

# On the inauguration of Conchubhar Óg Mac Diarmada, 1595



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## ON THE INAUGURATION OF CONCHUBHAR ÓG MAC DIARMADA, 1595

### ABSTRACT

This article presents an edition and translation of a poem by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird celebrating the inauguration of Conchubhar Óg Mac Diarmada as head of his family in 1595. It may be considered a political poem, which is to be interpreted in the context of other poems composed by this poet and which are paralleled by the work of contemporaries such as Eochaidh Ó hEódhusa, that feature themes of leadership and resilience among satellite characters in the drama of the Nine Years War.

The poem edited here was composed by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird in celebration of the restoration of his lands to Mac Diarmada, Conchubhar Óg, in late 1595 – having been previously ejected by the English<sup>1</sup> – and his inauguration by Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill.<sup>2</sup>

This was one of a sequence of actions taken by Ó Domhnaill at the end of that year, which also included inaugurations of Ó Ceallaigh, Ó hEadhra, Ó Dubhda, Mac Donnchaidh, and Ó Ruairc.<sup>3</sup> The poem is therefore an inauguration ode of sorts, which the declamatory apostrophes in the opening line and in qq. 4 and 5 serve to emphasise, and celebratory in its general thrust. As is clear from the repeated references to *Danair*, *Eachtrainn* and *Goill*, however, and those to the justice of Mac Diarmada's cause, the composition carries weight as a political poem, an historical document firmly located in the conflict of the Nine Years' War, and contextualized both by other work of Fearghal Óg's at this period and also of his contemporary, Eochaidh Ó hEódhusa.

The poem begins with the assurance that the expulsion of the Goill from all of Ireland is now a *fait accompli* (qq. 1–3) due to the unity of the Gaoidhil, and for this Mac Diarmada is to be thanked, as it was he who maintained the struggle (qq. 4–6). Fearghal Óg then elaborates on Mac Diarmada's war against the Goill (qq. 7–9). This opening section makes a remarkably atmospheric use of river-names (qq. 3–9) to conjure up the extent of Mac Diarmada's influence and of his theatre of operations prior to his restoration. The hardships he endured while on this campaign are treated of in qq. 10–12 and it is then stated that the endurance of such hardships ensured his victory

<sup>1</sup>*do ratsomh dana Ó Ruairc ⁊ Mac Diarmata ina natharda iarna niondarbadh la Gallaibh (Beatha Aodha Ruaidh, i, 118).*

<sup>2</sup>*ro ghairsidhe . . . mac diarmada maighe luirc do chonchobhar mac taidec mic diarmada (AFM s.a. 1595 (vol. vi, 1990)).*

<sup>3</sup>Pádraig Ó Macháin, 'A poem on the death of Tadhg Ó Ruairc', *Celtica* 28 (2016), 35–54.

(qq. 13–16) and that, now that the campaign is over and the Goill expelled, he will experience such comforts as will compensate him for the discomforts endured previously (qq. 17–21).

It is clear, however, that he has suffered much and that his victory has been dearly bought (qq. 22–3). This recalls the struggles of Conn Ceadchathach against Eóghan Taidhleach, culminating in the battle of Magh Léana (qq. 24–34). The conclusion to be drawn is that those who perpetrate injustice are always defeated (q. 35). Like Conn, Conchobhar Óg has repaid all those who wronged him (qq. 39–40). The poem ends with praise of Conchobhar Óg (qq. 41–4) and of his wife Mairghréag (qq. 45–7), and with memorial quatrains to Aodh Mág Aonghusa (q. 48) and Conn Ó Ruairc (q. 49), ending with the customary quatrain dedicated to St Peter (q. 50).

Conchubhar Óg's predecessor as Mac Diarmada, Brian mac Ruaidhrí mheic Thaidhg, died in November 1592. He is remembered as the patron of TCD MS H.1.19 (1293) – in which he inserted a number of valuable notes – and scribe of British Library MS Additional 4792 (fol. 19–32), which manuscripts contain the Annals of Loch Cé.<sup>4</sup> Brian mac Ruaidhrí's learned activities represent but one of many highlights in the sponsorship of Irish learning associated with Clann Diarmada. Poems referring to members of the family are recorded in the Book of the Dean of Lismore,<sup>5</sup> and patronage of poets by them continued into the seventeenth century, as witnesses a poem to Conchubhar Óg's successor, Brian Óg mac Briain mheic Ruaidhrí (d. 1636), preserved by Heinrí Ó Carraic in a manuscript written by him in Sligo 1701–8.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere in the same manuscript Ó Carraic records that he had found Aodh Ollbharr Ó Carrthaigh's poem on the rights of Mac Diarmada a *ndúanaire mhic Diarmada na Cairrge*.<sup>7</sup> So renowned for their generosity were Clann Diarmada that they were reputed to be prohibited by *geis* from refusing a stranger, and they had their own reflex of a sovereignty legend associated with generosity to a *cailleach* who inhabited the Carrag.<sup>8</sup>

Recording the death of Brian mac Ruaidhrí, the Four Masters comment: *γ ro ba móide dadhbhar éccaoine écc an fhir sin gan a chosmaileas do beith do chloinn Maol Ruanaidh do ghébhadh ceandus dia éisi*.<sup>9</sup> This remark reflects the fact that the chieftainship of Clann Diarmada lay vacant for the

<sup>4</sup>Paul Walsh, *Irish Men of Learning*, ed. Colm Ó Lochlainn (Dublin, 1947), 15–22.

<sup>5</sup>William J. Watson, *Scottish Verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Edinburgh 1937), Poems VI, VII, XIX.

<sup>6</sup>Maynooth MS B8, pp. 87–9 (poem beginning *Álaine claochlódh na Cairrge*), available on Irish Script on Screen ([www.isos.dias.ie](http://www.isos.dias.ie)), and transcribed in Damian McManus and Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh, *A Bardic Miscellany* (Dublin, 2010), 35.

<sup>7</sup>MS B8, p. 33 (poem beginning *Atá sunn sochar na riogh*); for the poem see Nessa Ní Shéaghda, 'The rights of Mac Diarmada', *Celtica* 6 (1963), 156–72.

<sup>8</sup>*TDall* 34.223–7; *DDána* 68.37–8, 120.15–33; Watson, *Scottish Verse*, XIX.7–13; *ALC* i, pp. xxxv–xxxvi. The *cailleach* features in one of the anecdotes in a mid-seventeenth-century *croisantacht* (unedited) beginning *Foghmhar na bhfileadh fuil Bhrianach* (transcribed in McManus and Ó Raghallaigh, *Bardic Miscellany*, Poem 242).

<sup>9</sup>*AFM* s.a. 1592 (vol. vi, 1908).

following three years. The incumbent previous to Brian mac Ruaidhrí was Tadhg mac Eóghain (cf. qq. 36a, 39b), father of the subject of this poem, Conchobhar Óg. Although the annals make no mention of the matter, Tadhg seems to have died about 1585: when Brian mac Ruaidhrí attended Perrot's parliament of April–May 1585, he did so as *fear ionait mec diarmatta mhaighe luircc . . . oir baí mac diarmatta fein .i. Tadhcc mac eocchain ina sheanóir chianaosda*.<sup>10</sup> In October of the same year, in a document concerning the Composition of Connacht, Brian is termed 'chief of his name' and Conchubhar Óg is mentioned as *tánaiste*.<sup>11</sup>

At this time, and for many years afterwards, Conchubhar Óg, and his wife 'Margaret ny Knowgher' (cf. q. 45 n.) lived at Aghacarra (variously spelt Agheghare, Aghahare, Incheaghechare) in the parish and barony of Boyle, close to the southern shore of Loch Cé.<sup>12</sup> Apart from the garrisons billeted in Tulsk, Roscommon town, and Boyle, it appears that further pressure was being exerted on the Mac Diarmada lordship through the leasing of lands in and around Loch Cé to new-English merchants from the Pale.<sup>13</sup> The day had gone when Mac Diarmada could claim control over all of Moylurg.

