir dān[a] dam	Relate to me, o man of art,
2 a ollaim indsi Gaīd*el*,	o chief poet of the island of Gaels,
3 cid glanas clīab ⁊ gut*h*:	what clears chest and voice:
4 an fua*r*ais riam a rīaglug*h*?	did you ever find a prescription for it?
5 Nī c*h*uala let nī bud ferr,	I have not heard a better thing from you,
6 a Dīan Céc*h*t, a mec Elt*h*end.	o Dían Cécht, o son of Elatha.
7 Bernān aonc*h*oisi gan ail	a single-stemmed dandelion without reproach,
8 berbt*ur* ar im a aonur.	an amount is boiled with butter alone.
9 Cuirt*h*ar psaland air, ní sāob,	Salt is put on it, it is not false,
10 Sīs a le*stur*, comsi cāom.	down into a vessel, a fair fitting quantity.
11 Caiter t*r*ī mīrenda de	Three portions of it are consumed
12 fo laige ⁊ fo ērge.	when going to bed and when rising.
13 Caiter in cuid sin gan crād	That portion is consumed without torment
14 gu cend naomaide, nī nār,	for nine days, an honourable thing,
15 is bid slān gac*h* duine de.	and every person will be healthy from it.
16 Cair daib uile a i*n*disi.	It is right for all of you to relate it.

[6] For the rules pertaining to *dúnad*, see Ní Dhomhnaill 1981 and McManus 1995.

[7] RIA MS 24 B 3, pages 84.18 and 86.10 respectively.

[8] For a more detailed account of the features of this metre, see Ní Dhomhnaill 1975, 76.

Textual Commentary

7 bernán. *DIL*, s.v. *bernán* ‘anything gapped, gaplike, indented’ gives ‘dandelion’ (*taraxacum officinale*) as a possible translation for the use of this word as a plant-name; cf. however, Ó Dónaill 1977, s.v. *bearnán*, which gives *bearnán Bealtaine* as a name for the ‘marsh marigold’ (*caltha palustris*). I have opted for ‘dandelion’ as a translation here in light of the fact that the numerous medicinal uses of this plant have been established by recent scientific analysis: thus Gonzalez-Castejon *et al.* 2012, 534, describe the dandelion as ‘a nontoxic herb that can be potentially exploited for its choleretic, diuretic, antirheumatic, and anti-inflammatory properties’.[9]

8 aonur. The end-rhyme in lines c and d of this stanza is imperfect. The use of the word *ail* ‘reproach’ in line c is most likely correct, as it is attested elsewhere in chevilles (see *DIL*, s.v. 2 *ail*), and perfect rhyme would therefore require a palatal ending for the last word of line d; however, the scribe has clearly written the expected form *aonur*.

Poem 2: A Recipe for Slimming (RIA ms 24 B 3, 66.6–15)

1 Findaid a lega fer bF*áil*	Discover, o physicians of the men of Ireland,
2 a luc*h*t an eolais anbāil.	O people of very great knowledge.
3 Cīa in deoc*h* cāolas an corp cauín	What is the potion that makes the fair body thin
4 do-ordaig Diaan Cē*cht* cobsaid*h*?	which steadfast Dían Cécht prescribed?
5 Cet[h]ri feda ro fāomad[h]	Four trees have been prescribed
6 D’īc in c*uir*p dia c*h*nesc*h*āolad[h].	For healing the body to make its flesh grow thin.
7 Resiu, crand fir, is fat*h*a	*Resiu* [and] juniper, it is a foundation,
8 Crit*h*ach, caort*h*and caomdat[h]a.	Aspen [and] fair-coloured rowan.
9 Mongach mesc molus in slūag	Mugwort, which the people recommend
10 ד an ellend forrūad.	and the deep-red elecampane.
11 In dīas aile, cāom a cliū,	The two other things, fair their reputation,
12 Caolfaide ד indígu.	Orache (?) and *indígu*.
13 Brūiter ces cl*ainn*i is ces lim*h*	A basket of plant-cuttings and a basket of elm are boiled
14 tre braic*h*l*is* an l*os*a-si*n*,	through the wort of that herb,
15 ד glac d’et*ar*snam truim	and a handful of the inner bark of an elder-tree
16 fōs tresin mbraichlis lānduin*d*.	[is boiled] through the completely brown wort as well.
17 Dēnam na dige duinde	The preparation of the brown-coloured drink
18 a*r* ēddrui*m*e [i]s nī a*r* tr*uim*e.	So that it is light, and not heavy.
19 baile i mbia in glīfid nach lacc	Where the pain that is not weak is,
20 fia*r*faidt*er* dīb, is findad.	Let it be asked of them, and let them discover.

[9] I am grateful to Dr Helen Sheridan for bringing this study to my attention.

TEXTUAL COMMENTARY

5 ro fáomhadh. It is possible that the use of this particular verb (cf. *DIL*, s.v. *fo-eim* 'accepts, receives') here constitutes an attempt to translate a form of the Latin verb *recēpi*, which has a similar meaning, as well as the transferred sense in later medical language of compounding various ingredients in medicines (cf. mod. Lat. *receptum*, 'receipt' or 'recipe'): see Lewis & Short 1879, s.v. *recipio*.

7 resiu. It does not seem probable to me that this is the temporal conjunction *resíu* 'before' (see *DIL*, s.v.). Assuming that a total of four different trees are to be listed in this quatrain, line c must contain two of them, and *is fatha* is more likely to be a cheville. I have thus far found one other attestation of the term *resiu* in the medical compendium, namely in the second quatrain of a versified recipe for pulmonary ailment (RIA MS 24 B 3, 64.14), where it appears to be one of eight herbs listed in the quatrain. O'Reilly 1864 records the term *risa* meaning 'bark', but I can find no other more illuminating attestations of the term in other lexicographical sources.

