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Parsons, G. (2003) "Never the twain shall meet?" East and West in the characterization of Conchobar mac Nessa. *Quaestio Insularis*, 4, pp. 35-56.

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Deposited on: 17 June 2015

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‘NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET’?: EAST AND WEST IN THE
CHARACTERIZATION OF CONCHOBAR MAC NESSA

Geraldine Parsons

Trinity College Cambridge

This is a pre-publication copy of the article in *Quaestio Insularis*, 4 (2003), 35-56. The published copy omitted a paragraph and two footnotes from the top of its p. 48, the missing footnotes coming between the published nn 27 and 28. This file also corrects a small number of typographical errors contained in the published text.

Introduction

This paper must begin with a clarification. Far from heralding a discussion of representations of the Occident and the Orient in tales featuring Conchobar mac Nessa and their impact upon his characterization, the ‘East’ and ‘West’ of this paper’s title are no more than metaphoric, alluding to two starkly contrasting depictions of Conchobar mac Nessa from the Early Modern Irish period. These characterizations – one of exemplary munificence, and one of equal amounts of depravity – demand attention. The Early Modern Irish text *Oided Mac nUisnig* depicts Conchobar mac Nessa manipulating his warriors’ *gessi*, winning over the allies of the sons of Uisneach with bribes and using his mendacious eloquence to convince Cathbad to defeat his opposition by means of magic and, on the basis of this portrayal, Conchobar has been described as ‘one of the most Machiavellian characters in Irish literature.’¹ The second depiction current in the

¹ *Oideadh Chloinne hUisnigh: The Violent Death of the Children of Uisneach*, ed. and trans. C. Mac Giolla Léith, Irish Texts Society 56 (London, 1993), 15. Note that the tales are referred to by the titles used in J.

Early Modern period is encapsulated in the poem written between 1560 and 1580 by Domhnall Mac Dáire in honour of Pádraigín Mac Muiris, eldest son of Thomas Fitzmaurice, sixteenth Lord of Kerry and Baron of Lixnaw. This poem depicts the touching scene wherein the infant king is being taught generosity by his mother.

Needless to say, Conchobar proves an attentive pupil and is seen as the ultimate symbol of regal largesse, a king whose rule rests on his liberality:

Fúair sáormhac Fhachtna Fháthaigh ór chan ris a rioghmháthair –
féile an leinbh gá chora i gcion – a thogha i seilbh na sinnsior.²

These two ideas of Conchobar occur frequently in the literature of the Early Modern period. He is frequently employed in the apologues of bardic poetry, often symbolising the ideal king whose reign rests on generosity and martial might, and less frequently in depictions more reminiscent of that found in *Oided Mac n-Uisnig*. In addition, both types of representation feature in the writings of Geoffrey Keating.³ It is clear, therefore, that

P. Mallory and R. Ó hUiginn, 'The Ulster Cycle: A Checklist of Translations' in *Ulidia: Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales, Belfast and Emain Macha 8 – 12 April 1994*, ed. J. P. Mallory and G. Stockman (Belfast, n. d.), pp. 291-304.

² O. J. Bergin, ed. and trans., *Irish Bardic Poetry*, ed. D. Greene and F. Kelly (Dublin, 1970), no. 11, edition p. 58, translation, p. 236, 'Fachtna Fathach's noble son acquired by what his queenly mother said to him (the child's generosity makes it manifest) his election to the possessions of his forefathers.'

Translations, unless otherwise attributed, are my own.

³ *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn le Seathrún Céitinn, D.D.: The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D.D.*, ed. and trans. P. S. Dineen, vol. 2 of 4, Irish Texts Soc. 8 (London, 1908) contains versions of the *Longes mac n-Uislenn* and *Aided Chonchobuir* tales at pp. 190-7 and pp.198-205 as well as a birth-tale at pp. 214-5 and details of his offspring.

the character of Conchobar underwent no crystallisation at the hands of a Geoffrey of Monmouth. In an effort to understand these late contradictory representations, this paper will consider treatments of Conchobar in the earlier medieval material. It is hoped that a character analysis of such a prominent figure in Medieval Irish literature will serve to illuminate some of the approaches to and concepts of characterization current at the time.

Conchobar appears in forty-four of seventy-two tales of the Ulster Cycle.⁴ These appearances demonstrate that Conchobar's character is hallmarked by a number of unusual features. Most commonly identified by his matronymic, there are two conflicting traditions of his paternity, and accounts of his familial relationships are further complicated by allusions to incest with both his sister, and in later tradition, with his mother. There are a number of divergent accounts of how he assumed his kingship; instances of underhand dealings to obtain and maintain power sit uneasily alongside accounts claiming him as a paragon of kingship, and on occasion, the first Christian in Ireland whose faith pre-empted the advent of Christianity there. For reasons of space and time, this analysis will be far more superficial than the material warrants. I propose to limit myself today to a consideration of particular texts that exemplify the diverse treatments of Conchobar in the medieval period and which might be seen as the sources for the later polarised depictions.

Conchobar as king

⁴ Details of these appearances are supplied in the Appendix. Though a somewhat problematic term, the 'Ulster Cycle' will be used throughout this paper.

This assessment of Conchobar's characterization will focus on his kingship. It is immediately obvious that the first set of associations triggered by Conchobar's appearance in a text would have had to do with his status as king and his location. There is one example of a tale, *Immacaldam in Dá Thuarad*, a tenth-century poetic text, where the sole use of the character is to set the scene

Loc tra dond immacallaim sea Emain Macha Amser
dano di amser Conchobair maic Nessa.⁵

Although this the only tale that uses Conchobar for this purpose alone, five other texts open with a statement that at the time of the action, Conchobar was king in Emain Macha.⁶ Therefore, it can be assumed that these references were signposts to a literary milieu understood by author and audience alike. It would appear that, as early as the eighth century, these statements functioned as an acknowledgement of an understood status quo, a jumping-off point for the action of the story. However, if the fundamental associations made by audiences were in relation to his physical location and social status, what, if any, other expectations were evoked by the appearance of Conchobar in a text? To this end, I will investigate to what extent there are homogeneous depictions of

⁵ 'The Colloquy of the Two Sages', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 26, 4-64, at 15, § 10: 'The place then of the colloquy it is Emain Macha. The time then of it is the time of Conchobar mac Nessa.'