As *tánaiste*, Conchubhar Óg might have been expected to succeed Brian mac Ruaidhrí on the latter's death in 1592. Under the terms of the Composition of Connacht, however, it was ordained that the Clann Diarmada were to set aside customs such as tanistry and 'that their lands shall lineally descend from the father to the sonn according to the c[o]urse and order of the lawes of England'.<sup>14</sup> But on the death of Brian mac Ruaidhrí, his son Brian Óg, heir by English law, was a boy of about 10 years old.<sup>15</sup> The situation therefore appears to have been that Brian Óg may have been unable to rule because of his age, and that Conchubhar Óg was too weak to assume the leadership until aided by Ó Domhnaill at Christmas 1595. References in the poem edited here to action over-riding a *rogha* 'selection' (qq. 14 and 16) hint that there may have been some opposition to Conchubhar's accession; and this is also re-enforced by Eochaidh Ó hEódhusa's protesting too much, perhaps, that Mac Diarmada ruled without *formad* or *tnúth*, two keywords for internal opposition.<sup>16</sup>

From English sources for the intervening period, 1593–5, we know only that in 1593 Aodh Mág Uidhir wrote to Fitzwilliam, the Lord Deputy, seeking protection for himself, Ó Ruairc and 'Connor Oge M'Dyermada and the rest of his kinsmen and followers' against the Governor of Connacht, Sir Richard Bingham.<sup>17</sup> Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird's account of this period in his career,

<sup>10</sup> *AFM* s.a. 1585 (vol. v, 1830–2).

<sup>11</sup> A. Martin Freeman, *The Compassion Booke of Conought* (Dublin, 1936), 155.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 163. *Irish Fiants*, iv, §§4702, 5497.

<sup>13</sup> *Irish Fiants*, iv, §§4407, 4922, 5070, 5877.

<sup>14</sup> Freeman, *Compassion Booke*, 160–1.

<sup>15</sup> Inquisitions (RIA Transcripts): Roscommon, vol. i, 154 (Inq. 47); Walsh, *Irish Men of Learning*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> Ó hEódhusa's allusions occur in the poem beginning *Ní gnáth liaigh gan luach saothair* (qq. 22 and 24), discussed below. For the keywords in question see Pádraig Ó Macháin, 'Tadhg Ó Ruairc', 35–6.

<sup>17</sup> *Cal. SP Ire. 1592–1596*, 128.

where Conchobhar Óg is depicted as locked in a mortal struggle with the English, is probably an exaggerated and partisan picture – not unexpected in poetry such as this – at variance with non-Gaelic sources, which depict Mac Diarmada as weak and unable to enforce his authority in his own territory, until eventually aided by Ó Domhnaill. Other Gaelic sources, however, are consonant with Fearghal Óg's account.

POEMS BY EOCHAIDH Ó hEÓDHUSA

Support for Fearghal Óg's account comes from a series of four poems addressed by his contemporary, Eochaidh Ó hEódhusa, to Conchubhar Óg. As in the case of the evidence of his poems relating to Ó Dochartaigh and Ó Ruairc and others,<sup>18</sup> it is of interest to observe how Fearghal Óg's circuit at this time is paralleled by that of Ó hEódhusa, as though the poetic itinerary was becoming constricted to a definite area and restricted to certain famous centres of patronage. It is notable also how their poems complement each other in a number of points.

The earliest of Ó hEódhusa's poems to Mac Diarmada may be that beginning *Fód codarsna críoch Bhanbha*.<sup>19</sup> In this poem the struggles of Conchobhar Óg – not yet chief of his nation – are located solely in the context of the war with the English:

Tnúthach bhfoghla re fada  
Goill is mac Meic Diarmada  
– mór d'éintír ionnramh a n-olc –  
fa fhionnmhagh gcéichtmhín gConnocht. (q. 10)

'The Goill and Mac Diarmada for long past are eager to fight  
for fair well-ploughed Connachta; no land could support their  
destructiveness.'<sup>20</sup>

Such is the fury with which Conchobhar Óg prosecutes this war that Ó hEódhusa feels bound to caution him that the destruction he is causing will be to his own detriment when eventually he claims his patrimony. The poet goes so far as to say that the havoc wreaked by the English is no worse than that caused by Conchubhar Óg, and that all this destruction will bring him shame.

Ní lugha as mhillteach mac Taidhg  
ar iath Cruachna an chláir mhionaird  
tír bhreaclongach na mbuach slim  
d'fhuath eachtronnach 'n-a inntinn.

<sup>18</sup>Ó Macháin, 'Taidhg Ó Ruairc'; Pádraig Ó Macháin, 'An elegy for Seaán Óg Ó Dochartaigh', *Celtica* 26 (2010), 89–110

<sup>19</sup>*DDána*, poem 92.

<sup>20</sup>Translations of quatrains from this poem are those provided in L. McKenna, 'Poem to Mac Diarmada of Magh Luirg by Eochaidh Ó hEódhusa', *Irish Monthly* 49 (1921), 327–32.

Mór longphort do leagadh lais  
feadh cogaidh an duinn dearcglais  
's níor tógbhadh dún ná diongna  
san mhúr fhódghlan oireaghdha.

Gidh eadh is easbhaidh air féin  
gach cion gnáth, gach dreas aigmhéil,  
gach díbhearg dá ndéanann sain,  
fa réadhfhonn mhíndearg MaonMhaigh.

Budh aithreach leis uair éigin  
iath Cruachna an chláir mhínghéigil  
muighe slaitgheala síon dte  
gan aitreabha ríogh roimhe.

Caithfidh cuingidh Cláir Meadhbha  
bheith ag ól fleadh bhfíneamhna  
– náir don tairngeartach ros thogh –  
fa ghairbhleachtach cláir Chruachan. (qq. 12–16)

'In his heart's hate of foreigners he is as ruinous as they to Cruachain  
with its noble plain its painted boats and graceful banks.

Many the castle laid low in the war of this grey-eyed hero, nor  
has fort or fortress been built in all the famous fair-sodded land.

Yet, injuries to himself are his wonted heroism, his dread foray,  
all the rage he wreaks in smooth ruddy Maonmhagh.

One day he shall weep to see Cruachain with its bright-treed plain,  
those fair-treed summery fields without a prince's dwelling left.

Then shall the lord of Meadhbh's plain have to drink his wine-  
feasts mid Cruachain's rough rocks; shame to the Prophecied One  
who hath chosen so.'

Although Ó hEódhúsa takes the harm out of this argument later in the composition by favourably comparing Conchubhar Óg to Cú Chulainn, it is difficult to interpret this as anything other than a hard-hitting poem. Consequently, it may be that another pre-1595 poem, beginning *Neimhchiontach mheise a mheic Thaidhg*,<sup>21</sup> from Eochaidh to Conchubhar Óg, in which he apologises for 'a wild-worded attack' (*foiléim fhocuil mhearuirghthe*), and memorably contrives to construe Conchubhar Óg's anger as a ploy for eliciting praise (*ag seilg mholta*), is to be taken as referring to what was said in *Fód codarsna*.

We next hear from Ó hEódhúsa on the subject when he apostrophizes the chief residence of Mac Diarmada in a poem beginning *An tú ar gcéadaithne, a Charrag*.<sup>22</sup> Carrag Mheic Dhiarmada, located on an island in Lough Key,

<sup>21</sup>*Aith.Dána* poem 34.

<sup>22</sup>*DDána* poem 68.

has changed beyond recognition from the glorious days of the past, and has joined the *sé ríoghphuirt* (Teamhair, Aileach, Caiseal, Eamhain, Nás and Cruachain) of Ireland in their dereliction.

An tú bhíodh i mbéalaibh sgol,  
do measdaoí re múr Cruachan?  
a phuirt ghil fan rionnghlan rosg,  
más ibh is iongnadh t'éagcosg.

Do claochlóidh do chruth dealbhghlan,  
do imthigh bhar n-óirthreabhgradh  
dod mhúr ghlan thaoibhleabhar the;  
ní mhar aoilghreanadh th'aighthe.

Níor deargadh le hingnibh each,  
níor loiteadh le lorg nuaichreach,  
do leirg dtonnbháin ngairthe ngil,  
congháir t'fhaighthe do uaignigh.