7 crand fir. See the discussion in Kelly 1976, 119–20, who notes that, if his identification of *crann fir* with 'juniper' is correct, the name 'seems to have dropped out of Irish well before the modern period.' He also notes that the juniper, which has edible berries, 'is occasional on mountains and lake-shores in the West and North', which would accord well with the north-Roscommon locale of the poem's scribe.

11 días. *DIL*, s.v. 2 *días*, gives the primary definition of this word as 'pair, couple (used of persons only, whereas *dede* [sic] is used of things)', while the secondary definition given under (b) states that the form occurs 'rarely for *déde* pair (of things)'. In the present context, *días* clearly refers to the last two plants listed in the quatrain, and therefore the secondary meaning given in *DIL* must be intended.

12 caolfaide. The precise meaning of this term is unclear to me, but it may denote some kind of reed (*fead*) or vine (*féithleog*): see, for example, Stokes 1900, 335: *Atriplex agrestis .i. cael feadh nó feithleog*. Hogan 1900, 33, gives the meaning of 'honeysuckle' for *feithleóg*, although the genus *atriplex* comprises 200–300 species of plants more commonly known as 'orache'.

12 indígu. *DIL*, s.v. *iníga*, gives the definition of 'the name of some plant' for this word. The term also occurs in a tract on various diseases in British Library MS Harley 546, f 43, where it is cited as an ingredient in a cure for stomach ailment; however O'Grady (1926 I 194), leaves it untranslated: *Do'n ghaili .i. timsaighter inígha ocus cruadhaighter re teine ocus déntar min de ocus cumaisgter codruma min eorna air amail menadhaigh ocus caiter fó luighi ocus fó éirge*, 'For the stomach: let …? be gathered, and hardened at the fire; powder, with equal bulk of barley meal mix to a pottage; use to bedward and at rising.' I have thus far identified four other attestations of the term (with either the form *iniga* or *inniga*) in Connla Mac an Leagha's compendium, namely line 8 of the third poem edited here (see below); in a prose recipe for headache earlier in the text (RIA MS 24 B 3, page 44.3); and in two other poems, one consisting of a recipe for headache (RIA MS 24 B 3, page 44.27) and the other of a cure for chest and stomach ailments (RIA MS 24 B 3, page 64.28). However, none of these examples provides sufficient context to allow for even a general identification of the plant. In the recipe for chest and

stomach ailments, the word *iniga* is modified by the adjective *imcrúaid* ‘very hard, dry, rough’, suggesting that the substance in question can be hardened or dried using heat, and then crushed into a powder. Cf. also the citations under *DIL*, s.v. 2 *idu*, ‘the name of some creeping plant’; if this refers to the same substance, it is possible that the initial *in-* or *ind-* in the word *inníga* or *indígu* is a form of the definite article. An entry in *Sanas Cormaic* (‘Cormac’s Glossary’; Y 759) defines the word *indigu* as *.i. negair a ind .i. in- ic a dīultad co nāch dīgu hí* ‘indigu, that is, its end is cleansed, that is, *in-* denies it, so that it is not the worst part’ (Meyer 1912, 64; my translation). This likewise might be interpreted as referring to a particular plant, part of which is used for medicinal purposes.

13 ces. I take *ces* here in the sense of ‘basket’, presumably as a measure of something (see *DIL*, s.v. 2 *ces*), although the word is often attested in early texts with the sense of ‘debility’ or ‘sickness’ (see *DIL*, s.v. 1 *ces*). A separate recipe for curing *lúas craide* ‘palpitation’ likewise suggests that the term is used in the compendium to refer to a measure of something: see RIA MS 24 B 3, page 60.9 *ar lūas craide .i. ces scīach do bruith ar lemnacht […]*, ‘for palpitation, i.e. boil a basket of whitethorn in new milk […]’

13 clainni. The manuscript reads *cli* + suspension mark over the letter ‘i’ here. This abbreviation is ambiguous, but in many cases would represent a vowel + continuant. The word must be in the genitive singular following *ces* (cf. *ces limh* in the same line). The term *clann* ‘plant, planting, off-shoot, produce’ would fit these criteria, but its meaning (on which see Russell 2014) is not very specific; it may, however, be referring back to the plants cited in the preceding quatrain.

15 etarsnam truim. See *DIL*, s.v. *etarsnam*, which cites a recipe for fetid breath from the aforementioned tract on diseases in BL MS Harley 546 (O’Grady 1926, 196): *Do leighios na brénanál[a] ann so … Item duilesc nó edarsnam soileach do cognam co cend nómaide* ‘Concerning the treatment of fetid breath … Item: for nine days chew ‘dillisk’, or the inner bark of willow’. Stifter 2005, 168, in discussing a separate recipe from Connla Mac an Leagha’s compendium for an ailment of the head that likewise calls for *edursnaum truim* (*cortex sambuci*) notes (citing Pahlow 1993, 168 and Willfort 1986, 208) that the pharmaceutically useful part of tree bark is the scraped-off, green inner bark (German *Mittelrinde;* Old Irish *etarsnam*), and that the inner bark of the elder tree in particular could be used against rheumatism or gout, or as an emetic or purgative. The term is clearly a compound consisting of the element *etar* ‘between, among’ and *snob* (or *snom*) ‘bark’, and thus closely echoes the Greek botanical term *mesophloeum*.

POEM 3: A CURE FOR URINARY DISEASE (RIA MS 23 N 29 F 7V23–8)

1 Secht losa a*r* i*n* ngalar fūail	Seven herbs for urinary disease
2 ícas gac*h* aon rē haonūair,	which cure every one instantly,
3 am*al* ro ordaig Dīan Cē*ch*t	as Dían Cécht has prescribed
4 a n-ord, noc*h*a n-īmarbrēg.	their arrangement, it is no falsehood.
5 In lus mide, mīn a g[h]al,	Mouse-ear, palatable its force,
6 budomun is aín let[h]an.	Yellow thistle and broad rushes.
7 trom ⁊ fed, is fīr dam,	An elder-tree and a bulrush, I am correct,
8 in*n*īga is ath*air* talman.	*inníga* and yarrow.