⁶ *Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories*, ed. A. G. van Hamel, Mod. and Med. Irish Series 3 (Dublin, 1933), pp. 1-8. *The Death Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, ed. and trans. K. Meyer, Todd Lecture Series 14 (Dublin, 1906), pp. 12-3. 'Das Fest des Bricriu und die Verbannung der mac Duil Dermait', ed. and trans. E. Windisch, in his *Irische Texte*, series 2, vol. I (Leipzig, 1884-7), 186-209. 'Tidings of Conchobar mac Nessa', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Ériu* 4 (1910), 18-38. 'The Oldest Version of Tochmarc Emire', ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *Revue Celtique* 11 (1890), 433-57.

behavioural patterns and moral characteristics in the tales detailing Conchobar's assumption of power, an episode which might be expected to encapsulate authorial attitudes towards Conchobar's kingship.

Depictions of Conchobar's assumption of power

There are three distinct strata of tradition surrounding Conchobar's assumption of kingship. The eighth-century *Compert Chonchobuir* and the early twelfth-century *Scéla Conchobair meic Nessa* constitute one strand of tradition, sharing the central idea that Ness and Cathbad are the parents of Conchobar. In the earlier text Ness decides to become pregnant by Cathbad on hearing his prophecy that a son conceived at that hour would rule over Ireland: 'As-noí in draí dar deu ba fír; mac do-génta ind air sin for-biad Hérinn'.⁷ In this short text, Ness's pregnancy is remarkable for its duration: 'Boí a ngein fó brú trí mísa for teorib bliadnaib.'⁸ Ness's three year and three month long pregnancy can be understood to mark Conchobar out as a figure destined for greatness.⁹ *Scéla Conchobair* contains an account of the birth with similar overtones: Conchobar's birth is delayed by his mother's sitting on a rock to await an auspicious time to give birth.¹⁰

⁷ T. Ó Cathasaigh, 'Some Reflections on Compert Chonchobuir and Serlige Con Culainn', in *Ulidia*, ed. Mallory and Stockman (Belfast, n.d.), pp. 85-9, edition and translation at pp. 85-6, 'The druid swore by gods that it was true; a son who was begotten at that hour would be over Ireland.'

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86, 'Three years and three months the child was in her womb.'

⁹ *Forbhais Droma Dámhgháire: the Siege of Knocklong*, ed. and trans. S. Ó Duinn (Cork, 1992) depicts both Cormac mac Airt and Fíachu Muillethan are depicted as the results of seven-month pregnancies.

¹⁰ 'Tidings', ed. and trans. Stokes, p. 22, § 4, 'A wonderful birth would be born with Christ's birth on that stone yonder upon which Conchobar was born and his name was famous in Ireland.' See also *ibid.*, p. 19:

More significant, however, is that the account of Conchobar's birth in *Scéla Conchobair* takes a rather ambiguous stance on the validity of his kingship. Cathbad is here portrayed as a warrior, and this martial strength is manifested in his rape of Ness, here a female champion.¹¹ The introduction of this rape might be seen to change considerably the dynamics of this pairing, although Ness's power and calculating nature reassert themselves in her dealings with Fergus when she agrees to marry him on condition that Conchobar is made king temporarily

Bóí dano Fergus mac Rossa i rrígu Ulad. Adcobrastar-side in mnái .i. Ness, do mnái dó. Nathó, ol sisi, co ndomrab a log .i. ríge mbliadne dom mac, conid tairle co n-erbarthar mac ríge frim mac. Tabair, ol cach, 7 bid lat a rrige cia chongarthar [dó] ainm ríge. Foid tra iar suidi in ben la Fergus, ocus congairther ríge n-Ulad do Chonchobur.¹²

'Parturition on a stone (cloch) is mentioned in §4. So S. Patrick was born on a flagstone (lecc), Trip. Life, p. 8. The idea may perhaps have been that the babe might absorb the valuable properties of the stone (stability, solidity, etc.)'

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22, § 3, '... that is the afore-mentioned Cathbad, until he came between them and spears, until that they came together, and until that she was his loving wife, and until that she bore a son to him. That son then was namely Conchobar mac Cathbad.' For a parallel to this scene, see Conchobar's rape of Medb in 'The Oldest Version', ed. and trans. Meyer.

¹²'Tidings', ed. and trans. Stokes, p. 22, § 5, 'Fergus mac Rossa was then in the kingship of the Ulaid. He desired the woman Nessa as his wife. 'No,' she said, 'until its value is mine, namely the kingship of a year for my son, so that it happens that my son will be called a son of a king.' 'Give (it),' says all, 'and the kingship will be yours although he is called the name of a king. The woman sleeps with Fergus then after that, and Conchobar is called the king of the Ulaid.'

This incident forms the first of the irregular steps towards Conchobar's kingship. The second is the garnering of support for him through his mother's rather dubious policy of stripping every second man in the kingdom of his wealth, and granting this wealth to the champions of the Ulaid.¹³ Thus, Conchobar emerges as a puppet king manipulated by his mother, and as a king whose regal status has been endorsed on the basis of a false manifestation of *fír flatha*, the topos of the 'Sovereign's Truth' present in Medieval Irish kingship theory.¹⁴

The account of *fír flatha* contained in *Mesca Ulad*, the eleventh- or twelfth-century text which forms the second stratum of tradition concerning Conchobar's assumption of kingship, is markedly different. Here, an adult Conchobar assumes power, having convinced his fellow kings in the territory of the Ulaid, Cú Chulainn and Fintan mac

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 24, § 6, 'Ro gab tra in ben for tinchosc a maicc 7 a aite 7 a muntire .i. lomrad indala fir 7 a thidnacul diaraile, 7 a hór-si 7 a hargat do thidnacul do a[n]radaibUladaird ardaig iartaige dia mac', 'The woman was then instructing her son and his foster-father and his household, namely to strip every second man and to bestow it upon the other, and to bestow his gold and his silver upon the champions of the Ulaid because of the result to her son.'