Tugais cruth naoidhe ar neamhchruth  
amhail do bhiadh baintreabhthach;  
a chúirt orrdhrais thirmgheal thiogh,  
do chomhloít imneadh th'aigneadh. (qq. 2–5)

'Art thou the rock on all poets' lips and praised beyond the palace  
of Cruachain, thou fair place making one's eye sparkle brightly?  
if so, strange now is thy appearance!

Thy bright fair form has changed, gone are thy gold-rich dwellings  
from thy fair comfortable long-walled enclosure, nor does the lime-  
white adorning of thy frontal remain.

It is not now cut up 'neath hoofs of steeds or disfigured by tracks  
of plundered cattle; but the baying of hounds (lamenting) on thy  
lawn has made desolate thy bright fair slope.

Thou hast exchanged fair form for shapelessness as though thou  
wert a widow, o noble firm dry-walled castle; anguish has destroyed  
thy spirit.<sup>23</sup>

The reason for its abandonment and dilapidation is the oppression of the English:

I n-aimhriocht dot fhoirinn féin  
a-taoi re treimhse n-imchéin,  
a chúirt ródghlan choillbhleacht chorr,  
ó fhoirneart ógbhadh n-eachtrann.

<sup>23</sup>Translation from L. McKenna, 'Poem by Eochaidh Ó hEoghusa', *Irish Monthly* 48 (1920), 539–44. We look forward to improvements on McKenna's groundbreaking work in Mícheál Hoynes's forthcoming anthology of Mac Diarmada poetry.

Foirneart eachtrann is é tug  
do chur sa chruth-so, a Charrag,  
a ráth thoghtha bheannbhláth bhog  
far neamhghnáth orchra orad.

Níor ghnáth leat-sa acht re linn Ghall  
gur bearnadh séan bhar saorchlann,  
a linngheal taobhuaine tiogh,  
imneadh aonuaire ar th'aigneadh. (qq. 17–19)

‘For long past thou hast been unclaimed by thy own folk owing to  
the excessive power of the warriors of the foreigners, thou round  
fair-pathed fort of sap-rich hazels.

‘Twas the foreigners’ power that has brought this state upon thee,  
o Rock, o gentle choice fair-towered castle where sorrow never  
was wont to dwell.

Even one hour’s sorrow on thy spirit was unknown till the day of  
the foreigners when the fortune of thy nobles was broken, thou  
firm green-walled fort of the fair lake.’

While the first 24 quatrains of this poem belong to the contemporary genre of laments for ruined and forsaken buildings, metaphors for the demise of past glories,<sup>24</sup> the remaining 18 quatrains express the optimistic view that the end of this desolation is now at hand, as Mac Diarmada will set all to rights and restore the castle to its former glory. Its true spouse (*céile cubhaidh*) has been found. All will be well again.

Tréig an gcumhaidh do chleachtais,  
eirg it earraidh oireachtais,  
lí bróin ná haithintear ort,  
a róimh chlaichfhinntreabh Chonnacht. (q. 28)

‘Put aside thy wonted gloom, don thy assembly garments, let no  
colour of mourning be seen on thee, thou bright stone-built Rome  
of the Connachta.’

At first sight this description of the ruined *Carrag* might be construed as a vindication of Ó hEódhusa’s earlier warning in *Fód codarsna*, but in fact we know, from the inquisition cited above (n. 15) that the chief Mac Diarmada castle was already dilapidated when Brian Mac Ruaidhrí was seized in fee *de ruinoso Castro de Diermott*, August 1593.

<sup>24</sup>E.g. *A dhúin thíos atá it éanar* (Measgra Dánta poem 56), *A mhná guileam tre Ghlais Áir* (Measgra Dánta poem 58), *Do bháidh teine Tír Chonaill* (DDána poem 81), and *Uaigneach a-taoi a theach na mbráthar* (DDána, poem 122, cf. Pádraig Ó Macháin, ‘Two Nugent manuscripts: the Nugent Duanaire and Queen Elizabeth’s Primer’, *Ríocht na Midhe* 23 (2012), 121–42, at 129).

This poem must be dated to *circa* 1596 when Mac Diarmada had just reclaimed his patrimony, and is therefore exactly contemporary with Fearghal Óg's poem. Together with *Fód codarsna*, it supports Fearghal Óg's account of Conchubhar's career prior to 1595; so too does the final poem in the sequence, which begins *Ní gnáth liaigh gan luach saothair*.<sup>25</sup> As the first line suggests, Mac Diarmada is here likened to a leech who has had to take severe measures (blood-letting, cauterization) to cure a sick patient, and who has earned his reward on account of this. The patient is, of course, Magh Luirg and the sickness the oppression of the English:

Críoch Bhúille na mbruach mbáinte  
tréan Gall dob í a heasláinte,  
fuinn chraoibhgeala na gcíogh noch  
níor ghníomh aoinleagha d'fhurtocht. (q. 7)

'The territory of the Búill, of the clear warm shores, English oppression was its illness – lands of white trees and proud hills – it was no job for a lone leech to minister to it.'

The lone leech is Mac Diarmada, who has to resort to desperate measures to remedy the illness, and endure hardship himself in so doing:

Meinic do sintí an taobh tais  
deireadh laoi láimh re Seaghais,  
gan suainleaptha, gan chraoibh gceóil,  
re caoin fhuairshneachta an aieóir.

Meinic fuair mar cheól gcodail  
éighmhe ban ar bhreacmhadaín,  
ar bhrú eas ngéagthamhan<sup>26</sup> nglan  
ar gcréachtuighadh gcneas gcuradh.

Ní ar déarghadh leaptha luighe,  
ní ar codladh ná ar comhnuighe,  
an t-éigne ón Bhúill bhreicmhín mhir  
do shúir sheintír a sheinnsir. (qq. 26–8)

'Often the soft body used to be stretched out by the Seaghais at day's end, without beds for sleeping, without musical instrument, accompanied by the cold snow of the air.'

<sup>25</sup>Unedited. Manuscripts consulted: RIA 23 M 23 (340), pp. 77–80 ; 23 B 24 (498), p. 414–20; 23 C 21 (672), pp. 10–14; NLI G 18, pp. 150A and 150B. G 18 is available on Irish Script on Screen, and is transcribed in McManus and Ó Raghallaigh, *A Bardic Miscellany*, 510–12.

<sup>26</sup>ngéugthana(mh) MSS.

Often for sleep-music<sup>27</sup> he had the cries of women at dawn, beside waterfalls of clear young vegetation, following the wounding of warriors' bodies.

'It is not in preparing beds for lying down, it is not in sleeping or resting, that the salmon of the sparkling, smooth, swift Búill strove for the ancient land of his ancestors.'

The ultimate reward, once the patient has been cured, is the reclamation of his patrimony:

Fiú a dtarla dó dá dochar,  
fiú ar chleacht d'anbhuaín d'iomachar,  
fiú a dheighbhhearta, dearbh an dáil,  
sealbh na heighreachta d'fhagháil. (q. 23)

'It was worth all the harm that it caused him, it was worth the misfortune that he used to endure, it was worth, to be sure, his heroic deeds, to gain possession of the patrimony.'

In addition to the testimony of the other Ó hEódhusa poems, *Ní gnáth liaigh* comes closest to Fearghal Óg's poem in the detail of the litany of hardships, which, together with their corresponding litany of comforts, occupies qq. 10–21 of Mac an Bhaird's poem. The context provided by Eochaidh Ó hEódhusa's poems to Conchubhar Mac Diarmada, therefore, furnishes important collaboration of the perception among Mac Diarmada's partisans of his activities in the war of resistance against the English occupation of his territory, even if ultimately he needed the help of Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill to confirm him in his patrimony. These poems present quite a different picture to that deducible from other historical evidence, and it is the depiction of Mac Diarmada as successful resistance-fighter that is the abiding theme of the poem edited here, the justice of whose cause is emphasised by the reference to *cóir* at qq. 36c and 39a (in opposition to *ainbhíor* at 37d and *éagóir* 34a, 35a, 38b).

