

Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha and the decline of patronage



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Celtica 32 (2020), 217–235

DOI: 10.58480/SCS-ssmkm-e5re5

DIAS

Institiúid Ard-Léinn | Dublin Institute for
Bhaile Átha Cliath | Advanced Studies



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MAOILÍN ÓG MAC BRUAIDEADHA AND THE DECLINE OF PATRONAGE

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an edition, with translation and notes, of a poem on the decline of patronage and on the inadvisability of pursuing poetry as a profession. It was composed *c.* 1600 by Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha (†1602), and is implicitly critical of Donnchadh Ó Briain, fourth Earl of Thomond.

The poem edited here is ascribed in a single surviving witness to ‘Maoilín Óg’. It is the last in a sequence of ‘five poems and epigrammes’ appended to a manuscript tract entitled ‘An instruction for those that desire to attaine to the understanding of the irish tongue’, written by John Brody in 1640 for ‘mr Therlaugh o Teig’, attendant to Barnaby, sixth Earl of Thomond.¹ From the context, we can be sure that the author is Maoilín Óg (mac Maoilín mheic Conchobhair) Mac Bruaideadha, of Co. Clare, who died on the last day of December 1602, according to the *Annals of the Four Masters*.² He was the author of a number of praise-poems and *seanchas*-poems: a list of those of the latter variety composed by him in *dán díreach* is given by the Four Masters in his obituary, some of which show his affinity with the Í Bhriain, Clann Ghormáin and Í Lochlainn. He is also noteworthy for his involvement in the first stage (*c.* 1592–5) of the translation and printing of *Tiomna Nvadh ar dTighearna* in Trinity College Dublin,³ which would eventually be completed in 1602, the year of his death. Both the Four Masters and Bishop Uilliam Ó Domhnuill attest to Maoilín Óg’s reputation for learning, the latter terming him ‘duine iúlmhar sa teanguidh ghaoidheilge’,⁴ the former commenting, ‘Ní bhaói i nerinn i nén pearsain Seanchaidh, file, agus fear dána do bfearr inás’.⁵

¹Oxford, Bodleian Library MS F.2.34 Linc., described in Ó Cuív (2001, 2003: I, 280–1). The poem occurs at pp [14].22 – [18].4 (scribal pagination), or fols [9]v22–[11]v4 (catalogue foliation). An edition of the tract is in preparation. Two of the five appended poems are edited in Ó Macháin (2017).

²*AFM* VI, 2320 (my thanks to Kenneth Nicholls for discussing with me matters of chronology within the 1602 entry); O’Rahilly (1922: §24); McGrath (1943: 61). Further commentary of relevance to Maoilín Óg and Clann Bhruaideadha will be found in Ó Murchadha (1999) and McInerney (2012).

³In 1596 he had returned to Clare, where, in August of that year, he served on a jury for a Commission of Enquiry at Ennis (Ainsworth 1961: §930).

⁴*Tiomna Nvadh ar dTighearna agvs ar Slanaightheora Iosa Criosd* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1602), preliminary pages, fol [3]v (‘Do Chum an Leughthora’).

⁵Cf. Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh’s description of him: ‘file foircthi fireolach . . . saoi shenchaidh agus fir dhána’ (*Beatha Aodha Ruaidh* I, 208).

THE DECLINE OF PATRONAGE, LEARNING AND POETRY

This poem belongs to a genre that emerged during the sixteenth century and continued throughout the seventeenth. It treats of the decline of patronage due to the changing times and of the consequent decline in the practice of poetry. This was a theme that was, to an extent, already recognisable as a rhetorical element in the bardic elegiac tradition, particularly in laments composed on the death of fellow poets but also in elegies for patrons, where one of the topoi was the resulting isolation of the poet and the implicit dim prospects for poetry or patronage after the death of the individual in question.⁶ Another manifestation of the theme allowed for its exploitation as a vehicle of praise in which patronage was viewed as confined exclusively in a single, superlative patron, and therefore, implicitly or explicitly, as absent or in decline elsewhere.⁷

The new realization of this theme, however, differs in its breadth and its more generalized application, in the ironic tone in which it is frequently delivered, and especially in that it occurs in the socio-political context of conquest and plantation, having a point of reference in actuality insofar as the demise of the professional learned orders was or would become a reality. There was much variety in this, and it gave rise to what is arguably one of the finest bardic poems of that era, that by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird beginning *Ní maith altuighim mh'onáir*.⁸ This poem by Fearghal Óg shows how the theme of the demise of learning merged with that of the conquest of Ireland and the rise of the uneducated lower orders, which, decades later, would cause Ó Bruadair to regret all that he had expended on art, and that he was not a 'dubhthuata' ('a thick ignoramus') so that at least he could enjoy the fraternity of 'daoinibh duarca'.⁹ A special type of 'dubhthuata' was he who pretended to a knowledge of poetry sufficient to criticise the works of the bards and to compose poems himself. Such 'amadáin' are the subject of Fear Feasa Ó'n Cháinte's poem beginning *Mór do-ghníd daoine dhíobh féin*, where their efforts at criticism and composition are characterized as 'Briathra forránta, feidhm tim' ('violent verbiage followed by feeble effort' (O'Grady's translation)).¹⁰ This in turn might lead bona fide practitioners to simplify their poems in order to render them more intelligible. In his poem on the decline of poetry beginning *Ionmholta malairt bhisigh*, which has been dated to 1603, Eochaidh Ó hEóidhasa refers with sarcasm to the contemporary preference for 'shórt gnáthach grés robhog'¹¹ and the 'dán bog' or 'dán fallsa'.¹² He claims that this soft poetry is something at which he can excel:

⁶E.g. *Ir. Bardic Poetry*, Poem 38; *Aith. Dána*, Poem 12; *TDall*, Poem 25.

⁷E.g. Ó Cuív (1974: 271); Ó Cuív (1987); *Ir. Bardic Poetry*, Poem 28; *Lbranach*, Poem 67.

⁸Ó Macháin (2007).

⁹Mac Erlean (1910: Poem XIII); de Brún et al. (1975: Poem 38).