¹⁴ The concept of *fír flatha* has been summarised by F. Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Early Irish Law Series 3 (Dublin, 1986), p. 18: 'The law-texts, wisdom-texts and sagas constantly stress the importance of the king's justice (*fír flathemon*). If the king is just, his reign will be peaceful and prosperous, whereas if he is guilty of injustice (*gáu flathemon*) the soil and the elements will rebel against him. There will be infertility of women and cattle, crop-failure, dearth of fish, defeat in battle, plagues, lightning, etc. The relationship between a king and his territory may be viewed in sexual terms, as when the inauguration of Fedlimid son of Áed is described as his "sleeping with the province of Connacht" (*feis re cóiced Connacht*).'

Néill Níamglonnaig, to relinquish their power to him for the period of a year. An explicit statement of what might be called a true *fír flatha* is present in the text when it states that under Conchobar, the province was a ‘well-spring of abundance and calm’: ‘thánic i cind blíadna, ro boí in cócied ina thopor thuli 7 téchta ac Conchobar, cona rabi aithles fás falam ótá Rind Semni 7 Latharnai co Cnoc Úachtair Fhorcha 7 co Duib 7 co Drobaís cen mac i n-inad a athar 7 a shenathar ic tairgnam da thigernu dúthaig.’¹⁵

In fact, this impression of the validity of Conchobar’s rule is reinforced throughout the text – for example by the statement at the beginning that equates the time in which the province was best with the reign of Conchobar¹⁶ – and no trace of the attitudes towards his kingship expressed in the first stratum of this tradition are to be found.

Ferchuitred Medba / Cath Bóinde and *Cath Leitreach Ruide*, both late Middle Irish texts, constitute the third of these strata and show Conchobar exerting military force to obtain the kingship of the Ulaid from the High King Echu Feidlech as the *éric*, or compensation, for the slaying of his father. As in *Mesca Ulad*, Conchobar’s father is Fachtna Fathach.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Mesca Ulad*, ed. J. C. Watson, Mod. and Med. Irish Series 13 (Dublin, 1941), lines 130-5, ‘... it came to the end of the year, Conchobar’s province was a well-spring of abundance and calm, so that there was not a vacant, empty, disused fort from Rind Semni and Latharnai to Cnoc Úachtair Fhorcha and to Duib and to Drobaís without a son in the presence of his father and his grandfather providing for his native lord.’

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 19-20, ‘int tan is ferr ro buí in cúiced .i. ra lind Conchobair mac Fachtna Fathaig’, ‘at the time during which the province was best, that is during the time of Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathaig’.

¹⁷ Fifteen of the texts studied name Conchobar’s father. Cathbad is named as his father in *Aided Chonchobuir* version D, *Compert Chonchobuir*, *Táin Bó Cuailnge I*, *Tochmarc Ferbe / Fís Conchobair* and *Scéla Conchobair meic Nessa*. Fachtna Fathach, meanwhile, first features in this paternal role in *Foghlaim Con Chulainn* dated to the ninth or tenth century, thereby allowing only a short period of overlap with *Táin*

(It is perhaps to avoid confusion arising out of the dual tradition of paternity that Conchobar is most commonly known by his matronymic.)¹⁸ *Cath Leitreach Ruide*, meanwhile, returns to the idea that Ness ensures her son's kingship by means of sexual activity. She grants sexual favours here rather than becoming pregnant, and the grateful recipient is Fergus mac Rossa, the then incumbent of the kingship of the Ulaid

Feargus mac Rosa for Ulltaib for re VII mbliagan cor eirig Concubar 7 dorat
Feargus gradh do mathair Concubair, .i. do Neasa ingen Eachach Salbuide, 7
doraid Neasa nach faighfedh leis ach muna fhaghad in aiscid do iarrfadh fair ... 7

Bó Cuailnge I, Tochmarc Ferbe / Fís Conchobair or *Scéla Conchobair meic Nessa* in which the two traditions could have been current. Fachtna Fathach is also named in *Mesca Ulad, Tochmarc Emire, Táin Bó Cuailnge II, Cath Leitreach Ruide, Cath Ruis na Ríg, Cocad Fergusa 7 Conchobair, Ferchuitred Medba / Cath Bóinde, Oided Mac nUisnig* and *Táin Bó Cuailnge III*, and often is given as Conchobar's father in the genealogies. (See, for example, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, ed. M. A. O'Brien, vol. I, § 147 b I, § 157 53, §158 13. Cathbad is given as an alternative in § 157, 5.). To my knowledge, the Bardic poetry names only Fachtna as Conchobar's father. See, for example, nos 8, 10, 16, 33 in *Irish Bardic Poetry*, ed. and trans. Bergin.

¹⁸ Few explanations have been offered for this unusual naming procedure; most scholars have merely pointed to the parallel cases of Fergus mac Róich and Muirchertach mac Erca (See 'Táin Bó Flidais,' ed. and trans. E. Windisch in his *Irische Texte*, series 2, vol. 2, 185-205, at 207) and to occurrences of matronymics in an ogam inscription and in *Féilire Oengusso* (See 'Tidings', ed. and trans. Stokes, p. 18. Note that Stokes also suggested here that Conchobar's use of the matronymic evidences the existence of a matriarchal social system.) However, as he is known by his mother's name in texts that pre-date the Fachtna Fathach tradition, this theory can only safely explain the popularity and not the origin of that usage. The name might instead reflect the unusual figure of Ness, a female champion, and her contribution to the making of Conchobar into a king.

do raigh Feargus co tibreadh di 7 dorat. ‘Agus ised is cuma liom’, ar si ‘righ Ulad do Conubar co ceand mbliadna.¹⁹

By means of this arrangement, she obtains for Conchobar the kingship of the Ulaid for one year, which is again a time of prosperity for the Ulaid.²⁰ On this basis, the Ulaid support Conchobar above Fergus and allow him gain the kingship of Ulster, as well as his four daughters, as recompense from Echu Feidlech.