9 A mberb*ad* a*r* lemn*acht* lōr.	Boil them in sufficient new milk.
10 ibt*er* deoc*h* dē, gu dīmōr	Let one drink of it very deeply
11 'nā sesam 's a aigid soir.	when standing and facing forwards.
12 Īc*caid* na 7 losa sin.	Those seven herbs heal.

Textual Commentary

6 budomun. This must be the name of a plant, since the opening of the poem purports to enumerate seven herbs in total, and six others are mentioned in this quatrain. The word is most likely a compound containing the initial element *buide* 'yellow', which can take the form *budh-* or *bugh-* when prefixed to another element (see *DIL*, s.v. 1 *buide*, and also Mac Cárthaigh 2014, 114–115). The second element of the compound would, in the present metrical context, consist of no more than two syllables; the simplest explanation is to read the suspension mark over the final 'u' as an n-stroke, and thus the second element as *omun*. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the similar form *boamuin* also occurs in a list of ingredients from a prose recipe for headache found elsewhere in the compendium (RIA MS 24 B 3, p. 44.4). However, the second element of the compound is probably not the comparatively common term meaning 'fear' (*DIL*, s.v. *omun, ómun*), but rather the less well-attested form *oman* or *omán*, defined in the *DIL* (s.v.) as the 'name of a plant, thistle'. The only attestation of the form *oman* given in the *DIL* is from a passage in the Old Irish legal tract *Tír cumaile* (Mac Niocaill 1971) that describes a way to test the quality of first-class arable land: however, the editor of that tract emended the form to *omthann* (see *DIL*, s.v. *omthand*). Subsequently Ó Corráin (1997) argued that this emendation was unnecessary, suggesting that *omthann* belongs to a series of words for plants constructed from the basic name of the plant and the collective suffix *–t(h)an, -t(h)en*; the more precise meaning of *omthann* would thus be 'a clump of thistles' (or similar), and one might posit a simplex **om*, of which *omán* is a diminutive. The occurrence of the element *-omun* as part of a compound at least twice in the compendium thus adds valuable support to Ó Corráin's suggestion.

8 inníga. See note on line 12 of poem 2 above.

Dating and Authorship of the Poems

In a recent discussion of late-medieval miscellaneous poetry—i.e. poetry not written specifically for patrons, such as works on legal or medical topics—Katherine Simms (2009, 59–60) observed that:

> The main problem [with such poetry] from a historian's point of view is that without a named author (apart from the fictitious attribution to a saint) and without a named patron, it is difficult to date most of these poems even to the nearest century. They are normally written in a loose metre, similar to that used by the Church scholars of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, with approximate rhymes and syllable count making the wording easily modernised by later scribes without disturbing the metrical pattern. As a result, it is difficult to distinguish

clearly between compositions from the twelfth-century Church schools and later works of the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth or even sixteenth centuries.

The dating of the three medical poems edited above presents similar problems. Some possible clues to their authorship can, however, be gleaned from other poems preserved elsewhere in the same text. One such clue is found in the concluding quatrain of the longest poem in the compendium, which is a 23-stanza composition on the different types of *atchomall* 'inflammation' or 'dropsy'. This poem ends by invoking the name of a certain 'Conn Mac an Leagha' as an authority for medicinal remedies:[10]

Mac in Lega na mbreth mbog	Mac an Leagha of generous Judgments,
Cond auct*or* glan gan aonlocd,	Conn, a pure author without any fault,
bíd treōrac*h* a s[h]īl gun brat*h*	His descendants will be skilful without treachery,
dā lenat lorg a rīagla[dh].	If they but follow the path of his prescriptions.

In his nineteenth-century catalogue of the Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy, Eugene O'Curry (1841–3, i, 259) suggested that this stanza indicated that the poem on *atchomhall*—and seemingly all of the other poems in the RIA 23 N 29 fragment of the compendium—might have been authored by the principal scribe of the manuscript himself, Connla Mac an Leagha. However, quite apart from the fact that 'Conn' and 'Connla' are two different names, this quatrain alone does not seem to constitute sufficient evidence to conclude that the scribe himself was the original author of all of the verse material in his compilation. We might wonder, for example, whether some of it had been passed down from an ancestor (a certain 'Cond Mac an Leagha') who was also in the profession, although no individual of this name is recorded in any currently published sources (cf. Ó Muraíle 2016, 100–101).

The conclusion to a separate poem in the compendium strengthens the argument against O'Curry's suggestion, moreover. The poem in question consists of a cure for leprosy, and its last stanza invokes the name of a certain 'Cond Mór Mac Gilla na Naomh':[11]

M*a*c Gilla na Naom, naomda a rat*h*,	Mac Gilla na Naomh, heavenly his gift,
Cond mōr na legis n-am*r*a	Great Conn of the marvellous cures,
as ē roscrīb in sgēl glan	is he who composed the clear account,
gidē do f*r*it*h* a t[h]arba.	whosoever procured its benefit.

It seems reasonable to surmise that the 'Cond Mór Mac Gilla na Naom' cited in this quatrain is the same as the 'Cond Mac in Lega' mentioned in the first quatrain: in other words, he is here simply being referred to more specifically as the son of someone named 'Gilla na Naomh'. If this is the case, however, the Conn in question

[10] RIA MS 23 N 29, f 4vz. The description of 23 N 29 by Winifred Wulff in the current RIA catalogue (*RIACat* 1222) gives the impression that this stanza is separate from the 23 quatrains that precede it on the same page; however, the repetition of the initials of the poem's first three words at the end of the quatrain shows that it in fact forms part of the same composition. A general account of the poem is included in *The Bardic Poetry Database* (bardic.celt.dias.ie) as item no. 90, *A lega Banba na mbrat*; but it has not yet been edited or translated.