¹⁰*BMus. Cat.* I, 555–7.

¹¹Cf. 'Rabhán gnáth, briathra boga' (*A mheic ná meabhraigh éigsi*, q. 3).

¹²*Ir. Bardic Poetry*, Poem 30, qq 2, 5, 9.

Mo gheallsa ar bhuga ar mhaoile
 ní bhéardaois daoithe an bheatha:
 do-chuaidh mé, maith an tuicsí,
 le cách fa uisce an cheatha.

‘The dunces of the world would not beat me in softness and artlessness: I have gone out in the rain like the rest – a wise course.’¹³

Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha’s poem, edited here, takes the form of cautionary advice tendered by a father, embittered by personal experience of the changed times, to his naïve son,¹⁴ who aspires to a career as a poet and wishes to receive training in a school of poetry. In this general theme, the poem accords with better-known poems already referenced above, and in particular with two by Maoilín Óg’s contemporary, Mathghamhain Ó hÍfearnáin:¹⁵ *Ceist cia do cheinneóchadh dán*¹⁶ and *A mheic ná meabhraigh éigsi*.¹⁷ The present poem shares with the latter a gambit – advice to a son – which locates both poems within the larger context of a sub-group of wisdom poetry.¹⁸

Also at the beginning of the poem, Maoilín Óg invokes (q. 2) a millenarian prophecy, apparently concerning the demise of Gaelic civilization, one that specifically relates to the year 1600. This coincides with the record of a prophecy purveyed by the Earl of Thomond at the time of the Battle of Kinsale regarding the defeat of the Irish – as noted in q. 2*d* n. – and it also connects with a common motif in the poetry of the time. This is articulated at the opening of a similarly themed and near contemporary poem by an anonymous poet, as follows:

Mairg rug ar an aimsirsi,
 aimsior gan iocht gan úaisli;
 fada atá dá tairngire,
 a teacht cá cáis is crúaidhe?

‘Unfortunate anyone overtaken by this cruel and barbarous time,
 long predicted but harsher still in effect!’¹⁹

These prophecies might be ascribed to named saints, Colum Cille especially,²⁰ which brings to mind Maoilín Óg’s recorded invocation in 1599 of a prophecy by the same saint in his dealings with Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill (see q. 12*c* n.).

¹³Ibid., q. 6, and translation p. 270.

¹⁴Addressed directly in qq 2, 10, 14–17. See note to q. 1*a*, below.

¹⁵O’Rahilly (1922: §15).

¹⁶*Jr. Bardic Poetry*, Poem 37.

¹⁷*BMus. Cat.* 1, 392–3.

¹⁸Ó Macháin (2015: 334–7). This shared gambit is compounded by a verbal echo in q. 1 of the present poem, see q. 1*b* n. below.

¹⁹Breatnach (1989: 58, 61).

²⁰Cf. ‘Do thairngir Colom ar mbrón’ (*Dán na mB. Mionúr*, Poem 28.7).

They might also be ascribed to a range of saints,²¹ or might be referred to in a more general, unspecific way, as in the elegy on Maol Mórdha Ó Raghallaigh in 1635/6:

Fáidhe agus naoimh cionn a ccionn
tarfás dóibh dílgheann Éirionn
le sluagh Danmarg leachtach lonn,
le neartchath lanngarg Lonnonn.

‘To the prophets and saints one by one was revealed the destruction of Ireland by the deadly, fierce Danes, by the powerful, rough-weaponed battalion of London.’²²

Following these two introductory quatrains the focus of Maoilín Óg’s poem is threefold. He firstly (qq 3–5) warns his son that, before he goes anywhere in pursuit of learning, he should consider whether gainful employment awaits him on his return: the father suggests not, and that the son would be better familiarizing himself with plough and flail. He secondly (qq 6–9) advises that, even if he were to go, the schools that existed in better times are now no more. Here the litany of the lost has obvious rhetorical affinities with the enumeration of deceased poets and patrons in similarly themed poems.²³ Maoilín Óg’s third point (qq 10–15) is that the son should consider his father’s – the poet’s – own experience of ‘siordhrud síos’ (‘constant demotion’), brought about by disrespect and lack of patronage; this would never have happened during the reign of earlier Kings of Thomond (qq 16–17), implying that the reign of the current Ó Briain, Donnchadh, fourth Earl of Thomond, is not what it should be with regard to patronage.

Maoilín Óg’s first two points are in line with aspects of the treatment of this theme by contemporary poets. For instance, the disappearance of the bardic schools (‘gan mharthain na scol’) and bardic families in the four provinces is the subject of a short poem by Fear Flatha Ó Gnímh, which attributes the cause to social inversion in the memorable couplet ‘fuil chrannda dá cara i gcion / ’s na fola arda ísiol’ (‘lowborn blood held in regard while noble blood is low’).²⁴

The second point on the desirability of poets seeking alternative employment is referred to in other poems also. For example, the same Fear Flatha, in a poem beginning *Mairg do-chuaidh re ceird ndúthchais*, expresses the following sentiments:

Dursan nár mhúin oide an fhis
riadh stéad nó stiúradh loingis,
nó snaidhm chéacht i ndeaghaidh damh,
d’fhearaibh na ndr éacht do dhéanamh.

²¹See Ó Caithnia (1984: 169).

²²*O’Reillys*, Poem XII.4; translation by present writer.

²³E.g. *DDána*, Poem 115; Ó Lochlainn (1939); Breatnach (1999).

²⁴*DDána*, Poem 115.10.

Mairg d'ollamh dá nárbh aithnidh
ceard nábudh cúis iomaithbhir,
d'uaim chláraidh, do dheilbh dhabhcha,
sul tárraidh feidhm foghlamtha.

'Alas that the fosterer in lore did not teach the breaking of
steeds, or the steering of ships, or the yoking of ploughs behind
oxen, to the men who compose lays.