#### MAC DIARMADA'S SUBSEQUENT CAREER

The present poem must therefore be dated to *circa* 1596, a date supported by the memorial quatrain (q. 48) to Mág Aonghusa. A reading of Conchubhar Óg's career subsequent to the event celebrated in this poem leads one to conclude that, after the fashion of the time, he was determined to maintain his new position and was willing to ally himself with whichever side was strongest. Not long after his inauguration was made known to the English,<sup>28</sup> efforts were made to make him submit, the failure of which was attributed in turn to

<sup>27</sup>Cf. q. 19 in the poem edited below.

<sup>28</sup>*Cal. SP Ire. 1592–1596*, 447, 501.

Sir Richard Bingham and to Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill.<sup>29</sup> At this time Mac Diarmada was with Ó Domhnaill, who was successfully confronting Sir John Norris in Connacht.<sup>30</sup>

Ó Conchubhair Slighigh had long been Ó Domhnaill's enemy and thus proved an important ally for the English on the southern border of Tír Conaill. Conchobhar Óg was married to a daughter of the late Sir Domhnall Ó Conchobhair, and his predecessor as Mac Diarmada, Brian mac Ruaidhrí, had also been married to a daughter of Domhnall's (see q. 45 n.). In 1581, on the death of his brother-in-law An Calbhach Ó Conchobhair, Brian mac Ruaidhrí inscribed a note lamenting his passing in the *Annals of Loch Cé*.<sup>31</sup> The significance of these close ties between the two families was apparent in the autumn of 1596 when his wife's first cousin, Donnchadh Ó Conchobhair, persuaded Mac Diarmada to submit to the English on September 8.<sup>32</sup> Native sources attribute this submission to the arrival in Connacht of the popular Sir Conyers Clifford.<sup>33</sup>

English suspicions of Mac Diarmada's good intentions seemed confirmed when, in early 1597, it was reported that he had re-joined Ó Domhnaill.<sup>34</sup> In fact, under Ó Domhnaill's instructions, Niall Garbh Ó Domhnaill rounded up those of the Irish of north Connacht who had submitted to the English and Conchobhar Óg Mac Diarmada and Aodh Ó Conchobhair Donn were taken captive.<sup>35</sup> Having been kept 'in great misery' they were released in November 1597, and immediately the English set about capitalising on their disaffection.<sup>36</sup> In this they were successful as in January of the following year Mac Diarmada and Ó Conchobhair Donn were advising Clifford on the best time to invade Tír Conaill. In response to this Ó Domhnaill hanged their pledges, including a son of Mac Diarmada.<sup>37</sup>

This retaliation may have persuaded Mac Diarmada to return to Ó Domhnaill, for in October of 1598 Clifford reported that Conchobhar Óg had switched camps 'rather than lose his wealth'.<sup>38</sup> This appears to have finally ended Mac Diarmada's association with the English, though his respect for Clifford remained. Following Clifford's death, August 1599, at the battle of the Curlews in Mac Diarmada's country, Conchobhar Óg took his headless body to Loch Cé and offered to exchange it for prisoners or else to bury it himself.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 533; *Cal. SP Ire. 1596–1597*, 91.

<sup>30</sup>*Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, i, 124; *AFM* s.a. 1596 (vol. vi, 2002).

<sup>31</sup>*ALC* s.a. 1581.11 (vol. ii, 434).

<sup>32</sup>*Cal. SP Ire. 1596–1597*, 104–5, 197.

<sup>33</sup>*Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, i, 132; *AFM* s.a. 1596 (vol. vi, 2002).

<sup>34</sup>*Cal. SP Ire. 1596–1597*, 167, 215, 228.

<sup>35</sup>*Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, i, 140; *AFM* s.a. 1597 (vol. vi, 2010); *Cal. SP Ire. 1596–1597*, 452.

<sup>36</sup>*Cal. SP Ire. 1596–1597*, 453, 482.

<sup>37</sup>*Cal. SP Ire. 1598–1599*, 25, 65, 129.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>39</sup>Richard Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors with a Succinct Account of the Earlier History*, iii (London 1890) 337–8.

In the months following Clifford's death, Mac Diarmada's involvement in activities against the English intensified,<sup>40</sup> and this continued into 1600 when he twice joined Ó Domhnaill on raids into Thomond.<sup>41</sup> In August 1601 he assembled in Elphin, Co. Roscommon, with Ó Domhnaill and other Connacht chiefs and, according to Bagwell, two months later he accompanied Ó Domhnaill on the march to Kinsale.<sup>42</sup> It is at this point that we lose sight of him.

In an obituary notice in the Annals of Loch Cé for Conchubhar Óg's successor, Brian Óg son of Brian mac Ruaidhrí, it is stated that he was chief of his country for 'trí bliadna dég ocus fiche ocus ráithe' at the time of his death in January 1636.<sup>43</sup> If this dating is according to New Time it means that Conchobhar Óg probably died *circa* October 1602; if the dating is Old Time his death occurred probably in 1603. An inquisition taken in July 1606 shows that he was survived by his wife, Mairghréag, and a son, Eóghan.<sup>44</sup>

#### MITHIDH SIN A MHACA MÍLEADH

The poem edited here occurs in a single copy: RIA MS A iv 3 (743), pp. 759–63.<sup>45</sup> This mutilated manuscript, the texts of which are exceptionally free from corruption, and which is unsigned and probably dates from the mid-seventeenth century, must in its day have been one of the greatest anthologies of bardic poetry.

The poem is in *dán díreach*, and in *séadna* metre. Length-marks absent in the manuscript are supplied editorially and indicated with a macron; non-historic and otherwise redundant length-marks are silently ignored; editorial supply of grammatical lenition is indicated with an italic *h*. Other interventions are indicated in the apparatus. For the sake of clarity, bardic teaching on the representation of the juncture of homorganic consonants in compound words is ignored at qq. 5c, 8d, 24d, 27a, 34d, 42c. Substitution of permitted variants for metrical reasons occurs at qq. 6d, 14d, 15b, 27d, 35d, 46c. Instances of the metrical decoration known as *breacadh* are in evidence in qq. 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 17, 25, 34, 39, 46, and 48.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>40</sup>*Cal. SP Ire. 1599–1600*, 207, 333.

<sup>41</sup>*Beatha Aodha Ruaidh*, i, 198, 250.

<sup>42</sup>*Cal. SP Ire. 1601–1603*, 38; Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, iii, 403.

<sup>43</sup>*ALC* s.a. 1636 (vol. ii, 516–18).

<sup>44</sup>Inquisitions (RIA Transcripts): Roscommon, vol. i, 204 (Inq. 10).

<sup>45</sup>Available on Irish Script on Screen, and transcribed in McManus and Ó Raghallaigh, *A Bardic Miscellany*, 465–7.

<sup>46</sup>I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer, and to Dr Gordon Ó Riain, for suggesting a number of improvements to this edition.

## TEXT

## Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird

1. Mithidh sin a mhaca Míleadh  
mithidh dhaoibh a ndearna sibh  
fa iath gcnoigheal na gcíoch dtana,  
dár fóireadh críoch Lagha libh.
2. Is fada an treimhsi a-tá Banbha  
fa b/reith Danar, díochra an brōn,  
go dtug sibh congnamh dá chéile,  
dār cobhradh libh Éire ógh.
3. Nī bheid Goill i ngar do Luimneach,  
nā fa Lifi na learg dtais,  
ná fān mBúill, tre bháidh bhar gcomhghaoil,  
ná um Mháigh n-ūir, ná um ghormDhaoil nglais.
4. A Ghaidhiola na ngreagh seangbhras,  
saoradh Banbha na mbrugh gcorr,  
cia dhíbh lé mbeirthior a bhuidhe,  
tír chleithgheal na nduille ndonn?
5. Beiridh uile, a aicme Chormaic,  
cuid dā bhuidhe le baidhbh gcró:  
fairche thaoibhsheang na dtrágh lighgeal,  
clār Raoilonn do dhíon dó.

## TRANSLATION

1. That was timely, sons of Míl, timely for you was what you did regarding the nut-bright land of the slender peaks, through which Lugh's country was aided by you.
2. Banbha has been a long time under the rule of Foreigners – intense is the grief – until you helped each other, through which pure Éire was helped by you.
3. The English will not be near to Luimneach, nor around the Life of the soft banks, nor around the Búill, on account of your mutual bond, nor around the fair Máigh nor the dark-blue Daoil.
4. O Gaoidhil of the slender and spirited horses, which of you is to be thanked for it, the saving of Banbha of the prominent castles, land of white trees and brown leaves?
5. O race of Cormac, let you all give some thanks for it to a bloody warrior: he protected the plain of Raoile, slender-sloped territory of the bright-coloured strands.