This discussion of the various accounts of Conchobar’s assumption of kingship leads us to some preliminary conclusions. First, it is clear that throughout the Middle Ages, Conchobar’s depiction was subject to change. Secondly, we note that there is no discernable chronological development towards a fixed depiction; it cannot be shown that early texts follow one pattern and later texts another. Rather, as is evidenced by the relationship between *Compert Conchobair* and *Scéla Conchobair* strands of tradition can be picked up after a gap of four centuries, despite the emergence of quite different representations in the interval. Thirdly, although *Compert Conchobair* and *Mesca Ulad* contain generally positive portrayals of Conchobar’s kingship, the other tales all present

¹⁹ ‘La Bataille de Leitir Ruibhe’, ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *Revue Celtique* 39 (1922), 1-32, at 20, § 15, ‘Feargus mac Rosa was over the Ulaid for seven years until Conchobar grows up and Feargus gave love to Conchobar’s mother, that is to Nessa daughter of Echu Sálbuide, and Nessa said that she would not sleep with him if she did not obtain the gift that she would demand from him ... and Feargus said that he would give it to her and he gave (it). ‘And my conditions are,’ she said, ‘the kingship of the Ulaid for Conchobar to the end of a year.’

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20, § 15, ‘Ba mor a n-ith 7 a blicht 7 a meas 7 torad’, ‘Their corn and their milk-yield and their fruit and produce were great.’

Conchobar gaining his kingship through rather underhand methods. Thus, Conchobar's kingship, the defining aspect of his *persona*, was often presented as resting on questionable foundations.

Some depictions of Conchobar in The Book of Leinster: Aided Chonchobuir, version A;

Táin Bó Cúailnge; Cath Ruis na Ríg; Longes mac nUislenn

In order to test to what extent this apparent ambiguity in the depictions of Conchobar as king is present in the rest of this corpus, I propose to examine four differing depictions of Conchobar. These texts, *Aided Chonchobuir* version A, Recension II of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Cath Ruis na Ríg* and *Longes mac nUislenn*, constitute four of the most powerful characterizations of Conchobar, and as such, and because of their potential impact upon subsequent interpretations of Conchobar, they should be assessed.

Furthermore, and more speculatively, their candidacy for consideration is bolstered by the fact that all these depictions are found in the twelfth-century manuscript of the Book of Leinster. It is worth considering the possibility that it was their variety in close proximity legitimised quite contradictory representations of Conchobar by authors in the Early Modern period.

Perhaps the most strikingly example of the 'positive' depiction of Conchobar occurs in version A of *Aided Chonchobuir*. The Medieval Irish ideology of kingship has been alluded to already, but as an understanding of some of its precepts is central to a reading of this text, it is necessary to pause and ask to what extents should the literary, and indeed the legal, kingly exemplars inform our reading of Conchobar? We can reasonably expect

that many of the audiences and authors of Medieval Irish narrative tales in general were familiar with the Irish *Speculum Principum* genre. Furthermore, on the basis that *Audacht Morainn*, like *Compert Conchobair*, has been postulated as one of the texts of the *Cín Dromma Snechta* manuscript, while *Tecosca Cúscraid* and *Bríathartheosc Con Chulainn* are preserved as sections embedded in *Cath Airtig* and *Serglige Con Culainn* respectively, we can expect this of at least some of the audiences and authors of the Conchobar texts in particular. Although the authors of the Conchobar material did not feel obliged to cohere strictly with this ideology - we have seen that the motif of *fír flatha* is ‘imperfectly’ present in *Scéla Conchobair*, while its flipside, the concept of *gáu flatha*, is even more conspicuous by its absence – *Aided Chonchobuir* A certainly draws on a knowledge of one major principle of this system. This text refers to the notion that the most significant external manifestation of the king’s status was his appearance. The physical descriptions of Conchobar found throughout this corpus habitually emphasis his perfection and establish explicit links between his appearance and his kingly status.²¹ However, in this possibly eighth-century text, Conchobar is seen to break this fundamental condition of rightful kingship by gaining a physical blemish. Far from undermining Conchobar’s right to be king, this blemish leads to his status being augmented: the Ulaid conclude that it is preferable to have Conchobar as a blemished king than to replace him stating “‘Is asso dún ind athis oldás a éc-som.’”²² This highly favourable representation is sustained when the text goes on to portray Conchobar as one

²¹ *Táin Bó Cuailnge: Recension I*, ed. and trans. C. O’Rahilly (Dublin, 1976), lines 3592-3, ‘Loéch cáem seta fota ard óemind, caínm do rígaib a delb, i n-airinach na buidne’, ‘A fair, slender, tall, pleasant warrior, fairest of the kings his appearance, at the head of the host.’

²² *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, p. 8, § 9, ‘It is easier for us (to accept) the blemish than his death.’

of the first Christians in Ireland. Indeed, it even depicts Conchobar in a strongly Christ-like fashion. The dramatic climax of the tale describes Conchobar's fall, having been struck by the brain of Mess Gegra, and states that his grave is where he fell, before, in a moment reminiscent of the Resurrection, he reveals himself to be alive by demanding to be carried from the field of battle. The identification with Christ is continued in the motif found here and in other versions of the tale that he and Christ share the same birthday.²³ The rest of this text, like the other versions of *Aided Conchobair*, relates how Conchobar hears of the Crucifixion and is then simultaneously filled with faith and rage at this deed. In the other versions, Conchobar's own death is brought about by this rage, which dislodges the brain-ball that is still implanted in his own head. The identification with Christ is particularly evident in version C, where the second of the two accounts of Conchobar's death offered depicts it as coinciding exactly with the Crucifixion.²⁴

The *Táin* and *Cath Ruis na Ríg* provide quite dissimilar views of Conchobar as a martial leader. Although, of course, he is incapable of fighting for much of the *Táin*, it is clear

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 8, § 11, “In fer sin dano”, ar in drúí, “i n-óenaidchi rogein 7 rogenis-[s]iu .i. i n-ocht calde Enair cen cop inund bliadain”, ‘That man then,’ said the druid, ‘on the same night he was born and you were born, that is on the eighth of the calends of January, although it was not in the same year.’