Woe to the scholar who knows not some craft that would be no
cause of censure, that he might join timbers, or shape a vat, ere
he attained the service of learning.²⁵

A later example is that of a poem by Cian Ó hEachaidhéin addressed to Cormac Ó Néill c. 1680, in which he asks his advice regarding a change of occupation ('búta ar mhalairt') that might appeal more to the newcomers to Ireland, who are now in the ascendant. In order to escape from the general odium directed towards poets ('lán gach aon d'fhuath na bhfileadh'), he requests that Cormac make arrangements with craftsmen to swap occupations with him: 'meall a cheird ón chioradóir,²⁶ . . . fagh iomlaoíd ón úcoire . . . Malairt 'na thráth dénaidh dhúin . . . re lucht sírdhénta snáthod.'²⁷ ('entice his craft from the comb-maker . . . arrange an exchange with the fuller . . . make a timely swap with those who are forever making needles.') As has been pointed out elsewhere in reference to Tadhg Dall's expression of regret at not having being reared to cut thistles, irrespective of this being a literary motif and of its largely ironic usage in the poetry, the reality of the phenomenon of change in occupation is underlined by the well-known case of Eoin Agniw, who in 1699 had 'forsaken the Muses and betaken himself to the plow.'²⁸

BRÁTHAIR DON BHÁS AN DOIDHBHREAS

The third point of Maoilín Óg's argument – that of his personal experience of disappointment – is best considered in the light of another poem, that beginning *Bráthair don bhás an doidhbhreas*.²⁹ This poem is composed in *ógláchas* of *Rannagheacht Bheag*. The burden of the poem – styled a 'poem on poverty' by O'Grady³⁰ – is that the poet has fallen on hard times, deserted by his friends. The fact that an individual described as 'triath Fhorghais', the summit of fame of the race of Blod (ll. 42–3), does not come to his aid signifies a separation ('deadhail', l. 41) from the poet. As a consequence of this loss of patronage, the poet's accomplishments and virtues are overlooked by all, who judge him solely by his lack of means. In response to this, in one of the most

²⁵*Jr. Bardic Poetry*, Poem 28.5–6, and translation p. 267.

²⁶Cf. 'uaisle dul re déiniomh cíor' in Ó hÍfearnáin's *Ceist cia do cheinneóchadh dán* (q. 4).

²⁷*LCAB*, Poem XII, ll. 53–60.

²⁸Ó Macháin (2010: 72).

²⁹*Measgra Dánta I*, Poem 26.

³⁰*BMus. Cat.* I, 531–3.

interesting sections of the poem (ll. 45–76), the author threatens to avenge this neglect by accusing his erstwhile patron of a number of practices that are contrary, it is implied, to what is expected of him by those in authority.

The poet will say that the patron in question is generous and – in order to supply that generosity – that he is consequently rapacious (ll. 45–8); in contravention of the royal decree (*i n-aghaidh reachta an Phrionnsa*) he honours those who should not be honoured (ll. 49–52); he worships images and frequents a (holy) well (ll. 53–6); he befriends enemies and is distant to friends (ll. 57–60); he is arrogant, unyielding, and he listens to poetry (ll. 61–4); he practises billeting and raises levies (ll. 65–8). In hope of satirising his patron, the poet will say that the Í Bhriain possess only as far as Limerick, and – anticipating the *Iomarbhágh* – that Leath Cuinn is superior to Leath Mogha (ll. 69–76). The sources of this poem are not earlier than the eighteenth century and those few that include an ascription name Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha as author. As the poem clearly has to do with one of the Í Bhriain of Thomond – Maoilín Óg refuses to name him (l. 38) – O’Rahilly suggested Conchubhar, third Earl, as the unnamed subject, and narrowed the date of composition to 1576 × 1579.³¹

The poem edited here bears an internal date of 1600 (q. 2), and belongs therefore to a period closer to the poet’s death in 1602 than that postulated by O’Rahilly for *Bráthair don bhás an doidhbhreas*. Irrespective of the question of date, *Bráthair don bhás* may be regarded as providing a background to the poem by Maoilín Óg edited here. The latter poem resonates with aspects of *Bráthair don bhás* in two respects: the decline in the fortunes of the poet resulting in his isolation (see notes to qq 13 and 14 below), and the implication of lack of patronage among the Í Bhriain. Because the theme is more general than a rehearsal of the poet’s own situation, however, we are to understand that poetry has declined throughout all the land. While reference to religion in *Bráthair don bhás* aligns that poem with other compositions such as *Mairg rug ar an aimsirsi*, assigned by its editor to a near identical period to that suggested by O’Rahilly for *Bráthair don bhás*,³² it would certainly not be out of place at the very end of the sixteenth century. Given the authorial and thematic connection with the poem edited here, *Bráthair don bhás* may well be contemporary with it, and, if so, Conchubhar’s son, the Protestant fourth Earl (1581–1624), Donnchadh Ó Briain, may be the target of both poems. This would be consistent with the uneasy relationship between Ó Briain and other poets as articulated by Aonghus Ó Dálaigh and Tadhg mac Dáire,³³ and especially with Maoilín Óg’s reported stratagem of praise in 1599 for Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill, referred to above, and his invocation of the curse of Colum Cille on Dál gCais, which can scarcely have endeared him to Ó Briain.

³¹*Measgra Dánta* I, 80.

³²Breatnach (1989).

³³Ní Úrdail (2004); McLaughlin (2005). The close connection between Donnchadh and Tadhg (to the detriment of Maoilín Óg?) is commented on in Ó Cuív (1984: 89).

METRE AND LANGUAGE

The metre of the poem edited here is *ógláchas* of *Rannai gheacht Mhór*. The poem consists of 76 lines of seven syllables; 26 are without alliteration, and in three of the *d*-lines (qq 2, 10, 15) alliteration, though present, does not occur between the final word and the preceding stressed word as required by *dán díreach*. End-rhyme (*b : d*) is perfect in six of the 19 quatrains;³⁴ internal rhyme is absent; and *aicill* rhyme – which occurs in both the first and second half-quatrains – is perfect in 20 cases (11 in the first half-quatrain, 9 in the second) of a possible 38.³⁵

The relaxed metre is complemented by some linguistic features that bear a transitional, post-classical, rather than a strictly Early Modern Irish flavour. It is not clear which if any of these may be attributed to the scribe rather than to the author, to the extent that one hesitates to restore classical forms in a number of cases where that might be an option; attention is drawn in the notes to such matters at 2*a*, 3*c*, 4*a*, 5*b*, 11*b*, 11*c*, 15*c*, and 17*b*. On the other hand, one imagines that the reading ‘mac con bháird’ (9*c*) must be transmissional, and accordingly it has been emended.