## VARIANTS

- 1 *d* logha
- 2 *b* ndanar
- 3 *a* bheidh *d* mháidh *inserted above*
- 4 *d* nduille
- 5 *b* chró *c* lígheal

6. Cóir a bhuidhe do *bhreith* ríson,  
rí Mhoighi Luirg na learg dte,  
go dol agaibh ar iath nÉibhir,  
cliath chagaidh do dhéinimh dhe.
7. Mac Diarmada, dreagan Búille,  
do bhuaidhreadh iad taobh re taoibh –  
le a dheirc moill is beirthe a bhuidhe –  
Goill Eithne, Goill Mhuighi Maoin.
8. Tug fuath Eachtrann fa iath Meidhbhe  
a mheince um Bhúill na mbárc ndonn,  
's a ró díbhearg fân Muaidh maighrigh,  
gruaidh mhíndearg do thairngir tonn.
9. Do chaitheadh lá láimh re Suca,  
ag seilg Dhanar dá dheirc chuirr;  
do chaitheadh bláth thoighi Tuathail  
tráth oile fa Chruachain gCuinn.
10. Do cheól ghnáth ar ghothaibh fuairshreabh  
fada do bhíoth barr na géag;  
cian do bhíodh i mbothaibh caoilshleagh  
ag díon shochair Ghaidheal nGréag.

6. Thanks should be given to *him*, the king of Magh Luirg of the warm slopes, for turning the land of Éibhear into a theatre of war until such time as ye prevailed over it.

7. Mac Diarmada, dragon of the Búill, he used to harass them in unison – thanks for it should be given to his astute eye – the English of the Eithne and the English of Magh Maoin.

8. Hatred for the Foreigners around the land of Meadhbh was the cause of his frequent presence around the Búill of the dark boats, and his great number of raids around the Muaidh of the salmon, red cheek foretold by a wave.

9. He used to spend a day beside the Suca, his noble eye harrying the Foreigners; the flower of the house of Tuathal used to spend another while around Cruacha of Conn.

10. For a long time he of the wavy hair used to partake of the perpetual music made by the sounds of cold streams; long was he in bivouacs of slender spears, defending the claim of the Grecian Gaoidhil.

6 *c* néimhir; *d* chogaidh

7 *c* mhoill as

8 *c* múaigh mhaighrigh

9 *d* chuinn

11. Do fhuilngeadh, gér anba an mheisnioch,  
Mac Diarmada, didion ceall,  
fa fhairche mín dtoinnghil dTuathail,  
shín n-oighridh i mbruachaibh beann.
12. Do ghnáthaigh re gluasacht cogaidh,  
Conchobhar Óg innlius cheilg,  
sreabh reóidh agus teach gan tuighi,  
is feóil chreach, is luighi ar leirg.
13. Mar sin, re Gallaibh ghuiirt Lonndan,  
lámh fhuiltioch dá n-órtar cuilg,  
fairche ghlan na bhfiodhbhadh bhfillte,  
do sgar fionnMhagh linnte Luirg.
14. Gur ghabh Magh Luirg na learg dtorthach  
tamhan cumhra Chnuic na Niall,  
do sgáth an anshóidh ní adhair,  
gnáth radhóigh i raghain riamh.
15. Mac Diarmada na nduas líonmhur,  
do luach an anshóidh uair sé,  
do thil clár na bhfionnshroth bhfoirbhte  
lámh re bionnLoch coirmthe Ché.

11. Though his courage was great, Mac Diarmada, protector of churches, used to suffer icy weather on the slopes of peaks around the smooth, bright-surfaced territory of Tuathal.

12. While prosecuting war, Conchubhar Óg, who plans subterfuge, experienced frozen stream and roofless house, meat from preys and resting on a hillside.

13. In that way did a bloody hand, for which swords are gilded, free fair Magh Luirg of the warm pools (pure land of the inclining woods) from the English of the territory of London.

14. Until he captured Magh Luirg of the fertile slopes, the sweet sapling of the Hill of the Nialls did not defer to a dislike of hardship – always a promising trait in any [leadership] election.

15. Mac Diarmada of the plentiful payments [to poets], in reward for the hardship that he got he occupied the plain of the fair, mature rivers beside sweet Loch Cé of the warm ale.

11 *b* mac díarmata *c* mhín *d* oighridh

14 *d* rodhóigh a roghain

15 *b* fuair *c* bfoirfi

16. Tug beódhacht is beagán tathaimh,  
     's tug a bheith i mbeannuibh sliabh  
         do fhleisg Luain is-teagh a toradh:  
         buaidh ar fear na roghan riamh.
17. Mac Diarmada, díoghbhódh Eachtrann,  
     íobhaidh feasda fion a hór  
         fa Bhúill sgathaigh na síon soirbhgheal:  
         rachaidh díol san oighreadh dh'ól.
18. Beid ag uaislibh innsi Luighdhioch  
     leabtha donnsrōill má dheirc gcuirr:  
         do shíor insna leabthaibh luachra  
         bhus díol d'Eachtair Chruachna Cuinn.
19. Seachas diamhair dán le ceólchroit  
     mar cheól chodail cleachtaidh sé;  
         d'ua na ríogh ò iathmhuigh Earca  
         díol i mbriathraibh ealta é.
20. Seóid Dhanar ag dol 'na éaraic  
     d'éigsibh cáigh ó chúl na ngéag;  
         i mbothaibh diamhra ar díoth maoineadh  
         do bhíoth griangha Ghaoideal nGréag.

16. Action and little rest, and being on the peaks of mountains, brought in its benefit for the youth of Luan: victory always over the elected man.

17. Mac Diarmada, destroyer of Foreigners, will henceforth drink wine from gold [vessels] around the blossom-strewn Boyle of the pleasant seasons: it will be compensation for drinking ice.

18. The nobility of the isle of Lughaidh will enjoy around his keen eye beds of dark satin: for the Hector of Conn's Cruacha it will be compensation forever for the beds of rushes.

19. For a lullaby he is [now] accustomed to the secret lore of poems with a musical harp; for the heir of the kings of the territory and plain of Earc it is compensation for the sounds of a flock of birds.

20. The valuables of the Foreigners are bestowed by him of the wavy hair on poets from all over: this is in compensation for the sunbeam of the Grecian Gaoidhil being destitute in remote huts.

17 *a* Macdiarmata *b* íobha

18 *c* thsíor; leaptthaibh *d* coin

19 *a* ceólerot

20 *c* mbotha

21. I n-aghaidh uaignis an fhásaigh  
iomad curadh do-chí sé,  
lén gnáth rinn chatha do chongmháil  
fa linn Lacha chollbháin Ché.
22. Go deimhin is daor do cheannaigh  
críoch Bhúille fā mblaghaid cuill:  
tug a dhonnchrú uile uirrthi  
onchú mhuighi cuirmthe Cuinn.
23. Mac Aibhilín na n-éacht minic,  
fa Mhagh Luirg na linnteadh dte,  
fuair go fóill a chneas do chréachtghuin,  
dōigh i dtreas nī déantair de.
24. Conn Céadchathach, coiléan Teamhra,  
tugadh amhlaidh iolar cneadh  
ar a chorp fa fhiadhmhagh nÉirionn,  
gort niamhghlan na ngéirreann ngeal.
25. Téid an Connsoin, tar ceann Éirionn –  
iúl fire dá bhfuil an sdair –  
go Magh Léana i n-aghaidh Eóghain;  
gabhair sgéala eólaigh air.
26. Téid i n-aghaidh Eóghain Taidhligh  
triath Éirionn le huathadh sluaigh  
go slíos brúigh leachtMhuighi Léana,  
neartruire mhúir Éanna d'uaim.

21. Instead of the solitude of the wilderness he [now] sees an abundance of warriors by whom the vanguard is continually maintained around the water of hazel-white Loch Cé.