[11] RIA MS 24 B 3, 90b.11–12.

is probably not the same person as our scribe 'Connla', since the latter's brother Maelechloinn, who served as *ollamh* in medicine to the two Mac Donnchaidh lords based in Ballymote and Tirerrill, Co. Sligo, claims in a scribal note from Kings Inns Library MS 15 (copied in 1512) that his father was one 'Illann Mac an Leagha' (Walsh 1947, 206–207 and 210). Of the modest handful of extant references to members of the Mac an Leagha medical kindred, only one mentions someone called 'Gilla na Naemh': this is a reference to a 'Maghnus mac Gilla na Naem Micc a Leagha' as a scribe of part of Trinity College Dublin manuscript 1323 (H 3. 4), a medical miscellany compiled in the sixteenth century, and to which—perhaps significantly—both Connla and his brother Maelechlainn Mac an Leagha also contributed their signatures (Ó Muraíle 2016, 100–101).[12]

If the Maghnus Mac Gilla na Naem Micc a Leagha mentioned in the TCD MS was a contemporary of Connla and Maelechloinn, could the 'Conn Mac Gilla na Naomh (Mac in Lega)' referred to in two poems from our compendium (assuming the figure invoked in both compositions is one and the same) be a relation of Maghnus—perhaps a brother? If so, it would place the composition of at least those two poems around the lifetime of our compendium's scribe, Connla Mac an Leagha, and thus probably at some point in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. However, neither 'Conn' nor 'Gilla na Naomh' are uncommon names in later medieval Ireland, and one should be wary of drawing too firm a conclusion based on such meagre evidence. It can only be hoped that a much more comprehensive examination of the corpus of verse in the compendium will unearth further clues in this regard.

Didactic Medical Verse: Contextual Considerations

The metrical content of Connla Mac an Leagha's medical compendium, as illustrated by these three poems, is significant from the perspective of medieval Irish textual culture more widely, since it offers valuable evidence for a relatively unexplored genre of medieval Irish didactic or technical verse. The use of a metrical or prosimetric medium for other genres of Irish vernacular writing is well attested from the early medieval period, encompassing subjects such as law, history, place-name lore, and grammar (Breatnach 1996, 65). In comparison to many of these genres, however, the use of verse for material of a strictly medical nature in Irish sources has received relatively limited critical attention.[13]

A noteworthy exception to this area of scholarly neglect is a poem of four quatrains on the efficacy of the different parts of healing herbs according to the

[12] Maghnus' signature is found on p. 63 of the manuscript, at the end of a copy of the herbal of Tadhg Ó Cuinn; the names of Connla and his brother Maelechloinn occur in Ogham script on the lower margins of pp. 32 and 33. For the most recent catalogue description, see the manuscript entry on ISOS.

[13] Katherine Simms 2007, 61–65 and 2009, 57 notes that during the high middle ages, students of medicine would, like students of poetry, history and law, have learned to compose verse in syllabic bardic metres; however, she does not discuss any specific examples.

different seasons of the year, which was edited by Robin Flower in the early twentieth century:[14]

O ocht kalainn Aibril āin	From A.D. VIII Kal. of glorious April
co teirt kalainn Iuil imslāin,	to A.D. III Kal. of perfect July,
frisin ré sin, ni bāigh bras,	in all that time, it is no rash boast,
is barr cech losa ícas.	it is the leafage of every herb that heals.
O ocht kalainn Iūil īar sin	From A.D. VIII Kal. of July thereafter
co teirt kalainn Octimbir,	to A.D. III Kal. of October
cos cech losa, gnīm cen geis,	it is the stalk of every herb, a deed without prohibition
is edh ícus cech n-ainceis.	that heals every ill.
Mecon cech losa, is fīr sin,	The root of every herb, that is true
o ocht kalainn Octimbir,	from A.D. VIII Kal. of October
Dīan Cecht docoraigh tré cēill	Dian Cécht wisely ordained it
co hocht kalainn aird Aprēil.	to A.D. VIII Kal. of lofty April.
Cúic losa .LX. is. 300,	Five herbs, sixty and three hundred—
is hé a n-āiremh, ni himarbréc,	that is their number, it is no falsehood,
lus cech galair raidhit raind	the herbs that heal all sicknesses
boinghcter uile a n-ocht kalaind.	let them be gathered on A.D. VIII. Kal.

This poem was copied into BL Add. MS 30512 at some point in the sixteenth century by Torna Ó Maoilchonaire (d. 1532), although it is perhaps significant that the majority of that manuscript—which consists of a miscellany of literary texts—was compiled primarily in the fifteenth century by an individual who, like the scribe of the versified recipes from our medical compendium in the Royal Irish Academy, bore the surname of Mac an Leagha.[15] Moreover, Flower argued that the poem on gathering herbs may itself 'very well be a composition of the 12th century', and that it was 'in all probability based upon some Latin original' (1921/3, 66). He was not able to identify the precise Latin original in question, but noted similar doctrine in an English translation of a Latin passage from a manuscript of *c*.1400 (Flower 1921/3, 67; for further discussion of comparable material, see also Hunt 1990, 78–79). Flower also compared the poem to another Irish metrical composition on the physiology of the emotions, for which he was able to identify a Latin (prose) source in a twelfth-century English manuscript, and argued that both Irish compositions were typical of the kind of 'school poetry' that flourished around that period.

From a wider European perspective, of course, the versification of medical learning first recorded in prose is hardly anything unusual. For example, the thirteenth-century Parisian scholar Gilles de Corbeil wrote popular short poems on the *Urines* of Theophilus and the *Pulses* of Philaretus, two tracts that formed part of the *Ars medicine*, or core collection of texts underlying the curriculum of the medical faculty at Paris during the later medieval period. These metrical

[14] Flower 1921/3, 65–66; I have made some adjustments to Flower's translation, which omitted all chevilles.