EDITORIAL REMARKS³⁶

The poem is arranged in the manuscript in the seventeenth-century (and later) four-line style.³⁷ Editorial intrusion on this scribal layout is therefore confined to punctuation and to capitalisation of proper nouns. Conventional orthographical changes effected silently consist of removal of length-marks over diphthongs (*ao(i)*, *ia*, *ua*); regularization of *éu* > *éa*; removal of unhistoric length-marks in the case of *cheárdchuibh* 6*d*, *bháird* 9*cd*, *gióll* 12*c*, *bhús* 15*b*; initial *tt-* > *dt-* and *cc-* > *gc-*; *as* (copula) > *is*; *a* (simple preposition ‘in(to)’) > *i*, and in combination with possessive pronouns *ad* > *id*, *am* > *im*.

Marks of length supplied editorially are indicated with a macron; grammatical lenition supplied editorially is indicated with italic *h*, while superfluous lenition of eclipsed initial *f-* has been removed (5*a*, 6*b*, 8*ad*). Other changes recorded in the apparatus are *gh* > *dh* 2*a*, 17*b*; *tugsat* > *tugsad* 7*a*; *mhic* > *mheic* (vocative case) 2*a*,³⁸ 15*a*, as the scribe otherwise writes ‘meic’ *plene*; supply of omitted letters *dhéuch* > *dh’fhéach* 3*c* n.; supply of eclipsis after gen. pl. (in evidence in q. 8*b* and 8*d*) following *sgol* 6*d*, 7*d*.

³⁴Typical examples of imperfect rhymes are *úir* : *shúist* (q. 4), *meath* : *shean* (q. 5), *dhoit* : *gcois* (q. 9); see further the end-rhymes in qq 10–19.

³⁵These data could be adjusted by emending *toghaidh* to *taghaidh* (giving internal rhyme, q. 11*c*) and *bhfuil* to *bhfoil* (giving *aicill* rhyme, q. 17*d*).

³⁶The edition of this text was developed in the weekly poetry seminar of the Department of Modern Irish, UCC. I thank all participants for their contributions. In addition, I am very grateful to Dr Gordon Ó Riain and to the anonymous peer-reviewer for reading and commenting on a draft of this paper.

³⁷Ó Macháin (2019: 40).

³⁸In this case the *aicill* rhyme might be augmented by emending *sin* > *sein* in l. *b*; and, for consistency, *miste* (q. 10*c*) could be spelled *meiste*.

TEXT

Maoilín Óg cc

1. Neimhghlic sin a mhacáin mhaoith,
díogha ceirde a-taoi do *t*hriall;
dul ar sgoil mās eadh dob āil,
bun 's cionn damhsa a-tá do chiall.
2. Sé chéad déag bliadhain, a mheic,
an uair budh aois sin mar shuim
do Chríost mhac Dē, liaigh ar locht,
do bhí i dtarngaire tocht ruinn.
3. Re ndul doit ō thír go tír
do dhioghluim seanchais síl dTáil
is mairg dhuitsi nach ē dh'fhéach
cionnas do bhiadh céacht id láimh.
4. Dá dtigtheá, iar gcur chuarta i gcēin,
thar th'ais fa fhréimh fhionnBhlod úir,
i ndiaidh sgagtha do ghréas nglan,
beag nābudh fhearr glac um shúist.
5. Léig dhíot feasta a bhfuil ar th'úidh,
nā bí nī is sia ag súil re meath
ō tā ar ndeaghbhlas 'na dhigh sheirbh:
tabhair cúl do cheird do shean.

TRANSLATION

1. That is unwise, tender youth – you are attempting the worst of trades; if it is [your] wish to go to school, your understanding is the opposite of mine.
2. Sixteen hundred years, son, when that in total should be the age of Christ Son of God, healer of our faults, it was prophesied to befall us.
3. Before you go from place to place assembling the traditions of the race of Tál, it is a pity for you that you have not tried how a plough would fit in your hand.
4. After making a circuit afar, should you return to the stock of fair, noble Blod, having polished your shining poems, it would nearly be better to grasp a flail.
5. Desist henceforth from what you have in mind, do not set your hopes on something that will fade, since our good draught has turned to bitter drink: turn your back on the trade of your ancestors.

VARIANTS

2. *a* bliaghain a mhic.
3. *c* dhéuch.
4. *b* réimh.
5. *a* bhfhuil; *b* ní sia.

6. Deacraide dhuit imtheacht uam
nī bhfuighe tú – truagh an teidhm –
fiú aonbhotha nō dhā bhoth
do cheardchuibh scol bhFōdla ar feidhm.
7. Tugsad Sacsain, sluaigh do chēin,
tar Cluain Plucáin béim re tuinn,
nach ionadh foghloma a-nois
seinteallach scol gCruachan Cuinn.
8. Do thuit Brosnach i bhfé fia
d'éis Chlann nGearailt – cia nār chrāidh? –
nī fhuil sí acht 'na cosair chuan,
port díoghloma duan bhfear bhFáil.
9. Dā cheannphort sgoile cláir Néill –
tárrtha léan dā madh léir dhoit –
Mac Con Midhe is Mac an Bhaird,
nī chluinim fiú an bhaird re a gcois.
10. Nach faiceann tú mise féin,
a mheic neimhghlic gan chéim gcruais? –
beag nār chuir mé, miste ar ngairm,
ceann mo shaothair go a shnaidhm buaic.

6. It should be more difficult for you to leave me that you will not find – alas the calamity – even one or two huts of the workshops of the schools of Fódla in operation.

7. The English, hosts from afar, over-ran Cluain Plucáin, so that the ancient hearth of the schools of Conn's Cruacha is no longer a place of learning.