22. Indeed it was dearly he paid for the land of the Búill about which hazels break: he gave all his dark-red blood for it, wolf of the plain of Conn of the warm ale.

23. Aibhilín's son of the frequent exploits, about Magh Luirg of the warm lakes his body has received such wounding up to now that it is thought unlikely he will [ever] be defeated in battle.

24. Conn Céadchathach, cub of Teamhair, many wounds were inflicted likewise on his body around the wild plain of Éire, pure-bright territory of the sharp, shining spears.

25. On Éire's behalf – true knowledge on which the tale is based – this Conn proceeds to Magh Léana against Eóghan: a scholar's tidings of it are recited.

26. The prince of Éire proceeds against Eóghan Taidhleach with a small army to the slope of the bank of Magh Léana of the graves, the strong king who united the rampart of Éanna.

27. Cóigeadh Uladh na n-eas líghgeal  
is Leath Mogha na múr réidh  
do thairg uaidh, i gcomhaidh chatha,  
do roghain shluaigh Lacha Léin.
28. ‘Ní ghēabh uaidh,’ ar Eóghan Caisil,  
‘comha acht Teamhair na dTri bhFear,  
tulach fhíonūr na n-eang n-álainn,  
badh leam ríomhūr bhánfhuinn *Bhreagh*.’
29. Conn Céadchathach na gcuach ngreanta  
do ghabh fírfhearg – fíor an sdair –  
longphort eangbhláith an fhuinn *ghrianaigh*,  
fān seanráith gcuirr d’iarraidh air.
30. ‘Eóghan Mór, gíodh mór a aigneadh,  
nī fhuighi feasda,’ ar flaith Luain,  
‘d’Éirinn shriobhghloin do thaoibh thoile  
iomdhaidh laoih na hoighi uaim.’
31. ‘Do-bhéar cath dá chrobhaing *mhíleadh*  
ar Mhagh Léana i los a uile,  
ós é is áil le hEóghan éachtach,’  
do ráidh leōmhan crēachtach Cuilt.

27. To the one elected by the host of Loch Léin he offered as a peace-term the province of the Ulaidh and Leath Mogha of the smooth ramparts.

28. ‘I will not accept from him,’ said Eóghan of Caiseal, ‘any term except Teamhair of the Three Men, the hill of new wine and beautiful banners: I will possess the royal fort of the fair land of Breagha.’

29. Anger gripped Conn Céadchathach of the engraved goblets – a true story – because the ancient eminent fort, the stronghold of the beautiful banners in the sunny territory, was demanded of him.

30. ‘Eóghan Mór, though great is his courage,’ said the prince of Luan, ‘he will never get from me willingly the choicest part of Éire of the pure streams.’

31. ‘Because of his evil, I will give battle to his band of soldiers on Magh Léana, since it is what heroic Eóghan desires,’ said the wounding lion of Colt.

27 *a* líggeal *d* locha

28 *d* rioghmúr

29 *d* chuirr

30 *a* gíodh] *ge*

31 *b* ‘bnm’ *jotting above* *ós*

32. Ar Mhagh Léana, an lá ar na bhárach,  
 brisdear cath ar a chúl *fhann*;  
 ua na ríogh nár lag a luaghal,  
 do-rad díol san uabhar ann.
33. Beantar san gcathsoin, céim suaithnidh –  
 seanchus fíre fuarus róm –  
 leómhan fa teann ar gach teaghlach,  
 a cheann d'Eóghan mheadhrach Mhór.
34. An éagóir re hairdrígh mBanbha  
 do bhí ag Eóghan – anba an ró –  
 dā bhfuair a ghoin fa Bhóinn mbionnfhuair:  
 do-chóidh soin ar diombuaidh dhó.
35. Gach drong ré ndéantar an éagcóir,  
 ar an eachtsoin, d'iúl na suadh  
 ní bhí orra dhíobh re deabhaidh:  
 orra do shíor bearair buadh.
36. Rug mac Taidhg tréan ar a nāimhdibh,  
 do nós Chuinn na gcupadh sean,  
 re hathaidh, a hucht na cóire,  
 nathair ó phurt *Bhóinni* Breagh.
37. Do dīoghladh leis – lór de mheisnigh –  
 mar mhac Úna dhár fhill dair,  
 éigni Bearbha, bláth na ndaighrīogh,  
 a ndearna cách d'ainbhfíor air.

32. The following day, his smooth head was defeated; the descendant of kings whose vigour was not weak repaid him there for his arrogance.

33. During that battle, an outstanding feat – true history that I discovered – merry Eóghan Mór is beheaded, a lion severe on every retinue.

34. The injustice that Eóghan did to the high-king of Banbha – great excess – on account of which he received his [death-]wound by the sweet cool Bóinn: it was that which caused his misfortune.

35. Every faction by whom injustice is perpetrated, therefore, according to the wisdom of the learned they have no protection against battle: they are always defeated.

36. Over a period, with justice on his side, Taidhg's son overcame his enemies, in the manner of Conn of the ancient goblets, serpent from the shore of the Bóinn of Breagha.

37. What courage: like Úna's son for whom the oak bent low, he avenged the injustice that all had perpetrated against him, salmon of the Bearbha, flower of the good kings.

33 *b róm*

34 *a hairdrí banbha*

35 *d búaidh*

36 *b choinn*

37 *a de] do*

38. Magh Luirg, ní léamhadh í d'fhéachain:  
 ēagóir Ghall ar a ghruaidh nduinn,  
 dóigh ghnáth dá ríogaibh do-roinni,  
 do dhíoghail bláth chloinni Cuinn.
39. A hucht uaisle, a hucht na córa,  
 do chuir mac Taidhg na dtreas ndian  
 fian Ghall ó choimhead a chríche,  
 barr na bhfoighéag bhfithe bhfiar.
40. Mac Diarmada, dúsgadh faladh,  
 fuath a chríche fa chath nGall  
 do chuir caomhthach rúin na ríge,  
 aonchloch chúil na tíre thall.
41. Taobh seada dā slēachtuid biodhbhaidh,  
 bas fhuiltioch dá n-íslich sreabh,  
 croidhe is eagal eidir armaibh,  
 dreagan mhoighi bharrghloin Bhreagh.
42. Seabhac Cruachna na gcraobh lúbtha,  
 leannán Uisnigh an fheóir chuirr,  
 bláth an chaomhmhuighi um Bóinn mbiligh,  
 aodhuiri slóigh chinidh Chuinn.

38. He would not permit Magh Luirg to be garrisoned: ever confident of defeating their leaders, the flower of the race of Conn avenged the injustice of the English against his red cheek

39. With nobility and justice on his side, the son of Tadhg of the hard battles prevented a company of English from garrisoning his land, head of the plaited, curling tresses.

40. Mac Diarmada, awakening resistance, he, beloved confidant of sovereignty, initiated his land's hatred for the English battalion, solitary supporting-stone of that territory.

41. Slender side to whom enemies submit, bloody hand before which a river subsides, a heart to be feared amidst weaponry, dragon of the bright-surfaced plain of Breagha.

42. Hawk of Cruacha of the bending branches, lover of Uisneach of the tall grass, flower of the fair plain around the tree-lined Bóinn, shepherd of the host of the race of Conn.

38 *d* coinn

40 *a* Mac diarmata

43. Beithir lúthmhar lingios deabhaidh,  
dreagan éachtach fhuilngios goin,  
ursa ghliadh míonmhoighi Mheadhbha,  
grian ríoghraidhe Teamhra thoir.
44. Conchobhar Óg, aigneadh faoilidh,  
féithlionn cheangail Chnuic na nGiall,  
báthadh coibhdhean bruaigh na Búille,  
gruaidh toinngheal is núidhe niamh.
45. Abhall chumhra de choill uasail,  
inghean Domhnaill dhíolus duain:  
cleachtaidh fodhail a séad sídhe,  
géag thoraidh an tíre thuaidh.
46. Téid ó éigsibh innsi Cobhthaigh,  
i gcrích Connacht na gcolg ndéad,  
do thoill Mairghréag, ó's dá mhaidheamh,  
pailmghéag de choill Ghaidheal nGréag.
47. Leaca thaoibhdhearg nár théigh ollamh,  
inghean Mhóire ó mhúr Dhá Thí,  
a teisd ag dol fán trian thallan:  
ag riar sgol nī hannamh í. Mithidh

43. Swift bear who is supreme in battle, lethal dragon who is impervious to wounding, battle-prop of Meadhbh's smooth plain, sun of the kings of Teamhair in the east.