[15] The individual in question is 'Uilliam Mac an Lega', whose relationship to Connla, the scribe of our medical compendium, is unclear. Walsh 1947, 208–209, argues against previous attempts to identify Uilliam with the 'Illann Mac and Leagha' who is cited in King's Inns Library MS 15 (1512) as father to Connla's brother Maelechloinn.

compositions were often copied and commented on by medical scholars in the early universities, who were evidently drawn to them because they offered brief restatements of the treatises on which they were based, as well as easily memorizable summaries of the essential diagnostic tools of medical practice (O'Boyle 1998, 112–113). The versification of medical recipes in particular is, however, a phenomenon often associated more closely with so-called 'popular' (and typically vernacular) *receptaria* rather than 'scholastic' medical learning of the later medieval period. For example, Hunt 1990, 144 has described an Anglo-Norman collection of metrical recipes known as the *Physique rimée*—which clearly consists of versified translations from a Latin source, arranged in a head-to-toe order similar to that found in our text—as being 'designed to introduce those who have no Latin … to the useful properties of herbs and plants the names of which may already be familiar to them.' The simplicity of such popular cures has likewise been underlined by Faribault 1982, 48–49 in relation to a French collection of versified recipes for wounds and fractures known as the *Chirurgie par rimes*:

> On remarque, à la lecture, la banalité des éléments thérapeutiques (la laitue, l'eau froide, l'ortie, le vinaigre, un chat), de même que la simplicité des manipulations (broyer, hacher, détremper). D'autre part, les recettes ne donne aucune mesure de quantité. Ce sont des recettes de type populaire—par opposition aux recettes de type savant qui demandent souvent des ingrédients rares, exotiques, des onguents compliqués, et qui donnent en général des mesures de quantité.

The characteristics of the versified medical cures that constitute the *Physique rimée* are paralleled in the Irish recipes in our compendium, which, as illustrated above, cite no particularly exotic ingredients, specific measures or detailed instructions for preparation. It is noteworthy, moreover, that Hunt's Anglo-Norman collection contains comparable recipes for slimming (e.g. Hunt 1990, 164: 'Por amegrier') and urinary problems (e.g. Hunt 1990, 187–188: 'Por pisser').

The use of verse as a mnemonic medium to convey technical information is also paralleled in other European didactic genres of the later medieval period. For example, Law 2003, 180–182 has drawn attention to the growing tendency to convey grammatical concepts in verse over the course of the twelfth century in particular. She cites, among others, the examples of Petrus Helius, who inserted clusters of mnemonic verses into his *Summa super Priscianum* (*c*.1140–1150) to facilitate memorising features such as the gender of fourth-declension Latin nouns; and the Norman scholar Alexander of Ville-Dei, whose celebrated *Doctrinale* (*c*.1199) constituted a near full-scale Latin grammar that was heavily commented on up to the end of the Middle Ages. Contemporary Irish scholars were by no means immune to these wider trends, to judge from the survival of works such as a poem in Irish on the gender and declension of Latin nouns, tentatively dated on linguistic grounds by Greene 1954, 278–279 to the Middle Irish period (*c.*900–1200 AD), or from a metrical composition on grammatical rules attributed to the famous fourteenth-century bardic poet Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh (McKenna 1947). It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Irish medical scholars might take a similar approach to the transmission of learning in their own particular discipline.

Medicine and Medieval Irish Law

An Irish textual genre that sheds some particularly useful light on the wider context in which these didactic medical poems were composed is that of law, which has fared somewhat better than medicine in terms of the extent of scholarly—and particularly editorial—attention that it has received in recent decades. Two points of comparison in particular will be highlighted here. First is the fact that medieval Irish legal texts frequently preserve a similar mix of prose and verse material as is found in Connla Mac an Leagha's medical compendium (Breatnach 2010, 223–224). Secondly, as is the case in all three of the medical poems edited here, the medieval Irish law-tracts also frequently invoke the authority of mythical figures to authenticate either the contents of entire texts or of individual points of doctrine within them. This convention no doubt stems from the fact that the authors of the surviving law-texts—most of which constitute 'legal handbooks' rather than records of formally promulgated law—were well aware of the concept of legal precedents and case law as grounds for a decision, and often drew their examples of doubtful cases and disputes from the plots of literary myths and sagas.[16] As Simms 2007, 124–125, citing Gwynn 1926, 158–166, has observed, this practice is not so different from the way that ancient Roman schools of rhetoric used the plots of well-known stories, or incidents from Greek history, as imaginary lawsuits to train students in disputation.

An example of this phenomenon that aptly illustrates the confluence of medical and legal tradition in medieval Ireland is found in the title of the Old Irish legal tract on the compensation due for various injuries known as *Bretha Déin Chécht* 'The Judgments of Dían Cécht' (Binchy 1966). This text appears to have originally formed part of a group of four 'craft-Judgments', attributed to various gods of the Túatha Dé Danann, that were included in the *Senchas Már*: a legal collection consisting of 47 or 48 distinct tracts that has most recently been argued to have been composed at Armagh in the second half of the seventh century (Breatnach 2011, 42).[17] However, the title *Bretha Déin Chécht* was adopted for the tract on injuries by D. A. Binchy when he first edited the text in 1966, and may not have formed part of the *Senchas Már* tract in its original form. As Liam Breatnach has noted (*CIHComp* 303 and 310), the evidence for the titles of component tracts of the *Senchas Már* collection is varied, and the only known occurrence of the title *Bretha Déin Chécht* in fact consists of the heptasyllabic line *bretha dein checht o legib* 'the judgments of Dían Cécht concerning leeches'. This is found at the beginning of the unique surviving witness of the text, which occupies pages 451–456 of NLI MS G11—a fifteenth-century codex that is otherwise entirely medical in content (Ní Shéaghdha 1967, 65–93). It is quite possible, therefore, that the heptasyllablic title (and therefore mythological attribution) assigned to the law-tract on injuries now known as *Bretha Déin Chécht* was drawn from a poem

[16] For further discussion of specific examples of this practice, see Binchy 1959, 38–40, and the more recent inventory of leading cases by Qiu 2013.