²⁴ *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, p. 16, ‘Antan dodechaidh teimheal forsin ngréin 7 rosúí ésga a ndath fola rofiarfaigh Concubur immorro do Cathbad dúss cid rombádar na dúile. “Do comhalta-sa”, ar sé, “in fer rogéanair a n-óenaidchi frit, anosa martar docuirthi (?) fair 7 doradadh a croich hé 7 isé sin chanuid anní sin.”’, ‘When darkness came upon the sun, and the moon turned to the colour of blood, Conchobar then enquired of Cathbad what ailed the elements. “Your own fosterbrother,” he said, “the man who was born on the same night as you, is now undergoing martyrdom and has been put on the cross, and that is what this signifies.”’

that he is to be understood as a noble opponent. This can be illustrated by reference to, for example, the comment made by Fergus to the Connachta “‘Cia ’táim ane ar longais riam reme dabuir bréthir,” ar Fergus, “‘ná fuil i nHérend nó i nAlbain óclach mac samla Conchobuir”²⁵ or Medb’s refusal to accept Fedelm’s prophecy of the slaughter of the Connachta on the basis that Conchobar is temporarily disabled.²⁶ This representation is sustained throughout all versions of the *Táin* despite the emphasis placed on tales of Cú Chulainn’s past and present feats in battle. A final statement in this recension, this time an authorial aside, strengthens the case for Conchobar’s ferocity and tenacity in battle ‘Conid hí sin in tress bríathar is génnu ra ráded bar Táin Bó Cúalnge: Conchobar gana guin do gabáil.’²⁷

Cath Ruis na Ríge constitutes a very different treatment of the theme. The tale, preoccupied with ideas of kingly conduct in battle, opens with Conchobar’s own feelings on the subject. Sliding into a decline, refusing to eat and unable to sleep, Conchobar

²⁵ *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, ed. and trans. C. O’Rahilly (Dublin, 1970), lines 747-8, “‘Although I am thus in exile from him, I give (my) word,” said Fergus, “that there is not in Ériu or in Alba a warrior resembling Conchobar.”

²⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 204-8, “‘Maith and sin, a Feidelm banfáid, cia facci ar slúag?’/ ‘Atchú forderg forro, atchú rúad.’ ‘‘Atá Conchobar ’na chess noínden i nEmain ém,” ar Medb. ‘‘Ráncatar m’echlacha-sa connice. Ní fail ní itágammar-ne la Ultu. Acht abbair a fír, a Feidelm.’”, “‘Well then Fedelm, prophetess, how do you see our host?’ ‘‘I see them wounded, I see red.’ ‘‘Indeed, Conchobar is in his debility in Emain,” said Medb. ‘‘My messengers have gone to him. There is nothing that we fear from the Ulaid. But tell the truth, Fedelm.’”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, lines 4257-8, ‘So that is of the three most ridiculous words spoken in *Táin Bó Cúalnge*: Conchobar to be taken without being wounded.’

identifies as the cause of his illness the outcome of the events described in the *Táin*, and particularly, the roles played by kings in the final battle ‘Noco chath na tuitt rí redg ar cruadbach ar comferg,’²⁸ and at his insistence the Ulaid prepare to seek vengeance on the rest of Ireland. A somewhat foolhardy attitude to war is revealed, not only in his decision to fight with only a third of his warriors, but also in the inflated wording of his refusal to accept terms of settlement ‘connach gab-sa comaid dib-side na co raib inad mo phupla cacha cóicid i n-Herind’.²⁹ Adding to this impression, Conchobar reveals the existence of *géssi* that hinder him as a battle-leader; he never conceals from his enemies the place in which he camps and states that it is incumbent upon him to go into battles of every number. These high-sounding standards are mocked ceaselessly in the text, where in contradiction of his earlier words Conchobar is seen retreating from battle by Conall Cernach, whose arrival saves the honour of the Ulaid in the battle.

This comic portrayal of Conchobar as a warrior is further underlined in a retrospective analysis of the passage at the start of the text, which depicts Conchobar in a kind of battle-frenzy reminiscent of the *ríastrad* of Cú Chulainn in the *Táin*: ‘Cid tra acht nir chutulsa do Chonchobar in[d] Heriu etir ra mét leis a brotha 7 a bríge 7 a báige. Et ro-mebaid loim cráo 7 fola dar a bél sell sechtair. Et in cháep chró 7 fola ro-bói for a chride

²⁸*Cath Ruis na Ríg for Bóinn with Preface, Translation and Indices. Also a Treatise on Irish Neuter Substantives, and A Supplement to the Index Vocabulorum of Zeuss* ‘*Grammatica Celtica*’, ed. and trans. E. Hogan, Royal Irish Academy Todd Lecture Series vol. 4 (Dublin, 1892), 6, § 5, ‘It is no battle in which a furious king does not fall by hard fighting, by mutual anger.’

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28, § 20, ‘... connach geb-sa comaid dib-side na co raib inad mo phupla cacha cóicid i n-Herind’, ‘I will not take terms from you until there has been the place of my pavilion in every province in Eriu.’

issí roscesatar ra halt na huair sin.³⁰ A number of contrasts - the ‘troublesome’ drops of blood in Conchobar’s heart as compared with those on the ends of Cú Chulainn’s hair - mean that this can be read as an inverted version of Cú Chulainn’s *ríastrad*, inferring perhaps that Conchobar’s abilities as a warrior are seen to be the antithesis of those associated with his nephew in the *Táin. Cath Ruis na Ríg* seems to be a direct and irreverent response to that text’s depiction of Conchobar as a warrior-king par excellence. This depiction of Conchobar as a weak and ineffectual martial leader, may draw on earlier portrayals such as that in the ninth-century text *Scéla Mucce Maic Dathó*, where he is humiliated by the charioteer Fer Loga, and in the eleventh- or twelfth-century text, *Aided Guill meic Carbarda 7 Aided Gairb Glinne Rige*, in which he relies totally on Cú Chulainn for the defence of his territory, and is threatened physically and again humiliated by him in Emain.³¹

Philip O’Leary has commented that it was a king’s responsibility to administer justice that distinguished him from his warrior companions,³² and this, taken alongside the motif of *fír flatha*, prompts us to consider Conchobar’s decision making in these texts. The

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18, § 12, ‘However the whole of Ireland did not satisfy Conchobar at all through the amount in him of his ardour and of his energy and of his fierceness. And a drop of blood and gore burst out through his mouth a little and the clot of blood and gore that was on his heart it is it that pained him at that time.’