8. Brosnach has fallen into oblivion in the wake of the Fitzgeralds – whom has it not tormented? – it is now but a bed of dogs, the place where [once] the poems of the men of Ireland were assembled.

9. The two leaders of the school of the plain of Niall – you would come to grief if you but understood – Mac Con Midhe and Mac an Bhaird: I do not hear that they have as much as a *bard* for a retinue.

10. Do you not see me, naïve unseasoned youth? I had almost brought my finished work to its pinnacle – my situation is the worse for that.

6. *b* bhfuighe; *d* fodla.

7. *a* Tugsat *d* chruachan.

8. *a* bhfhé; *d* bhfhear bhfhail.

9. *c* mac con bháird.

11. Is í mh'anóir dā cheann sin
fa chloinn Luigheach, ua Fir Chorb,
deireadh toghaidh tús dom shlad:
nī fhaghaim brat glas nā gorm.
12. Gabhtar chugam tar an dtír –
annamh neach do-ní mo réir –
breith mo ghill i ngioll re cách,
gur cuireadh mē ar sgáth mo sgéith.
13. Bím im chois re cois na n-each,
bím im aonar i measg cháigh:
dar leat is mise do mharbh
ar thuit i gCluain Tarbh d'íbh Táil.
14. Dúsacht mh'fheirge, neimhní im ghruaim,
budh ionann duais dúinn, a mheic;
freagra seasmhach síordhrud síos,
gan mo chuimhne ag fíon nā ag fleidh.
15. A mheic nā bisi dom nós,
saothraigh foghlum bhus mō cion;
seachain Gaoidhealg, seanda a snas
do thogh Gaoidheal Glas dā shliocht.
16. Truagh nach re linn cheathrair mhac
Toirdhealbhaigh Dhuinn, nār char geis,
airgtheōir Laighean na learg n-úr,
ba mac foghloma thū, a mheic.

11. My reward for that among the tribe of Lughaidh grandson of Fear Corb is that being the last to be chosen, I am the first to be plundered: I get neither a grey nor a blue cloak.

12. Throughout the territory I am confronted with the taking of my pledge in pledge for all – rare is he who does my bidding – so that I was forced to take cover.

13. I am on foot beside the horses, I am alone among everyone: you would think it is I who had killed all the descendants of Tál who fell at Clontarf.

14. Stirring my anger, ignoring my gloom: the reward for me will be the same, son; the unwavering response is [my] constant demotion, I am forgotten at wine-drinking and at feasting.

15. Son, be not like me, labour at a learning that will be better regarded; avoid Gaelic (antique its sheen) which Gaoidheal Glas chose for his posterity.

16. Alas that it was not in the time of the four sons of Toirdhealbhach Donn, who hated wrong, harrier of the Laighin of the bright slopes, that you were a student, my son.

11. *a* As si.

13. *c* dho.

15. *a* mhic *b* saothraidh; bhús *c* seannda.

17. Truagh nach re linn Taidhg mheic Bhriain
Chatha an Aonaigh, tug ngliaidh ngaire,
do bhí tú iondolta ar sgoil,
a mheic bhúidh rē bhfuil mo spairn.
18. Measa an réimhsi ráinig dhoit –
d'éis na gcuradh ōn Chraig Léith
rug an éigsi céim ar gcúl –
measa a chách a-niú inā 'né.
19. Spiorad, naomhAthair is Mac
cuir it aigne, an mar taoi,
triar re a n-adhradh, aoinDia ar nimh.
Neimhghlic sin a mhacáin mhaoith. .n.e

17. Alas that it was not in the time of Tadhg, son of Brian Catha an Aonaigh, who gave hard battle, that you were ready for schooling, dear son with whom I am sparring.

18. The time in which you find yourself is worse, it is even worse today than yesterday: in the wake of the heroes of An Chrag Liath, the profession of poetry has declined.

19. Bear in mind the Spirit, holy Father and Son, worshipped as three, a single God in heaven, [and] stay as you are; that is unwise, tender youth.

17. *a ré; b ngliaign; c tú[r cancelled].*

19. *b ad taigne.*

NOTES

1a The opening line recalls the *seanfhocul* referred to in the fourteenth-century poem beginning *Geabh do mhúnudh, a mheic bhaoith* (*Magauran* XIX.1; cf. ‘Gabh a mhic mo mhúnadh’, *Rel. Celt.* I, 127–8, and ‘feirde macámh a mhúnadh’, *DDána* 67.35). If the reference is not simply rhetorical, one might suggest Conchubhar mac Maoilín Óig as the son in question, as he did indeed pursue a career in learning. Conchubhar’s name appears with that of the Earl of Thomond’s son Tadhg on a committee of arbitration to a dispute dated 1614 (Mac Niocaill 1970: 62–5), and he was sufficiently qualified in learning to supply an attestation to what is now known as the Louvain volume of the Annals of the Four Masters in November 1636 (OFM-UCD MS A13, p. xxvi). He was also almost certainly the author of the prose encomium and three-quatrain poem (in loose *Rannagheacht Bheag*) in honour of Matthew de Renzy, dated January 1631 (Mac Cuarta 1993). It is of interest that John Brody, the author of the tract containing the poem edited here, may have been the John Mc Brody who succeeded to the occupancy of Conchubhar’s lands in the 1640s (Ó Murchadha 1999: 128).

1b *díogha ceirde* This echoes ‘Ná len do dhíogha ceirde’ in q. 2 of *A mheic ná meabhraigh éigsi* (*BMus. Cat.* I, 392).

1*d bun* 's *cionn* See O'Rahilly's note in *Measgra Dánta* II, 241; and further examples in *DIL* B, 242.20–33.

2*a bliadhain* Gen. pl. would be expected, but cf. rhymes with 'iarraidh' (*OHara* XV.11) and 'fhiadhaibh' (*TDall* 15.10, 32.39) in similar constructions; nom. sg. for gen. pl. after *céad* is noted as a later development in *DIL* C, 152.8–10.

2*c* Cf. 'liaigh do fhaomh leigheas ar locht' and 'Mac Dé do leigheas ar locht', *DDána* 62.3 and 5.