[17] Breatnach, *CIHComp* 303–304, has noted that the list of component tracts found in the introduction to the *Senchas Már* includes a reference to a tract called *Bretha Creidini* together with the 'craft-Judgments' of Dían Cécht, Goibniu and Luchtaine. Creidine appears in *Cath Maige Tuired* as the bronze-worker of the Túatha Dé Danann, alongside Goibniu the smith, Dían Cécht the physician, and Luchta/Luchtaine, the wright (Gray 1982, §§96–103).

composed at a much later stage than the law-tract itself. And indeed, what may well have been the poem in question appears to have survived elsewhere, to judge from the following stanza in a composition dealing with the authors and laws of Ireland:

> Bretha Díancécht ó leigib. The *Judgments of Díancécht* concerning leeches.
> Cuit cáich i mBrethaib Neimid Everyone had a share in the *Bretha Nemed*
> acht ba fer cerda, guth glan provided he was a man of art, a clear voice,
> Indse Elga ardollam. a lofty, master-poet of the island of Ireland
> (Smith 1994, 132, 137).

The most recent editor of this poem has suggested that it may have been 'intended as a set-text in the curriculum of the medieval schools', and dates the composition to the mid-twelfth century on the basis of its ascription to Gilla in Choimded Úa Chormaic, an author to whom another poem traditionally dated to *c.*1160 is extant (Smith 1994, 123–124).

In the introduction to his edition of *Bretha Déin Chécht*, Binchy pointed to a second instance in which Dían Cécht's name is invoked in legal verse material that may date to the twelfth century or later. This occurs within a passage of commentary on *Bretha Éitgid* 'Judgments of inadvertence', a text that deals with accidental death or injury where no liability is attached to the perpetrator:[18]

> Cethraimthi diri cneidi in ruib ara leighes, amail ata o gradaib feine. Is as gabair cethraimthi | diri (cneide) cach(a) ruib ruamanda | ara leighes lainnerda | do reir dian cecht cainbrethaig | is e rochind in bann […]
>
> One quarter of the penalty for wounding a beast [is due] for curing it, as is due from members of the freeman grades. It is from this that [the rule] is derived; a quarter of the penalty [paid] for every reddened (i.e. wounded) beast for its radiant cure, according to fair-judging Dian Cécht—'tis he who has fixed the rule (Binchy 1966, 1; cf. *CIH* I 305.27–29).

Binchy, who considered the matter dealt with in this commentary to be rather extraneous to that of *Bretha Déin Chécht*, dismissed the passage as a late addition to *Bretha Éitgid*, noting it 'contains no linguistic archaisms, nothing in fact that could not have been written in the twelfth century'. In particular, he argued that 'one should not attach any real importance to the fact that this alleged "source" is cast in the old heptasyllabic metre […] with a pentasyllabic *clausula*, for versification in this metre lasted down to the end of the Middle Irish period and probably later' (Binchy 1966, 1). In the present context, however, the passage offers an intriguing parallel not only for the metrical attributions to Dían Cécht found in our medical compendium, but also for the poem on gathering herbs discussed above, where the name of the god is likewise invoked as an authority, and which Flower had tentatively argued to be a twelfth-century composition. A later dating of the verse passage in *Bretha Éitgid* would also be consonant with the apparent adoption of a line from a twelfth-century poem on the authors and laws of Ireland to provide a mythological author for the Old Irish law-tract on injuries, *Bretha Déin Chécht*. In other words, the medical poems in our compendium would appear to reflect an interest in citing mythological authorities that was current in

[18] On *Bretha Éitgid*, see *EILGuide* 272, and also the detailed account in *CIHComp* 176–182.

other didactic genres of Irish vernacular literary tradition from around the eleventh or twelfth centuries in particular.

This use of indigenous Irish gods as symbols of authority in legal and medical sources during the late-Middle Irish period very much chimes with what Mark Williams, in his recently published study of the Irish supernatural race known as the Túatha Dé Danann, has shown to be a keen interest on the part of Irish *literati* of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in identifying particular mythological figures as patrons and personifications of the professional skills proper to the *áes dána* 'people of art/talent', or those in early Irish society who maintained themselves by the exercise of their skill and knowledge. We can see this interest clearly reflected, for example, in a list of seven 'primary gods of skill' from the eleventh-century pseudohistorical text *Lebor Gabála Érenn*:

> […] ro foglaimsit eolusa ⁊ filidechta; ar cach ndiamuir ndána ⁊ in cach lēire leighis ⁊ in cach amaindse elathan do chūisin is ō Thūathaib Dé Danann atā a bunadh […] (Macalister 1938–56 IV 164–165)

> […] they studied knowledge and the art of the *filid*, for every secret of skilful art, and every technique in medicine, and every trade-secret in poetry—all indeed derive their origin from the Túatha Dé Danann […] (Williams 2016, 172)

As noted by Williams (and discussed further in Hayden forthcoming), the currency of this doctrine amongst a learned elite conversant in both Latin and the Irish vernacular is evidenced by the inclusion of Latin names and attributes for various members of the Túatha Dé in the eleventh-century pseudo-historical work known as the *Lebor Bretnach*, where Dían Cécht is referred to as *Dianus meidicus* (Van Hamel 1932, 21–22). On the basis of these and other examples, Williams argues, however, that 'using ex-divinities in this way as symbols, rhetorical personifications, and allegories *was not paganism*. It might, in fact, have been a long way from Irish paganism as it actually had once been. Instead it was a kind of meta-mythology for intellectuals, a local analogy to the myriad ways that the classical deities were put to use by poets and thinkers throughout the Middle Ages, and beyond' (Williams 2016, 181). In a didactic context, such an interpretation accords well with Simms' aforementioned observation that the invocation of Irish literary and mythological authorities as legal precedents echoes the Roman rhetorical practice of using incidents from Greek literature and history as imaginary lawsuits for training in disputation.