³¹ *Scéla Mucce Maic Dathó*, ed. R. Thurneysen, Mod. and Med. Irish Series 6 (Dublin, 1935), 19, § 20; ‘The Violent Deaths of Goll and Garb’, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 14 (1893), 396-449, at 426, § 47.

³² P. O’Leary, ‘A Foreseeing Driver of an Old Chariot: Regal moderation in Early Irish literature’, *CMCS* 11 (1986), 1-16, at 9.

favourable characterization evident from a consideration of martial values ascribed to Conchobar in the *Táin* continues in its description of how Conchobar spent his reign,³³ as it parallels closely a passage outlining the weekly duties of a king in *Críth Gablach*.³⁴ Nonetheless, far more common is the characterization of Conchobar as a king who habitually made false judgements, a strand of characterization which survives into the Early Modern literature in, for example, *Oided Mac nUisig*. Indeed the text that gave rise to that depiction directly, and most probably other similar later depictions, *Longes mac nUislenn*, is the obvious text to consider in connection with the characterization of Conchobar as kingly-judge.

Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, in his recent edition of *Oided Mac nUisig*, has characterized Conchobar in the earlier text as ‘the wronged king exacting a terrible but

³³ *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, ed. and trans. O’Rahilly, lines 741-2, ‘Dáig is amlaid domeil Conchobar in rígi óro gab rígi in rí .i. mar atraig fó chétóir cеста 7 cangni in chóicid d’ordugud’, ‘Since it is thus Conchobar enjoyed the kingship since the king took the kingship, namely to settle that which arose immediately of difficulties and branches of the province.’

³⁴ *Críth Gablach*, ed. D. A. Binchy, Mod. and Med. Irish Series 11 (Dublin, 1941), lines 542-7: ‘Atá dano sechtmonáil i córus rígi .i. domnach do ó[u] chorma[e], ar ní flaith téchta[e] nád ingella laith ar cach ndomnach; lúan do br(e)ithemnacht, do choccertad túath; máirt o(i)c fidchill; cétaín do déisciu mílcho(i)n o(i)c tofunn; tar(a)dain do lánamnas; aín díden do retha[i]b ech; satharn do brethaib’, ‘There is then a weekly order in a king’s system, namely Sunday for the drinking of ale, since he is not a proper prince who does not promise liquid on every Sunday; Monday for judgement, to set to rights the conflicts of *túatha*; Tuesday for the playing of *fidchell*; Wednesday for looking at greyhounds hunting; Thursday for marriage; Friday for horse racing; Saturday for judgements.’

not explicitly unjust vengeance.’³⁵ This view derives no doubt from a favourable comparison with the later version, but it is clear that the author of *Longes* intended us to see Conchobar as more than a wronged king seeking revenge. It is his selfishness, and irresponsible attitude to his kingly duty, made manifest in his decision to put personal desires over the good of the province, that initiates the drama. He subsequently manipulates the code of honour governing his warriors, while remaining aloof from it himself. The conversation between Derdriu and Naísi in which Conchobar is described in terms of a bull is highly significant: ‘Atá tarb in chóicid lat,’ or-se-seom, ‘.i. rí Ulad.’³⁶ Because Conchobar is not present at this time, and because Deirdriu and Naísi are as yet without the prejudices against him that arise from subsequent events, this conversation reveals a wider and more objective view of Conchobar than is available elsewhere in the text. It would appear that his warriors regard him as a formidable presence, a leader with remarkable physical strength, and perhaps a solitary figure. There is also an element of criticism present in the comment, as it also suggests that he is a headstrong, unthinking, easily angered and threatening figure. This passage may also have been intended to awaken in its audience memories of the bull-king in *Audacht Morainn*, a truly flawed kingly type: Tarbflaith, to-slaid side to-sladar, ar-clich ar-clechar, con-claid con-cladar, ad-reith ad-rethar, to-seinn to-sennar, is fris con bith-búirethar bennaib.³⁷

³⁵ *Oidheadh*, ed. and trans. Mac Giolla Léith, p. 15.

³⁶ *Longes mac nUislenn: the Exile of the Sons of Uisliu*, ed. and trans. V. Hull (New York, 1949), line 113, ‘You have the bull of the province,’ he said, ‘namely the king of the Ulaid.’

³⁷ *Audacht Morainn*, ed. and trans. F. Kelly (Dublin, 1976), p. 18, § 62, ‘The bull-prince strikes and is struck, wards off and is warded off, roots out and is rooted out, attacks and is attacked, pursues and is pursued; it is against him that there is constant bellowing with horns.’ I am indebted to Professor T. M.

Conclusion

The images of the bull-king and of the Christ-like figure seem as far-removed from one another as Kipling's east and west. What conclusions can be drawn? The four texts discussed in the latter part of this paper offer striking and skillful interpretations of the character of Conchobar mac Nessa. Some of them can easily be thought of as the direct ancestors of later depictions, and, furthermore, the divergent characterizations of the bardic poets and Geoffrey Keating are better understood in light of the Book of Leinster's diversity. But what does this analysis contribute to our understanding of medieval Irish concepts of characterization? On the evidence of the texts featuring Conchobar mac Nessa, I suggest that characterization, those basic sets of associations made with a particular figure that transcend textual boundaries, resided in external factors only rather than in the moral or behavioural patterns that emerge within the parameters of individual texts. That only the infrastructure of his character was fixed allowed authors to develop Conchobar's character in whatever direction – east or west – that served their particular purposes.

Charles-Edwards for a reference to a similar depiction of Conchobar in the eighth-century *Míadshlechta*. See *Corpus Iuris Hibernici ad Fidem Codicum Manuscriptorum*, ed. D. A. Binchy, 6 vols (Dublin, 1978), II, 582-9 (beginning and ending at lines 32) and T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 519-20.