2*d* What is being referred to is the litany of decline recounted in the quatrain that follow. The *tarngaire* in question may be that recorded by both Stafford and Moryson, which foretold the overthrow of the Irish by the English at this time, and was referred to, with apparent frequency, by Donnchadh Ó Briain at the Battle of Kinsale: 'Many times I heard the Earl of Thomond tell the Lord President that in an old book of Irish prophecies which he had seen, it was reported that towards the latter days there should be a battle fought between the English and the Irish in a place which the book nameth near Kinsale' (O'Grady 1896: II, 62). 'The same day an old written Booke was shewed to the Lord Deputy, wherein was a Prophesie, naming the foard and hill where this battell was given, and foretelling a great overthrow to befall the Irish in that place' (Moryson 1908: III, 82). For the general topic see Gillespie (1997: 137–42).

3*b* Lenition would be expected here after the dat. sg. and gen. sg. respectively, but exemption due to 'sléagar' (*BST* Appendix IV, Mac Cárthaigh 2014: 295–7) can be invoked.

siól dTáil 'In tribal names formed with *siól*, *cinéal*, e. gg. *siól gColla*; *siól nEóghain*, the eclipsis appears in some cases to have become stereotyped throughout the declension' (*TDall* I, civ). Despite reservations (*ibid.*, II, 204) about whether or not *siól* should be read where the glide is not shown, many rhyming examples of gen. sg. *siól* exist in such cases (e.g. *Aith. D* 31.3, *DDána* 89.28, *Maguires* VIII.30).

3*c nach ē dh'fhéach* Note the non-classical form (MS 'dhéuch') for 'do fhéach/dhéach [tú]'; one could posit a corruption of 'nachar fhéach/dhéach', but this would remove the alliteration, and corruption of this degree is not in evidence elsewhere in the poem; the peer-reviewer suggests emending to *th'éacht*.

4*a* The subjunctive form *tig-* is rare in bardic verse, where forms of the *s*-subjunctive are countenanced exclusively by the tracts (*IGT* III.5); Tadhg Dall uses the forms *tísseadh* and *tighi* in the same poem (*TDall* 26.31*a*, 52*d*).

The rule (*BST* 208.14–15) regarding the non-elision, after a word ending in long vowel, of an unstressed *iairmbéarla* that begins with a long vowel could be circumvented either by reading *ar* instead of *iar* here, or by reading short *-thea* in the preceding subjunctive ending.

4*b fhionnBhloid* Eclipsis would be regular after accusative *fhréimh* but lenition is required for alliteration, so that 'sléagar' (cf. 3*b* above) may again be invoked; or perhaps one could argue that the distinction between accusative and dative usage after *fa* (*BST* 190.29) had begun to wane.

Blod/Blad, and his father Tál (qq 3*b*, 13*d*, *alias* Cas, *a quo* Dál gCais), were distant ancestors of the Í Bhriain (*Leabhar Muimhneach*, 294–5); see also 11*b* n.

4*c* *sgagtha* Cf. ‘grés oide d’éis a sgagtha’ (*Maguires*, l. 369: ‘the polished poem of a teacher’); also ‘oighidh Taidhg dhuansgagtha Dhoill’ in Ó Gnímh’s *Tairnig éigse fhuinn Ghaoidheal* (*DDána* 115.4).

4*d* *glac um shúist* Cf.: ‘Minic bhíos damhna flatha / soidhbhir ratha óg álainn / ’s a mhac i bhfeidhm an tsúiste, – / trí glúine ó rígh go rámhainn’ (*Bráthair don bhás*, q. 3).

5*b* A reading of MS ‘ní sia’ as ‘níos sia’ would also be acceptable at this period.

meath My colleague Dr Seán Ua Súilleabháin suggests emending to *meadh*, a late form of *míodh* ‘mead’, which, in addition to supplying perfect end-rhyme, would accord with the drinking image in line *c*.

7*b* *Cluain Plucáin* Seat of the Í Mhaoil Chonaire, and thought to be an earlier name for Baile Uí Mhaoil Chonaire, which encompassed a number of townlands in the civil parish of Kiltrustan, bar. and co. of Roscommon (Walsh 1947: 43–8).

béim re tuinn The general sense (as given in the translation) is clear, but the syntax is open to interpretation. Perhaps the optimal sequence would be ‘Tugsad S béim tar CP re tuinn’, ‘The English [arriving] by sea over-ran Cluain Plucáin’, accepting the glossators’ equation of *béim* with *céim* (*DIL* B, 53.44–7), or simply taking it as a figurative use of ‘delivered a blow’. In the latter case, *béim re tuinn* might alternatively be considered a phrase meaning ‘a blow to the skin’ – cf. also examples of *béin fri/re* in *DIL* B, 54.75–81 – a commonplace extended meaning of *tonn* (*DIL* T, 248.50–70), though other examples of this exact phrase are wanting.

8*a* *Brosnach* The school of a branch of the Í Dhálaigh, poets to the Fitzgeralds, located in Brosna, now a town and civil parish (bar. Trughanacmy), in north co. Kerry; see O’Rahilly (1922: §50) and O’Rahilly (1942: 116.6 n.).

i bhfé fia A form said to be ‘lochdach’ (in favour of ‘fégh fia’) in *IGT* II.95; see *TDall* II, 245 (q. 13 n.).

8*b* Cf. ‘Mé im luing cheannaigh ar gcaill laist / d’éis Chlann nGearailt do thuill teist’ (*Ceist cia do cheinneóchadh dán*, q. 7); ‘Léig tar cel cuimne a nemhuile / stór filed fuil ríGheruilt’ (*A mheic ná meabhraigh éigsi*, q. 11).

9*a* *sgoile* ‘of the school’: perhaps better ‘of the poets’, as suggested to me by Gordon Ó Riain.

9*b* *tárrtha* Apparently a form of the defective verb *tárraidh*: cf. ‘gé thártha riocht nuaidhe a-nocht’ *DDána* 79.25 (‘though tonight thou art in strange plight’, *Irish Monthly* 49 (1921), 246).

9*c* The poets to the two preeminent northern families, Í Néill and Í Dhomhnaill respectively, are mentioned here.