The question of whether or not the authors of Irish historical, legal or medical texts may have to any extent actually believed in the mythological figures whose authority they invoked is, perhaps, ultimately beyond the scope of scholarly inquiry. Nevertheless, the otherwise firmly Christian context in which all of these works were composed is clearly evidenced in the medical poems discussed above. For example, Flower 1921/3, 66–67 noted that although the poem on the correct times for gathering herbs preserved in BL MS 30512 invokes the authority of Dían Cécht, the doctrine of the verses themselves clearly articulates the succession of the seasons with which particular herbs are associated according to the sequence of the Christian feasts: 'thus the leafage is said to heal from the Annunciation (25 March) to Peter and Paul (29 June), the stalk from the Nativity of S. John the Baptist (24 June) to Michaelmas (29 September), the root from the Conception of S. John the Baptist (24 September) to the Annunciation again'. Similarly, the medical poems preserved in RIA MSS 24 B 3 and 23 N 29 variously refer to both the mythological Dían Cécht and to classical and Christian figures, as in a recipe for

pulmonary ailment that begins by citing the authority of Hippocrates, and concludes by invoking the *mac mór Muire* 'great son of Mary' (RIA MS 24 B 3, page 60.34; edited in Hayden forthcoming).

This tension between 'pagan' and 'Christian' elements in Connla Mac an Leagha's compendium—as illustrated not only by the mythological invocations in the poems edited above, but also by other similar attributions elsewhere in the text—is in many ways reminiscent of features found in the written prayers or spells against specific ailments and misfortunes preserved in Anglo-Saxon sources of the tenth and eleventh centuries, such as afflictions supposed to have been caused by the attacks of elves. Although earlier work on these sources has tended to emphasise the pagan elements in them, scholars such as Karen Jolly have by contrast characterised the whole body of surviving Anglo-Saxon texts as essentially Christian, but assimilating some pagan elements in a manner that conveys a kind of 'areligious folklore, transferable from one religious tradition to another'—a practice that ultimately derives, she argues, from the Christian church's successful attempts to adapt its liturgical and pastoral traditions to indigenous Germanic customs. Jolly has argued, therefore, that this assimilation 'should not suggest a lesser understanding of Christian truth or a degradation of Christianity by the influence of paganism' (Jolly 1996, 122 and 140; also discussed in Hutton 2013, 382–383).[19]

The two examples of legal texts that invoke the authority of Dían Cécht cited above—namely *Bretha Déin Chécht* and *Bretha Éitgid*—remind us, moreover, that the lawyers of late medieval Ireland could be well trained in the art of poetics, or *filidheacht*. As Simms 2007, 122–124 has pointed out, however, the term *filidheacht* properly refers to a theoretical knowledge about the content, metrics and language of poetry, and is thus not necessarily the equivalent of *dán* 'professional poetry', or the actual composition of elegies and praise-poems addressed to aristocratic patrons in return for payment. She likewise notes that much of the surviving didactic legal poetry—which would of course have had a practical and mnemonic, rather than aesthetic purpose—does not adhere to the standards of *dán díreach*, 'strict verse', with its elaborate patterns of rhyme, alliteration and consonance.

Simms exemplifies the use of a looser metre in didactic poetry of the late medieval period by pointing to the verse compositions of the early MacEgan judge, Giolla na Naomh mac Duinnshléibhe Mhic Aodhagáin (d. 1309), whose extant works include a versified address to a student of law and a 78-stanza poem on the main principles of distraint (for an edition and discussion of the former, see Ní Dhonnchadha 1989; for a discussion of a separate prose tract by Mac Aodhagáin, see Kelly 2001). The annalistic obit of this Giolla na Naomh refers to him as *ollam Connacht re fenechas*, and in the poem on distraint he locates himself in *Cruacha Uí Chonchubhair*. One can only speculate as to exactly how the patronymic 'Mac Duinnshléibhe' might connect him with the famous family of that name who are

[19] It is no doubt significant, in light of Jolly's focus on medical charms and prayers in Anglo-Saxon tradition, that Connla Mac an Leagha's medical compendium also contains a significant number of charms, some of which are paralleled in the English sources. Discussion of these charms is beyond the scope of the present article, and much textual work remains to be done on this aspect of the text; however some observations on specific charms can be found in Carney & Carney 1960; Stifter 2007 & 2007; Borsje 2016; and Hayden forthcoming.

mentioned since the fourteenth century as professors of medicine for the O'Donnells of Tír Chonaill (see Bannerman 1998, 4, 27–28). It is worth noting, however, that Walsh 1947, 206, following Father Patrick Woulfe 1923, tentatively connects the family of Mac Duinnshléibhe with the hereditary medical family of Mac an Leagha, who were likewise based in the region of north Connaught during the late-medieval period. One might wonder, therefore, whether the Mac an Leagha responsible for composing some or all of the verse in the compendium examined here might have been trained in the same tradition of *filidheacht* as that with which the thirteenth-century Connaght legal scholar Giolla na Naomh mac Duinnshléibhe Mhic Aodhagáin was familiar. As noted above, the scribe of the medical compendium, Connla Mac an Leagha, wrote at least part of his text while in the parish of Killaraght, Co. Sligo, seemingly while he was in the employ of the local Mac Diarmada lords of Magh Luirg (Walsh 1947, 210, 214). I have suggested already that the numerous attributions of medical doctrine to figures of the Túatha Dé Danann that are found throughout Connla's text may stem from his (or his sources') familiarity with narratives relating to the mythological battle of Mag Tuired. Such familiarity may have been acquired by the Mac an Leagha physicians through contact with the neighbouring Uí Dhuibhgeannáin family of poet-historians based in nearby Cill Rónáin, a parish in the barony of Boyle, Co. Roscommon. The Uí Dhuibhgeannáin were likewise in the employ of the Meic Dhiarmada lords, and—as Mícheál Hoyne 2013 has recently argued—appear to have re-worked the narrative of *Cath Maige Tuired* for the propagandistic purposes of their patrons in the early fifteenth century (Hayden forthcoming). Were such a connection between the Uí Dhuibhgeannáin poet-historians and the Mac an Leagha physicians to have existed, it is not unreasonable to surmise that the latter may have likewise been acquainted with legal scholars from the same region who were equally versed in Irish poetic tradition.

