

Corrach do chodlas a-réir revisited



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CORRACH DO CHODLAS A-RÉIR REVISITED

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a new edition of the poem *Corrach do chodlas a-réir* which is attributed to Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh. A translation into English is provided together with notes, some of which provide extended commentary on aspects of the poem.

INTRODUCTION

When Thomas F. O’Rahilly [Tomás Ó Rathile] published the second edition of *Dánta Grádha* (henceforth *DG*) in 1926, the title page carried the information that this volume, containing the texts of the poems, was ‘Part I’ of a two-part work. In his introduction the author promised a second part which would contain notes on the poems and a glossary.¹ This second volume was never published, so that, apart from a general statement on the five manuscripts which contained many of the poems in O’Rahilly’s book, information on the manuscript sources which he used for most of the poems and his commentary on their texts has never been made available.² However, in the case of *DG*, no. 69, *Corrach do chodlas a-réir*, Douglas Hyde had already in 1916 provided the information that the poem was to be found in the Book of O’Conor Don, where it was ascribed to Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh, and that [due to part of folio 25 of the manuscript having been cut away] eight of its twenty quatrains, viz. qq. 11–18, were defective.³ This manuscript is the sole source of the complete poem. Though it is now known that parts of the poem, including most of the defective quatrains, are found in other manuscripts, it is evident that O’Rahilly was unaware of this and used only the Book of O’Conor Don as his source, marking with a line of dots the absence of the defective quatrains from his edition. Since most of the missing quatrains can now be supplied and given that they and other aspects of the rich text of the poem deserve commentary, I offer here a new edition of the poem.

¹*DG*, *Reumhrá*, ix: *Má bhíon éileamh ar an leabhar, beid sin le fáil i leabhar fé leith gan ró-mhuill* ‘If there is a demand for th[is] book, they [i.e. notes and glossary] will be available in a separate book without much delay.’ All translations in this article are my own unless otherwise indicated.

²See *DG*, viii. O’Rahilly’s earlier collections of *dánta grádha* (*Dánta Grádha* (Dublin etc., 1916), and *Laoithe Cumainn* (Baile Átha Cliath agus Corcaigh, 1925)) also lack information on the manuscript sources. In a recent essay, Síle Ní Mhurchú lists the manuscripts in which each of the poems in *DG* is now to be found: ‘Observations on the manuscript sources for the *Dánta Grá*’, *Celtica* 29 (2017), 199–250, at 239–45.

³Douglas Hyde, ‘The Book of the O’Conor Don’, *Ériu* 8 (1916), 78–99, at 85.

SOURCES

- B** Castlereagh, Clonalis House, The Book of O'Connor Don, fol. 25r-v: qq. 1–20.⁴ Written at Ostend in 1631 by Aodh Ó Dochartaigh. Read on ISOS.
- A** UCD-OFM MS A 25, p. 129: qq. 14, 15, 17–20; p. 216: q. 15a.⁵ Perhaps written by Brian Mac Niallghuis, it 'may be dated to the second decade of the seventeenth century'.⁶ Read on ISOS.
- C** NUIM MS C 74 (g) (5), fol. 1rb: q. 1a; fol. 1ra: qq. 4, 7, 6, 10, 11, 14–20. A single leaf bearing the date 17 January 1763, written by Diarmaid Ó Drisceoil.⁷
- H** TCD MS H. 4.15 (1356), pp. 506–7: qq. 1abd, 2a–d, 5a, 5b+10b, 10c–d, 10a, 8b–d, 15, 20. Written by Stiabhna Ríghis, 1727–8.⁸

This edition is based on **B**, as was O'Rahilly's. However, **C** is a good copy of parts of the poem and, in particular, of most of the quatrains which are defective in **B** and which O'Rahilly omitted; readings from **C** have been given where **B** is defective. Due to a tear in p. 129, **A** suffers from several defects in qq. 15, 17, 18 and 19; however, alternative readings from it have been listed in the relevant section below. Some alternative readings from **H** have also been listed.

B and **A** may be nearly contemporaneous. However, they would appear to be independent copies: see, for example, q. 14a where **B** has *fá dheirdre*, whereas **A** has *tre deirde*; q. 15a where **B** has *farbhlaith fuair an mhnaoi* whereas **A** has *farbhloidhe fuair gnaoi*, and q. 20c where **B** has *ní faghtar* whereas **A** has *ní fhaghoibh*.