APPENDIX

*Appearances of Conchobar mac Nessa in Ulster Cycle Tales*³⁸

1. *Aided Áenfhir Aífe* (AAA): *Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories*, ed. A. G. van Hamel, Mod. and Med. Irish Series 3 (Dublin, 1933), 9-15. Late ninth-century: R. Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum siebzehnten Jahrhundert*, (Halle, 1921), p. 404.
2. *Aided Cheltchair meic Uithechair* (ACMU): *The Death Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, ed. and trans. K. Meyer, Royal Irish Academy Todd Lecture Series 14 (Dublin, 1906), 24-31. Ninth- or tenth-century: Thurneysen, *Irische Heldensage*, p. 571.
3. *Aided Chonchobuir* (ACon): *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, 2-23. Versions current from the eighth century: Thurneysen, *Irische Heldensage*, p. 534.
4. *Aided Chonlaeich meic Con Culainn / Cú Chulainn 7 Conlaech* (ACMC): ‘Cuchulinn and Conlaech’, ed. and trans. J. G. O’Keefe, *Ériu* 1 (1901), 123-7. Middle Irish.

³⁸ Mallory and Ó hUiginn, ‘The Ulster Cycle’ provided a starting point for this list. However, as this list aims to provide references to editions, rather than translations, of these texts, it was necessary to make some modifications to that catalogue. I have standardised the spellings of tale names, where they have sometimes used the names employed in early translations, but I have retained the abbreviations given by Mallory and Ó hUiginn to counter any resultant ambiguity. I have also combined some instances of duplication, the result of a tale being partially translated by different editors. I have counted *Cath Étair* and *Talland Étair* as one text, and *Aided Con Roí* II and *Amra Con Roí* as another. I have had to conclude that their *Aided Chonlaeich mic ConCulainn*, for which no translation is given, is identical to their *Cuchulinn 7 Conlaech*. References to editions follow the tale names and a dating has been supplied. Where no basis for dating has been cited, the suggested date is very approximate, and where possible some indication of the foundation of my dating has been given.

5. *Aided Chon Roí I* (ACR-I): ‘Die Sage von Curoi’, ed. and trans. R. Thurneysen, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 9 (1913), 190-6. Eighth- or ninth-century: *Ibid.*, p. 190.
6. *Aided Chon Roí II* and *Amra Con Roí* (ACR-II): ‘The Tragic Death of Cúroí Mac Dáiri’, ed. and trans. R. I. Best, *Ériu* 2 (1905), 18-35 and ‘The Eulogy of Cúroí (Amra Chonrói)’, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Ériu* 2 (1905), 1-14. Tenth-century: ‘The Tragic Death’, ed. and trans. Best, p. 18.
7. *Aided Fhergusa meic Róich* (AFMR): *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, 32-5. Pre-tenth-century: included in Saga List A.³⁹
8. *Aided Guill meic Carbarda* 7 *Aided Gairb Glinne Rige* (AG): ‘The Violent Deaths of Goll and Garb’, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 14 (1893), 396-449. eleventh- or twelfth-century.
9. *Aided Laegairi Buadaig* (ALB): *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, 22-3. Probably tenth-century: included in Saga List A.
10. *Aided Meidbe* (AM): ‘Aided Medibe: The Violent Death of Medb’, ed. and trans. V. Hull, *Speculum* 13 (1938), 52-61. Eleventh- or twelfth-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 583.
11. *Brinna Ferchertne* (BF): ‘Brinna Ferchertne’, ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 3 (1901), 40-6. Tenth-century: *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁹ For this, and for any subsequent, references to the saga lists, see P. Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1980)

12. *Brislech Mór Maige Muirtheimne /Aided Chon Chulainn* (BM): ‘Cuchulainn’s Death, abridged from the Book of Leinster’, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 3 (1877) 175-85. Pre-twelfth century: included in the Book of Leinster.
13. *Bruiden Da Chocae* (BDC): ‘Da Choca’s Hostel’, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 21 (1900), 149-65, 312-27, 388-402. Ninth-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 586.
14. *Cath Airtig* (CA): ‘The Battle of Airtech’, ed. and trans. R. I. Best, *Ériu* 8 (1916), 170-90. Middle Irish: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 595.
15. *Cath Aenig Macha* (CAM): ‘Battle of the Assembly of Macha’, ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 16 (1926), 145-61. Late Middle or Early Modern Irish.
16. *Cath Cumair* (CCum): ‘Cath Cumair’, ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *Revue Celtique* 43 (1926), 277-342. Twelfth- or thirteenth-century.
17. *Cath Étair* and *Talland Étair* (CE): ‘The Siege of Howth’, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 8 (1887), 47-64. ‘Agallamh Leborchaim’, ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *Études Celtiques* 5 (1945-51), 154-61. Eleventh-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 506.
18. *Cath Findchorad* (CF): ‘The Battle of Findchorad’, ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 14 (1923), 395-420. Twelfth-century.
19. *Cath Leitrech Ruide* (CLR): ‘La Bataille de Leitir Ruibhe’, ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *Revue Celtique* 39 (1922), 1-32. Thirteenth-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 528.

20. *Cath Ruis na Ríg* (CRR): *Cath Ruis na Ríg for Bóinn with Preface, Translation and Indices. Also a Treatise on Irish Neuter Substantives, and A Supplement to the Index Vocabulorum of Zeuss* 'Grammatica Celtica' ed. and trans. E. Hogan, Royal Irish Academy Todd Lecture Series vol. 4 (Dublin, 1892). Twelfth-century.
21. *Cocad Fergusa 7 Conchobair* (CFC): 'La Guerre entre Fergus et Conchobar', ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *Revue Celtique* 40 (1923), 404-23. Early Modern Irish.
22. *Compert Chonchobuir* (CCon): T. Ó Cathasaigh, 'Some reflections on Compert Con Culainn and Serglige Con Culainn', in *Ulidia: Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales, Belfast and Emain Macha 8 – 12 April 1994*, ed. J. P. Mallory and G. Stockman (Belfast, n. d.), pp. 85-90, edition at 85-6, translation at 86. Eighth-century: *Ibid.*, p. 85, citing 'The Conception of Conchobar', ed. and trans. V. Hull, *Irish Texts Fasciculus* 4, ed. J. Fraser, P. Grosjean and J. G. O'Keefe (London, 1934), 4-12, at 7.
23. *Compert Chon Chulainn* (CCC): *Compert Con Culainn*, ed. van Hamel, 1-8. Version I before the first half of the eighth century, version II from the eighth or ninth centuries: *Ibid.*, p. 1.
24. *Ferchuitred Medba / Cath Bóinde* (FM): 'Cath Boinde', ed. and trans. J. O'Neill, *Ériu* 2 (1905), 174-85. Late Middle Irish: *Ibid.*, p. 175.
25. *Fled Bricrenn* (FB): *Fled Bricrend: The Feast of Bricriu, an Early Gaelic Saga Transcribed from Older Mss. into The Book of the Dun Cow, by Moelmuiri Mac Mic Cuinn na m-Bocht of the Community of the Culdees at Clonmacnois, with Conclusion from Gaelic MS. XL. Edinburgh, Advocates' Library*, ed. and trans. G. Henderson, *Irish Texts Soc.* 2 (London, 1899). Last quarter of the ninth century: *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