44. Conchubhar Óg, cheerful disposition, binding vine of the Hill of the Hostages, destruction of the raiders of the shore of the Búill, white-skinned cheek of radiant appearance.

45. Sweet apple-tree from a noble wood, Domhnall's daughter, who rewards a poem: she practises the sharing out of her marvellous treasures, fruitful branch of the northern land.

46. I proclaim it: in the land of Connachta of the ivory swords, Mairghréag – palm-branch from the wood of the Grecian Gaoidhil – has earned [praise] that is sent from the poets of Ireland.

47. Rosy-skinned cheek that no poet has satirised, daughter of Mór from the house of Dá Thí, her fame spreads around yonder territory, not seldom does she minister to schools of poetry.

43 *b* fhuilngios

44 *d* núidhe] *vel* correction from nuaidi

45 *a* de] do

46 *c* do thuill

47 *a* théidh

48. A bheith fo chriaidh do chráidh meisi,  
Mág Aonghusa nár éar dháimh;  
nach truagh mo leannán 'na luighi,  
beangán ó chuan mhuighi Máil?
49. Mo dhara céile i gcrích Chobhthaigh,  
Conn mac Briain lé mbronntaoi fail,  
teasda slat bhosghlan na Búille,  
nach dorsan brat úire air?
50. Ceileadh doirseoir dhúin na n-aingiol  
gach olc dhamh dá ndearna sí:  
mé dá toil congmhaidh an cholann –  
foghlaidh, mar soin, oram í. Mithidh

48. His being beneath the earth has tormented me, Mág Aonghusa who did not refuse poets; is it not sad that my lover is prostrate, the sapling from the shore of the plain of Máil?

49. My second spouse in the land of Cobhthach, Conn son of Brian who used to bestow a ring, the clean-palmed scion of the Búill is dead: is it not woeful that a mantle of earth covers him?

50. May the door-keeper of the citadel of angels conceal every evil that she has done to me: the body keeps me subjected to her will – she is, therefore, a predator on me.

48 *a chraáidh*

#### NOTES

2*b* MS *ndanar* possibly influenced by the instances of *fa* and *um* ‘around’ (with accusative) in qq. 1*c* and 3*d*.

3*a* MS *bheidh*, is presumably a slip for 3 pl. dep., which form (as opposed to *-biad* (IGT III.7)) is found in contemporary prose (e.g. *TBg* p. xix) and poetry (e.g. *DDána* 59.28, *O’Hara* XX.8, etc.).

Fearghal Óg, here and in qq. 7–9, makes use of river names to convey both the extent to which the English have encroached on autonomous Gaelic Ireland, and the extent of Mac Diarmada’s theatre of activities. In this quatrain he refers to the English presence in three of the provinces: river Liffey (Leinster), rivers Maigue and Deel (Munster), and the river Boyle (Connacht).

5*b baidhbh* Though clearly used figuratively (cf. Ó Macháin, ‘Seaán Óg Ó Dochartaigh’, 27*c* n.) with reference to Mac Diarmada, the context, developed later in the poem, of patrimony recovered through battle and hardship, suggests that the word also carries its primary connotations of battle, the pun being accentuated through the use of *cró* gen. sg. ‘of blood’, or gen. pl. ‘of battle-enclosures’. McManus’s suggestion (‘Varia III: Miscellanea on bardic poetry: metre, language and style’, *Ériu* 55 (2005), 147–66, at 163 n. 31

(referenced by the peer-reviewer)), however, that *cró* in such phrases be taken as an unidentified placename, may well be correct; cf. the case of *fleisg Luain* 16c below.

*d dó* The use of the masculine pronoun here in reference to the feminine *badhbh* is explainable by the primacy of the sex of the referend over the gender of the word.

*6b Moighe Luirg* Mac Diarmada's territory of Moylurg in present-day Co. Roscommon.

*c agaibh* The poet is still addressing *aicme Cormaic*.

*7d Eithne* River Inny (in counties Westmeath and Longford); *Mhuighe Maoin* Magh Maoin or Maonmhagh, the plain in south Galway centred on Loughrea.

*8c Muaidh* The river Moy.

*d* Cf. *craobh tharaidh do thairrngir tonn* in *Ir. Bardic Poetry* 43.11, a reference to the part played by the three great waves (Clíodhna, Tuaighe and Rudhraighe) in combining with the Lia Fáil to foretell the true king of Ireland.

*9a Suca* The river Suck, Co. Roscommon.

10 This quatrain marks the introduction of the topos of the litany of hardships endured by the warrior prior to attaining leadership (cf. Ó Macháin, 'Tadhg Ó Ruairc', 38). Such litanies dwell on the hero's endurance of exposure to the elements while on campaign, thereby proving himself in the struggle to attain leadership. Once attained, the ultimate comforts of castle-life are seen as well-earned rewards, and correspondences between the comforts and the hardships are established, as here in qq. 17–21.

*14b Chnuic na Niall* A kenning for Teamhair: cf. *O'Reillys* XXIV.34, and see Ó Macháin, 'Tadhg Ó Ruairc', 35c n.; cf. *Chnuic na nGiall* q. 44b.

*c ní adhair* Historic present.

*15d Loch Cé* Loch Key on which Mac Diarmada's main residence, Carrag Mheic Dhiarmada, was located: see Introduction.

*16c fhleisg Luain* The expression *flaith* (etc.) *luain* etc. has received various interpretations in editions of poetry: *fear Luain* 'chief of Luan' (*Mac Con Midhe* X.12); *craobh Luain* 'luminous lord' (*Marcher Lords* II.69); *flaith Luain* 'Lord of Monday' (*O'Hara* XXX.21). The tentative suggestion of a meaning 'warrior' has also been made in *DIL* (L, 224.52–9, and cf. also s.v. 5 *luan*). While the example in the present quatrain is ambiguous, in q. 30b it would seem that *luain* is to be regarded as a proper name, as though associated, perhaps with Áth Luain. Though the probability is that the usage is connected to the ancient *luan láith*, I have merely translated 'youth of Luan' and 'prince of Luan' in both instances here.

*is-teagh a toradh* This might also be construed as *is teagh a toradh*, possibly meaning 'and a house [made] from foliage', referring to the temporary dwellings used while on campaign, the *botha caoilshleagh* (q. 10), *teach gan tuighi* (q. 12), *botha diamhra* (q. 20) mentioned elsewhere in the poem.

*d* For the notion of action or heroism being the determining factor in the election of a leader cf. *gibé tí do thogha ríogh / an gníomh do-ní rogha riamh*, *O'Reillys* XIV.1.

17*b* For other examples of the idea of drinking from golden vessels see *DDána* 100.18 and *Aith.Dána* 5.18.

19*a* *ceólchroit* (MS *ceólcrot*) Accusative sg. must be read here.

20*ab* With the booty plundered from the English, Mac Diarmada maintains not only his own poets but the poets of everyone else also.

21*c* *rinn chatha* Sometimes a kenning for chieftain, warrior etc. (e.g. *DDána* 93.40, *Aith.Dána* 18.17), but also signifying a military vanguard (cf. *rinn áigh* in *Magauran*, l. 2662n.).

22*b* *críoch* An instance of *cosg réime*. The hazel branches break due to the weight of their fruit in the reign of the rightful king: cf. *Mac Brighde fa mbloghtar dair*, *DDána* 93.51, and *dhár fhíll dair* below (37*b*).

23*a* *Aibhilín* (*Eibhilín* in *DDána* 68.36). Wife of Tadhg mac Eóghain, but otherwise as yet unidentified.

24 The *uirsgéal*, which begins here and continues to q. 34, adheres fairly closely to the second half of *Cath Maighe Léana*, where Conn Céadchathach finally overcomes Eóghan Taidhleach. For Conn's wounds see Kenneth Jackson (ed.), *Cath Maighe Léna* (Dublin, 1938), ll. 1245–71, 1913–21.