C would appear to be independent of both **B** and **A**. See, for example, q. 6a where **B** has *mh'aighneadh*, whereas **C** has *m'aire*; q. 10 where **B** has *san croidhe cúan*, whereas **C** has *san croidhe ó chúan*; q. 15a where **B** has *farbhlaith* (: *samhlaidhthi*) whereas **C** has *farbhladh* (: *samhladh*); q. 17b where **B** has *ó charuidh*, whereas **C** has *ó croidhe*; and q. 18b where **B** has *an tsearc* whereas **C** has *an bheart*. So also see q. 15a where **A** has *farbhloidhe fuair gnaoi* whereas **C** has *farbhladh fuair mhnaoi*; q. 18b where **A** has *sea...* whereas **C** has *bheart*; and q. 20c where **A** has *ní fhaghoibh* whereas **C** has *ní fachtar*.

It is clear that the garbled text in **H** is the product of a very poor memory.

⁴Ibid., 78–9.

⁵A note on p. 216 provides the best reading of q. 15a.

⁶See Myles Dillon, Canice Mooney and Pádraig de Brún, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Franciscan Library Killiney* (Dublin, 1969), 50.

⁷See Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, *Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge Choláiste Phádraig, Má Nuad: Clár*, fasc. 6 (Má Nuad, 1969), 5.

⁸See T. K. Abbott and E. J. Gwynn, *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin and London, 1921), 180.

AUTHOR

In the fifteenth century the family of which Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh was a member emerged as a bardic dynasty in the Westmeath area, holding lands in the barony of Rathconrath. When An Clasach Ó Cobhthaigh died in 1415 he was described in the Annals of the Four Masters as *saoi ré dán agus ré daonnacht* ‘a man eminent for poetry and humanity’. Three of his sons, who were also poets, lived and died in the Westmeath area: Maoileachlainn who was killed by Éamann Dalatún (*AFM* s.a. 1429.13) of Rathconrath; Domhnall, *saoi lé dán* ‘a learned poet’, who together with his two sons was killed by members of the Ó Maoileachlainn and Mág Eochagáin families on *Cró-inis* in Lough Ennell (*AFM* s.a. 1446.14 and *AU* s.a. 1446.10),⁹ and Aodh, *saoi lé dán*, who died of the plague in *Feara Tulach* (Fartullagh) (*AFM* s.a. 1452.21).

In the middle of the sixteenth century three sons of Aodh Ó Cobhthaigh, Diarmaid, Eoghan and Tadhg, were poets. Diarmaid composed a number of religious poems (*AithDD* nos. 63–7) and also an elegy, *Dá néall orchra ós iath Uisnigh* ‘Two clouds of grief cover the land of Uisneach’, on the deaths of Eoghan and his wife, Aibhilín, at some date between 1560 and 1577.¹⁰ Eoghan is described in that elegy as *ceann ar gcinidh* ‘head of our family’, and was the author of two eulogies, *Mairidh teine a dteallach Ghaoidehal* ‘Fire still burns in Ireland’s hearth’, for Rudhraighe Caoch Ó Mórdha,¹¹ and the incomplete *Faighigh chosnas clú Laighean* ‘The men of Í Fhaighigh uphold Laighin’s fame’, for Brian Ó Conchobhair Failghe.¹²

According to *AFM* Tadhg, *oide scol Ē[i]reann lé dán* ‘teacher of the schools of Ireland in poetry’, was imprisoned in Dublin Castle for three months in 1546 and though an attempt was made to murder him (*ro fōbradh [a] oidheadh*) he survived and died in 1554, under which date *AFM* described him as *prīomhoide Ē[i]reann 7 Alban lé dán* ‘principal teacher of Ireland and Scotland in poetry’.

In addition to *Corrach do chodlas a-réir*, two other poems which are attributed to Tadhg survive: *Folamh Éire d’easbhaidh Bhriain* (*ABM*, no. 246, ‘Ireland is empty without Brian’) in which he expresses his disquiet at the imprisonment in the Marshalsea of London in 1548 of Brian son of Cathaoir Ó Conchobhair,¹³ and a religious poem, *Crann seóil na cruinne an chroch naomh* (*ABM*, no. 118, ‘The holy cross is the mast of the world’).¹⁴

⁹Domhnall’s father’s name is recorded in RIA MS 23 D 14 (1), p. 59.25: see Thomas F. O’Rahilly, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1926), 3.