26. *Fled Bricrenn 7 Longes Mac nDuíl Dermait* (FBL): ‘Das Fest des Bricriu und die Verbannung der mac Duil Dermait’, ed. and trans. E. Windisch, in *Irische Texte*, ed. E. Windisch and W. Stokes, series 2, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1884), 173-209. Ninth-century: ‘The Feast of Bricriu and the Exile of the sons of Dóel Dermait’, trans. K. Hollo, *Emania* 10 (1992), 18-24 at 18.
27. *Foglaím Con Chulainn* (FC): ‘The Training of Cúchulainn’, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 29 (1908), 109-52. Ninth- or tenth-century, text draws on FB and AG.
28. *Goire Chonaill Chernaig* (GCC): ‘The Cherishing of Conall Cernach and the Death of Ailill and Conall Cernach’, ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 1 (1897), 102-11. Thirteenth-century.
29. *Immacaldam in Dá Thuarad* (IDT): ‘The Colloquy of the Two Sages’, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 26 (1905), 4-64. Tenth-century: *Ibid.*, p. 5.
30. *Lánellach Tigi Rích 7 Ruirech* (LTR): ‘Lánellach Tigi Rích 7 Ruirech’, ed. and trans. M. O’Daly, *Ériu* 19 (1962), 81-6. Old Irish: *Ibid.*, p. 81.
31. *Longes mac nUislenn* (LMU): *Longes mac nUislenn: the Exile of the Sons of Uisliu*, ed. and trans. V. Hull (New York, 1949). Late eighth-century or early ninth-century: *Ibid.*, pp. 29-32.
32. *Mesca Ulad* (MU): *Mesca Ulad*, ed. J. C. Watson, Mod. and Med. Irish Series 13 (Dublin, 1941). Eleventh- or twelfth-century.
33. *Oided Mac nUisnig* (OMU): *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisnigh: the Violent Death of the Children of Uisneach*, ed. and trans. C. Mac Giolla Léith, Irish Texts Society 56 (London, 1993). Early Modern Irish: *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 21.

34. *Scéla Conchobair meic Nessa* (SCMN): ‘Tidings of Conchobar mac Nessa’, *Ériu* 4 (1910), 18-38. First half of the twelfth century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 524.
35. *Scéla Mucce Maic Dathó* (SMMD): *Scéla Mucce Maic Dathó*, ed. R. Thurneysen, Mod. and Med. Irish Series 6 (Dublin, 1935). C. 800: *Ibid.*, p. iv.
36. *Serglige Con Chulainn* (SCC): *Serglige Con Culainn*, ed. M. Dillon, Mod. and Med. Irish Series 14 (Dublin, 1953). Eleventh-century for version A: *Serglige*, ed. Dillon, p. xiv.⁴⁰ Ninth-century for version B: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 416.
37. *Siaburcharput Con Chulainn* (SC): ‘Siabur-charput Con Culaind’, ed. and trans. J. O’Beirne Crowe, *Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland*, series 4, vol. 1 (1870), 371-401. Tenth-century.
38. *Táin Bó Cuailnge I* (TBC-I): *Táin Bó Cuailnge: Recension I*, ed. and trans. C. O’Rahilly (Dublin, 1976). Ninth-century.
39. *Táin Bó Cuailnge II* (TBC-II): *Táin Bó Cuailnge from the Book of Leinster*, ed. and trans. C. O’Rahilly (Dublin, 1970). Twelfth-century.
40. *Táin Bó Cuailnge III* (TBC-III): *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, ed. and trans. P. Ó Fiannachta (Dublin, 1966). Fifteenth-century.
41. *Tochmarc Emire* (TEM): ‘The Oldest Version of Tochmarc Emire’, ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *Revue Celtique* 11 (1890) 433-57. Eleventh-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 382.

⁴⁰ *Serglige*, ed. Dillon, p. xiv suggests that a ninth-century date is rather early for version B.

42. *Tochmarc Emire III* (Tem-III): ‘The Wooing of Emer’, ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *The Archaeological Review* 1 (1888), 68-75, 150-5, 231-5, 298-307. Middle Irish: *Compert Con Culainn*, ed. van Hamel, p. 16.
43. *Tochmarc Ferbe / Fís Conchobair* (TF): ‘Das Freien um Ferb’, ed. and trans. E. Windisch, in *Irische Texte*, ed. E. Windisch and W. Stokes, series 3, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1891), 461-556. Ninth- or tenth-century; in Book of Leinster and list of *remscéla* of Táin Bó Cuailnge.⁴¹
44. *Tochmarc Luaine 7 Aided Athirni* (TL): ‘Tochmarc Luaine ocus Aided Athairne’, ed. and trans. L. Breatnach, *Celtica* 13 (1980), 1-31. Second half of the twelfth century: *Ibid.*, p. 6.⁴²

⁴¹ See T. Chadwin, ‘The Rémscéla Tána Bó Cualngi’, *CMCS* 34 (1997), 67-75.

⁴² I owe thanks to many for their helpful discussion following this paper. Particular thanks go to Dr Máire Ní Mhaonaigh for her advice on an earlier version of this paper.