9*d* Compare Fearghal Óg’s complaint: ‘mé gan fiú an bhaird de bhuidhin’ (Ó Macháin 2007: 101.29).

10*cd* More literally ‘I had nearly tied the final knot on the roof [*ceann*] of my work’: an image from thatching. From more recent times see the

description of making the *buaic* in, for example, Verling (2012: 90); *snaidhm buaice* ‘a top knot’ (*Dinneen*, s.v. *buaic*); cf. ‘fíodhbhaidh tré bhuaic tighé ac teacht’ (*Maguires* XII.16).

11*b* *Luigheach*, properly *Luighdheach* (*IGT* II.122, where (ex. 1895) it rhymes with *Muimhneach* (cf. *DDána* 74.11)). The *Lughaidh* in question is *Lughaidh Meand* grandson of *Fer Corb* and grandfather of *Tál* (*Corp. Gen.* 154ab41–45) – hence an ancestor of the *Í Bhriain*; cf. ‘síol Luighdheach Meann na míntread’ (*Bráthair don bhás an doidhbhreas*, l. 70); see also 4*b* n. above.

11*c* *toghaidh* Genitive singular of a post-classical verb noun, the classical forms being *togha* and *tagha* (*IGT* II.3, III.80).

11*d* *glas ná gorm* That is, neither plain nor coloured.

12*a* The interpretation and translation are tentative. Though ‘gabhaidh chuige’ (etc.) is a familiar expression in active constructions signifying acceptance or reception of something (examples in *Bergin* (1931: 429) and *O’Rahilly* (1941: 313)), in this case the impersonal, as an historical present and apparently with *breith mo ghill* as its object, seems to bear connotations of unwelcome attention and confrontation.

12*c* The poet’s complaint here – that pledges are taken from him as guarantees for people unconnected to him – recalls that of *Tadhg Dall* concerning the plunder of his cattle, and the extortion of unjust pledges from him (*Ó Macháin* 2010: 64–72). The well-known case of the plundering of *Maoilín Óg*’s cattle by *Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill*, a year previous to the probable date of this poem, and their return following the poet’s petition to and praise of *Ó Domhnaill*, is recorded by both *Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh* (*Beatha Aodha Ruaidh* I, 208–10) and the *Four Masters* (*AFM* VI, 2102–4). Anxiety regarding the protection of his cattle from plunder prompted *Tadhg mac Dáire*’s threat of satire against *Í Dhomhnaill* and *Búrcaigh* and against *Donnchadh Ó Briain* in separate poems (*McLaughlin* 2005: 42).

12*d* *ar sgáth sgéith* is a relatively common phrase, usually translated literally ‘shelter/protection of a shield’: e.g. *Magauran* XI.43, *Aith. Dána* 5.17, *Aonghus Fionn* XXXII.10; perhaps ‘the last line of defence’.

13*a* The *each* was one of the coveted rewards of the poets, and overt requests for this form of payment survive in the bardic corpus: the opening line of one such poem ‘Olc beatha na gcoisidheadh’ (*Magauran*, Poem VI) is probably representative of the view of the poets, who disdained to go unmounted. To be without a horse therefore becomes one of the tokens of lack of patronage and reversal in fortune of the poets at the end of the bardic era. *Írial Ó hUiginn* says that he will be ‘feasda choidhche dom chois’ until *Cormac Ó hEadhra* supplies him with a horse for a poem (*OHara* XV.3); and following the death of *Seaán mac Briain Í Néill* in 1617, *Cormac Mac Con Midhe* declares that a patron cannot be found to give him a horse: ‘Ní bhfuair misi, acht me dom chois, / ón ló teasta flaith Fionnrois, / éineach i bhfódmhuigh na bhFionn / ó éinneach d’ógbhaidh Éirionn’ (*LCAB*, Poem XXVI, ll. 14–17). Towards the end of the century *Ó Bruadair* completes the picture with the well-known image of his reduction in circumstances: ‘d’aithle mo cheana

is marcach mé dom chois' (Mac Erlean (1913: VII.9); de Brún et al. (1975: Poem 39, l. 36)).

13b Cf. 'Aonar dhamhsa eidir dhaoineibh' (*Ir. Bardic Poetry*, 42.1). With Maoilín Óg's statement of his isolation compare his remarks in *Bráthair don bhás an doidhbhreas* (ll. 35–6): 'iniu ní fhaghaim éisteacht / do thréigsead mé mo charaid'.

14a The poet's point is that it makes no difference whether he is angry or remains sanguine, the response he elicits is the same.

14d Maoilín Óg's complaint of his neglect at feasting is generalised in *Bráthair don bhás an doidhbhreas* (ll. 13–16): 'Mar bhíd ag ól 's ag aoibhneas / fóir Ghaoideal na ngleó neamhlag, / bídh tús suidhte ag an soidhbhir, / 's bídh an doidhbhir ar dearmad'.

15c Accusative 'Ghaoidheilg' would be expected here, perhaps justifying emendation. The sentiment – the loss of respect for the Irish language and for compositions in Irish (cf. 'ná cum do ghrés Gaoidheilge' (*A mheic ná meabhraigh éigsi*, q. 2)) – is another token of the changed times, epitomised by Brian Mac Giolla Phádraig: 's gan scot ag neach le fear don dáimh éigsi / acht hob-amach is beir leat do shár-Ghaelg-sa' (Mhág Craith (1958: 106)). It formed a theme of broad concern that extended beyond the immediate bardic sphere, being reflected in works as diverse as *Pairlement Chloinne Tomáis* and Stapleton's *Catechismvs*, and it continued well into the eighteenth century.