¹⁰Ed. in Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh, ‘Poems from the Nugent Manuscript’, unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, poem 7.

¹¹Ed. Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh, ‘A poem to Rudhraighe Caoch Ó Mórdha, lord of Laois 1542–7’, *Ossory, Laois and Leinster 2* (2006), 44–64.

¹²Ed. Lambert McKenna, ‘Some Irish bardic poems, 89’, *Studies* 38 (1949), 57–62.

¹³See Fiona Fitzsimons, ‘The lordship of O’Connor Faly’, in William Nolan and Timothy P. O’Neill (eds), *Offaly: History and Society* (Dublin, 1998), 117–43, at 118–19.

¹⁴The latter poem lacks closure and may be incomplete. However, the scribe of the earliest manuscript in which it is found, RIA MS 23 D 14 (1), written in 1673, penned the following note after the end of his copy of the poem: *Finit don dán sin más fíor dá lucht eólais 7 munab eadh ní rachadsa do chruthghadh a aithearrach orra* ‘That is the end of that poem if those who are

In Osborn Bergin's edition of the *Irish Grammatical Tracts*, citation 1485 is *Ní bhiadh ó cheart nar ccinn-ne / an dearc do iarr Aithirne* 'The eye which Aithirne demanded would not be by right in our head.'¹⁵ This citation does not occur in the copy of that tract in RIA MS C ii 3 (1218), Section C; however, a marginal note in faded ink at the top of fol. 12r of that copy has that citation and states that it is taken from a poem by Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh: *Ag so dān ō T[h]ad[h]g Ō Chob[h]t[h]aigh ...*¹⁶ Furthermore, in the same copy of the tract a marginal note at the top of fol. 15v quotes a quatrain which it attributes to Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh: *Tig tre fhuil tTāil 'na tendál / do d[h]āil do c[h]ruidh fa gcoimmian / seoid ōn fhuil duitsi is dimbuan / cuisli innfhuar d'fhuil Oilliam. Tad[h]g Ō Cobhthaigh .cc.* 'A refreshing gush of the blood of William comes as a fury through the family of Tál; because of bestowing your wealth due to their common desire, resulting from this blood your treasures are short-lived.' This quatrain is given as citation 1815 in Bergin's edition.¹⁷ The hand of the marginal note seems to be that of Muirheartach Ó Cionga, the scribe of the main text, which he wrote in 1552, when Tadhg was still alive. The poem or poems from which those two quotations were taken do not appear to have survived.¹⁸

Following a suggestion of Edward O'Reilly's, Pádraig A. Breatnach has expressed the belief that Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh and Tadhg Mór Ó Cobhthaigh, author of the poem for Maghnas Ó Domhnaill, *Cia ré gcuirfinn séd suirghe* 'Whom should I send with a love token', were the same person.¹⁹ The stylistic device of pervasive and varied repetition, which is a significant feature of all three of Tadhg's poems, is also found in Tadhg Mór's poem for Maghnas Ó Domhnaill, which suggests that all four poems are by the same author.²⁰

knowledgeable about it are right, and if it is not, I shall not attempt to convince them that the opposite is true': see *ABM*, 704–5. On another similar scribal note in the same manuscript, see Dáibhí I. Ó Cróinín, 'A poem to Toirdhealbhach Luinneach', *Éigse* 16 (1975–6), 50–66, at 51–2.

¹⁵ *IGT* II, 114. The reference here is to the opening topographical episode of the tale *Talland Étair* (ed. Caoimhín Ó Dónaill, *Talland Étair: A Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation, Textual Notes and Vocabulary* (Maynooth, 2005)), in which the origin of the name of Lough Derg, *Dergderc* (*sic*), is explained. The king of south Connacht, Echu Luchtaí, had only one eye. When the Ulster poet Aithirne demanded that he give it to him, he plucked it from its socket and handed it to him. The king's servant who brought him to wash his face in water informed him that the cavity (i.e. referring both to the eye-socket and to the water-hole) was red with his blood, to which the king replied: *Bid ed a ainm co bráth or in rí .i. Dergderc* 'It will be its name forever said the king i.e. Dergderc [trans. Red eye]' (reading from the Book of Leinster, Ó Dónaill, *Talland Étair*, 70).