*a coiléan* More usually *cuiléan* (*IGT* II.35); cf. *coiléin* : *foiléim* (*Duanaire Mhéig Uidhir* XVIII.11).

26*b* For Conn's small army see Jackson, *Cath Maighe Léna*, ll. 1381–6.

27 Conn's offer to Eóghan is detailed in Jackson, *Cath Maighe Léna*, ll. 1387–93.

29 Fearghal Óg's narrative varies from the prose-tale here, where it is said that Conn's anger was caused by Eóghan executing his peace-emissaries (Jackson, *Cath Maighe Léna*, ll. 1429–45).

30*a* On Eóghan Mór, Eóghan Taidhleach and Mogh Nuadhad, see Thomas F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), 184–5.

*d* The expression *laogh na hoighe* or *laogh oighe* ('fawn of the/a doe') is a complimentary term in bardic verse: examples will be found in *Ir. Bardic Poetry* 43.33, *Dán Dé* 8.17; *Butlers* XVII.31; *DDána* 26.24; *IGT* II, ex. 74. Therefore *iomdhaidh laoigh na hoighi* presumably means a coveted place, but also with a possible pun here on *Laogh* – the name of a well at Tara (*MD* i, Temair III, ll. 129–32; *Onom.* s.v. *loég*) – with *iomdhaidh* signifying 'source' (*DIL* I, 82.81–3). Dr Ó Riain, however, suggests 'he will never get from me willingly [as much as] a resting place for a fawn'.

33. The beheading of Eóghan is not recorded in the prose-tale, but cf. *TDall* 18.28.

34*a* *éagóir* Spellings of this word with -g- and -gc- (q. 35*a*) are permitted (*IGT* II.42). Note that acc. sg. -*rígh* and following eclipsis are editorial.

37*b* *mhac Úna* Conn Céadchathach.

38*a* *féachain* and *coimhead* (39*c*) are probably synonyms in this context.

c For the expression here compare q. 23*d* above.

d This line cements the connection with Conn, from whom, according to the annalists, Mac Diarmada was descended through Eochaidh Muighmheadhóin (e.g. Séamus Pender (ed.), *The O Clery Book of Genealogies* (= *Analecta Hibernica* 18 (1951)), 83).

40d The use of *tír thall* and related expressions (q. 47c) to refer to places in the immediate vicinity of the speaker is noted in Ó Macháin, ‘Seaán Óg Ó Dochartaigh’, 92 n. 26.

44b *Chnuic na nGiall* A name for Tara deriving from the name of the passage-grave known as Dumha na nGiall (*MD* i, Temair III, ll. 33–6). Hence *Leac na nGiall* for the Lia Fáil (*Aith.Dána* 10.27) and *Teagh na nGiall* (ibid, 5.12) for Tara.

c Perhaps eclipsis after gen pl. should be inserted here, although it is consistent with the feature noted by Knott in *TDall* i, p. cv.

d The final *mh* is to be regarded as the first *dúnadh*, though not so indicated in the manuscript.

45 This is the first of three complimentary quatrains in honour of Conchubhar Óg’s wife, Mairghréag, daughter of Domhnall Ó Conchubhair and his wife Mór (47b). Mór was the subject of Tadhg Dall’s well-known poem *A Mhór cuimhnigh an comann* (*TDall* poem 15). She was a daughter of Brian Ballach Ó Ruairc and a sister of Conn Ó Ruairc memorialized in q. 49. Conchubhar Óg’s predecessor, Brian mac Ruaidhrí, was married to another daughter (Meadhbh) of Domhnall Ó Conchubhair (*ALC* s.a. 1582.5 (vol. ii, 446–8)).

d an tíre thuaidh Presumably Sligo.

46 The syntax of this quatrain is unclear, though the meaning is unambiguous: Mairghréag has earned the praise of the poets of Ireland. Dr Gordon Ó Riain suggests this interpretation to me: ‘She goes by means of the poets of Ireland into . . . Connachta . . . since I am saying this, M., palm-branch . . . , has earned [this]’. For commonplace expressions – mostly chevilles – of the type *ó’s dá* + verb noun cf. *TDall* 15.2, *Aonghus Fionn* XLVI.4, and *Dán na mBMionúr* 19.16, 23.5.

48–50. Fearghal Óg brings the poem to its conclusion with three dedicatory verses, one each commemorating Aodh Mág Aonghusa (q. 48), who died in January 1595/6, a month after Mac Diarmada had been installed, and Conn Ó Ruairc, who probably died in 1577; and the final signatory quatrain to St Peter (*doirseóir dhúin na n-aingiol*). For this practice see Pádraig Ó Macháin, ‘Poems by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird’, *Celtica* 24 (2003), 252–63.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

*Aith.Dána*

Lambert McKenna, *Aithdioghluinm Dána: a Miscellany of Irish Bardic Poetry*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1939, 1940).

*ALC*

William M. Hennessy (ed.), *The Annals of Loch Cé. A Chronicle of Irish Affairs from A.D. 1014 to A.D. 1590*, 2 vols (London, 1871).

- Aonghus Fionn* L. M'Kenna, *Dánta Do Chum Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh* (Dublin, 1919).
- Beatha Aodha Ruaidh* Paul Walsh (ed.), *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill as Leabhar Lughaidh Uí Chléirigh*, 2 vols, ITS 42, 45 (Dublin 1948, 1957).
- Butlers* James Carney (ed.), *Poems on the Butlers of Ormond, Cahir, and Dunboyne* (Dublin, 1945).
- Cal. SP Ire.* *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Ireland of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth, Preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office*, 7 vols (London, 1867–1912).
- DDána* Láimhbheartach Mac Cionnaith, *Dioghlúim Dána* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1938).
- Dán na mBMionúr* Cuthbert Mhág Craith (ed.), *Dán na mBráthar Mionúr*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1967, 1980).
- Duanaire Mhéig Uidhir* David Greene (ed.), *Duanaire Mhéig Uidhir: the Poem Book of Cú Chonnacht Mág Uidhir, Lord of Fermanagh 1566–1589* (Dublin, 1972).
- Foras Feasa* D. Comyn and P. S. Dinneen (ed.), *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn le Seathrún Céitinn D.D.*, 4 vols, ITS 4, 8, 9, 15 (London, 1902–14).
- Ir. Bardic Poetry* Osborn Bergin (ed.), *Irish Bardic Poetry*, ed. David Greene and Fergus Kelly (Dublin, 1970).
- Ir. Syllabic Poetry* Eleanor Knott, *An Introduction to Irish Syllabic Poetry of the Period 1200–1600*, second ed. (Dublin, 1957).
- Irish Fiants* *The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns during the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Philip & Mary, and Elizabeth*, with a New Introduction by Kenneth Nicholls and Preface by Tomás G. Ó Canann, 4 vols (Dublin, 1994).
- Mac Con Midhe* N. J. A. Williams (ed.), *The Poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe*, ITS 51 (Dublin, 1980).
- Magauran* Lambert McKenna (ed.), *The Book of Magauran: Leabhar Mhéig Shamhradháin* (Dublin, 1947).
- Marcher Lords* Anne O'Sullivan (ed.), *Poems on Marcher Lords from a Sixteenth-Century Tipperary Manuscript*, ITS 52 (London, 1987).
- Measgra Dánta* Thomas F. O'Rahilly (ed.), *Measgra Dánta: Miscellaneous Irish Poems* (Dublin and Cork, 1927).

- O'Hara* Lambert McKenna (ed.), *The Book of O'Hara: Leabhar Í Eadhra* (Dublin, 1951).
- Onom.* Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum Locorum et Tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae: An Index, with Identifications, to the Gaelic Names of Places and Tribes.* (Dublin, 1910).
- O'Reillys* James Carney (ed.), *Poems on the O'Reillys* (Dublin, 1950).
- TBg* Osborn Bergin (ed.), *Trí Bior-Ghaoithe an Bháis: Séathrún Kéitinn do Sgríobh.* (Dublin, 1931).
- TDall* Eleanor Knott, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (1550–1591)*, 2 vols, ITS 22, 23 (London 1922, 1926).

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