16ab The genealogy of Toirdhealbhach Donn (†1528, *AFM* V, 1392), King of Thomond, is given in *Leabhar Muimhneach*, 377–8 and 393 (ll. 137–52 of *Tug damh h'aire, a Inse an Laoigh* by Eóghan Mac Craith); his four sons are enumerated *ibid.*, 345–6. They were: Tadhg, who was killed in Tipperary in 1523 (*AFM* V, 1364); Conchubhar (†1539, *AFM* V, 1450), King of Thomond; Donnchadh (†1531, *AFM* V, 1402), 'tánaisi Tuadmumhan'; and Murchadh (†1551, *AFM* V, 1518), first Earl of Thomond. During the reign of Conchubhar, he and his two remaining brothers, Donnchadh and Murchadh, were the subject of an *ógláchas* praise-poem beginning *Maith re sírleanmhain síol mBriain* (McManus and Ó Raghallaigh 2010: Poem 318).

16c Perhaps a reference to the defeat by Ó Briain in 1510 of a force under the Earl of Kildare near Limerick (*AFM* V, 1304–6).

17ab Tadhg Ó Briain (†1444, *AFM* IV, 938) had been King of Thomond until deposed in 1438. He and his wife Gráinne are the subjects of an elegy by Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn, beginning *Dá bhrághaid uaim i nInis* (*Aith. Dána*, Poem 14). The origin of the name of his father – Brian Chatha an Aonaigh – is given in *Leabhar Muimhneach*, 234 and 344. This Brian was regarded as the progenitor of the main Thomond line (*ibid.*, 346–7).

17b *ngliaidh* The unexpected eclipsis is due, presumably, to the influence of following *ngair*, and possibly should be removed.

18a *Measa* That is, worse in comparison to the eras mentioned in qq 16 and 17.

réimhsi Examples of this word are cited in *DIL* s.v. 'reimse', none of which are conclusive as to the length of the first vowel; the rhyme *eing-si* : *reimhsi*

occurs in a poem by Tadhg mac Dáire (McManus and Ó Raghallaigh 2010: 462.18cd, example provided by peer-reviewer), perhaps indicating variation as in ‘treimhse/tréimhse’ (*TDall* II, 192 §21n.).

18*b* *Chraig Léith* Craglea (par. Killaloe, bar. Tulla Lower, co. Clare), ancient centre of the Dál gCais – ‘Agus is ann bhaoi longphort Dhál gCais an tan sin do leathtaoibh na Craige Léithe idir an Chraig Léith agus an Bhórumha’ (*Leabhar Muimhneach*, 98) – and home to their goddess Aoibheall.

18*d* For this common use of the comparative with (*s*)*a chách* see *DIL* C, 5.65–6.2. The end of this line provides the first *dúnadh* of the poem.

ABBREVIATIONS

See also the standard *Celtica* abbreviations, pp. 309–11 below.

<i>Aith. Dána</i>	Lambert McKenna (ed.), <i>Aithdioghluinm Dána: A Miscellany of Irish Bardic Poetry</i> , 2 vols, ITS 37, 40 (Dublin, 1939, 1940).
<i>Aonghus Fionn</i>	L. M’Kenna (ed.), <i>Dánta do chum Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh</i> (Dublin, 1919).
<i>Beatha Aodha Ruaidh</i>	Paul Walsh (ed.), <i>Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill as Leabhar Lughaidh Uí Chléirigh</i> , 2 vols, ITS 42, 45 (Dublin 1948, 1957).
<i>BMus. Cat.</i>	Standish Hayes O’Grady and Robin Flower, <i>Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum</i> , 3 vols (London, 1926 and 1953).
<i>BST</i>	Lambert McKenna, <i>Bardic Syntactical Tracts</i> (Dublin, 1944).
<i>Corpas</i>	Corpas Stairiúil na Gaeilge: Historical Irish Corpus 1600–1926 (http://corpas.ria.ie/)
<i>Corp. Gen.</i>	M. A. O’Brien (ed.), <i>Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae</i> (Dublin, 1962).
<i>Dán na mB. Mionúr</i>	Cuthbert Mháig Craith (ed.), <i>Dán na mBráthar Mionúr</i> , 2 vols (Dublin 1967, 1980).
<i>DDána</i>	Láimhbheartach Mac Cionnaith (ed.), <i>Dioghluim Dána</i> (Baile Átha Cliath, 1938).
<i>Dinneen</i>	Patrick S. Dinneen, <i>Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla</i> (Dublin, 1927).
<i>Ir. Bardic Poetry</i>	Osborn Bergin, <i>Irish Bardic Poetry: Texts and Translations together with an Introductory Lecture</i> , ed. David Greene and Fergus Kelly (Dublin, 1970).

<i>LBrnach</i>	Seán Mac Airt (ed.), <i>Leabhar Branach: The Book of the O'Byrnes</i> (Dublin, 1944).
<i>LCAB</i>	Tadhg Ó Donnchadha (ed.), <i>Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe</i> (Baile Átha Cliath, 1931).
<i>Leabhar Muimhneach</i>	Tadhg Ó Donnchadha (ed.), <i>An Leabhar Muimhneach maraon le Suim Aguisíní</i> (Baile Átha Cliath, [1940]).
<i>Maguires</i>	David Greene (ed.), <i>Duanaire Mhéig Uidhir: The Poem Book of Cú Chonnacht Mág Uidhir, Lord of Fermanagh 1566–1589</i> (Dublin, 1972).
<i>Magauran</i>	Lambert McKenna (ed.), <i>The Book of Magauran: Leabhar Méig Shamhradháin</i> (Dublin, 1947).
<i>Measgra Dánta</i>	Thomas F. O'Rahilly (ed.), <i>Measgra Dánta: Miscellaneous Irish poems</i> , 2 vols (Dublin and Cork, 1927).
<i>O'Hara</i>	Lambert McKenna (ed.), <i>The Book of O'Hara: Leabhar Í Eadhra</i> (Dublin, 1951).
<i>O'Reillys</i>	James Carney (ed.), <i>Poems on the O'Reillys</i> (Dublin, 1950).
<i>Rel. Celt.</i>	Alexander Macbain and John Kennedy (ed.), <i>Reliquiae Celticae: Texts, Papers and Studies in Gaelic Literature and Philology Left by the Late Rev. Alexander Cameron</i> , 2 vols (Inverness, 1892, 1894).
<i>TDall</i>	Eleanor Knott (ed.), <i>The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (1550–1591)</i> , 2 vols, ITS 22, 23 (London, 1922, 1926).

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