A more explicit indication of the convergence of legal and medical material in verse form emerges, moreover, from a contextual examination of the manuscript in which the medical compendium is preserved. The fragment of the text found in RIA MS 23 N 29 also contains two 'non-medical' items, one of which is a humorous poem concerning whether the River Shannon should be described as belonging to Connacht or Munster (Ó Cuív 1962; cf. Bergin 1970, 60–3, 238–239).[20] Within this composition, a legal scholar by the name of Tadhg an Ghadraigh Mac Aodhagáin pronounces an official judgement on the matter that has been described by Simms 2007, 126 as comprising 'a fascinating parody of an Irish brehon's summing-up at the end of a law case', in which he 'rehearses the primary cause of dispute and the arguments of each party; discusses the political history of the region; compares the contention over the provenance of the Shannon to a lawsuit to determine the true paternity of a child; compares the river system of the Shannon to the arteries of the human body, showing that he has some medical knowledge' […]. The inclusion of a poem such as this alongside a collection of medical recipes suggests that the manuscript's compiler, Connla Mac an Leagha—who appears to have himself been a practising physician—was inclined to draw in interesting ways

[20] The poem is preserved on ff 5r–v.5 of RIA MS 23 N 29. For a discussion of the second non-medical item in the fragment, a prose account concerning the murder in 1502 of Maol Eachlainn Mág Raghnaill, chief of the small lordship of Muintear Eólais (in modern-day Co. Leitrim), see Hoyne forthcoming.

on not only medical lore, but also historical, legal and literary traditions emanating from the particular locale in which he was based, namely the lordship of Magh Luirg, Co. Roscommon.

Much transcription and editorial work remains to be completed on both the verse and prose material in Connla Mac an Leagha's medical compendium before it will be possible to paint a truly satisfactory picture of the sources, dating and wider context of the material that he copied. By drawing attention to the existence of these compositions, however, this preliminary discussion has aimed to point up not only the lexicographical value of this body of unpublished material, but also the extent to which medieval Irish medical scholars—just like lawyers, historians and poets—might draw on a wealth of vernacular narrative tradition for inspiration when seeking to authenticate doctrine for which the origin might be unknown or unfamiliar to them. The poems discussed here demonstrate that members of the hereditary medical families of late medieval Ireland found themselves equally at home in both a very local, long-established Irish vernacular literary tradition on the one hand, and an outward-looking and multi-lingual network of scientific ideas on the other. Their textual heritage deserves to be drawn further into the modern scholarly discourse concerning the learned activities of medieval Irish scribes and scholars.

Abbreviations & Bibliography

THIS reference section is intended to contain full bibliographical references to works referred to above through an abbreviation. In respect of web-based sources, it may be noted that the ones corresponding to printed works are given after those, with the URL shown after a semi-colon; if no printed equivalents are listed, a colon precedes the URL. Moreover, it will be noted that a central place of honour has been provided for as many publications of our honorand's as were known to the editors at the time of going to press.

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ABM = McManus & Ó Raghallaigh 2010.

ACJ = *Australian Celtic Journal.*

ACL = Stokes & Meyer 1898–1907.

ACLL = Harvey & Malthouse 2010: www.brepolis.net.

Adams, James Noel 2013 *Social Variation and the Latin Language*, CUP.

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AI = Mac Airt 1951.

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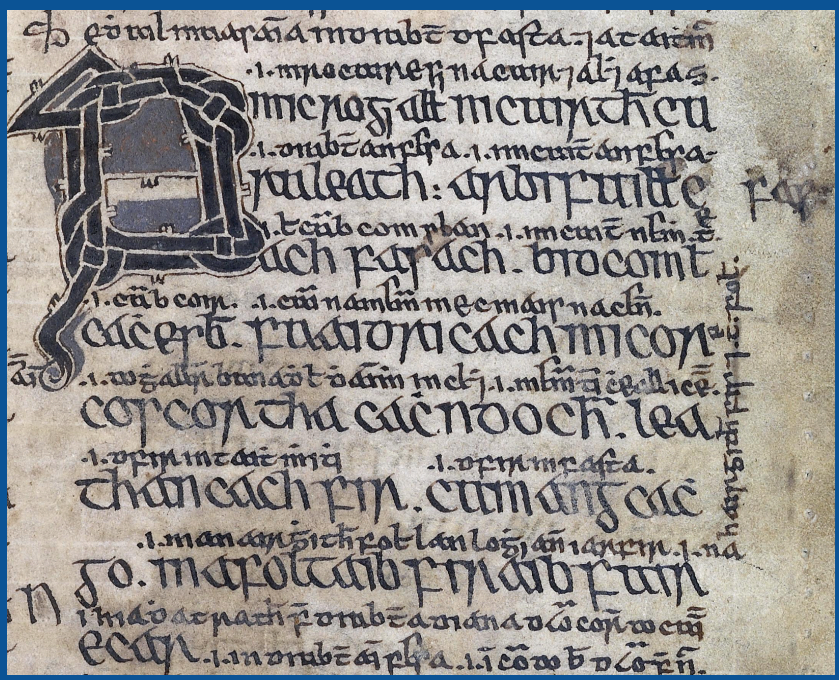
an Aisling

The Aisling Society of Sydney



Dublin, Royal Irish Academy Manuscript 23 Q 6 p. 32

A maic ro-gíallaig: ni cuirther curu leth-fásа. Ar bid fuilnithi cach fásach. Bid comlán cach esbaid. Fúaitrithi cach míchor. Coscarthai cach dochor. Lethan cach fír, cumang cach gáu i nadfoltaib fíraib -fuirecar.

O son of abundant hostages: you should not make half-empty contracts. For every emptiness will have to be supplemented by damages. Every deficiency will be [made] complete. Every illicit contract [is] to be impugned. Every disadvantageous contract [is] to be dismantled. Every truth [is] broad, every falsehood narrow when it is not found with true considerations.

Di Astud Chor §37

Neil McLeod, *Early Irish Contract Law* pp.170–171