¹⁶ See Kathleen Mulchrone, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, fasc. 26 (Dublin, 1942), 3271.

¹⁷ *IGT* II, 137.

¹⁸ See the file 'Citations from the *Irish Grammatical Tracts* and the *Bardic Syntactical Tracts*' available on www.tcd.ie/Irish/research/database.php, nos. 2916 and 3788 (= *IGT* II, 1485 and 1815). Accessed November 2018.

¹⁹ See Pádraig A. Breatnach, 'In praise of Maghnas Ó Domhnaill', *Celtica* 16 (1984), 63–72, at 63.

²⁰ See the discussion of this feature below. The triple repetition of the word *fuil* in *IGT* II citations, ll. 1815–16, is also worth noticing.

METRE

The metre of *Corrach do chodlas a-réir* is *rannaigheacht mhór*. Though there are two internal rhymes of the ‘broken’ variety (*comhardadh briste*)²¹ in the opening couplet (*seóladh*) of half of the quatrains, a ‘broken’ rhyme (*comhardadh briste*) is accompanied by a ‘perfect’ rhyme in seven quatrains, with two ‘perfect’ rhymes being accompanied by a ‘broken’ rhyme in two quatrains (8*ab* and 17*ab*) and one ‘perfect’ rhyme being accompanied by two ‘broken’ rhymes in q. 18. This pattern (to which that of Tadhg’s other *rannaigheacht mhór* poem, *Crann seóil na cruinne an chroch naomh*, is similar) would seem to be normal for the period after a transition had occurred from an earlier ‘perfect rhyme only’ rule to a later relaxed rule in which ‘broken’ rhyme was acceptable.²²

According to Eleanor Knott’s formulation, in a quatrain in *rannaigheacht mhór*, ‘[the final words of lines] *b* and *d* rime, and *ac* consonate with them ... and the final word of *c* rimes with a word in the interior of *d* [the term for this device being *aicill*].’²³ In qq. 16 and 17 of this poem the final words of lines *a* and *c* rhyme perfectly with each other: *ngrādh* : *lán*, *meadh* : *bean*, while in q. 18 *Traoi* rhymes with itself. In each case there is *aicill* rhyme between the final word of line *c* and a word in the interior of *d*. Having noted that this combination of features ‘has the effect of producing multiple/superfluous rime (known as *breacadh*) in the overall quatrain’, Pádraig Breatnach has provided a substantial list of instances of its occurrence in initial quatrains.²⁴ However, as is the case in this poem, it also occurs frequently elsewhere in poems: e.g. *AithDD* 17 q. 39; 62 q. 15; 63 q. 19; 84 q. 24; 86 q. 14; 95 qq. 15, 27 and 31; 100 q. 35, with a word rhyming with itself in nos 17.39*ac*; 62.15*ad*; 84.24*cd*; 95.27*ad*.

EDITION

Matter taken from C where B is defective is enclosed in chain brackets. With one exception (1*b*), forms of *codail* and *codladh* are spelled in B with *-dh-*; the aspiration is omitted here. Tall *e* is used for *e* and *ea* in B: it is represented here by whichever form is appropriate. I have not italicised subscript *i*. I have read *i* (preposition), *im* (preposition + possessive pronoun, first person singular) and *is* (copula) for *a*, *am* and *as* respectively, *gc-* and *sc-* for *cc-* and *sg* respectively, *mar* for *mur* and *ua* for *úa*.

²¹ For the use of the term ‘broken rhyme’ to include both *comhardadh briste* ‘broken rhyme’ and *amus* ‘assonance’ see Pádraig A. Breatnach, ‘Ornamentation in *rannaigheacht*’, in Gordon Ó Riain (ed.), *Dá dTrián Feasa Fiafraighidh* (Dublin, 2017), 293–337, at 300 n. 33.

²² See *ibid.*, 295–9.

²³ Eleanor Knott, *Irish Syllabic Poetry* (Dublin, 1957), 13–14 (for the metre), 9 (for *aicill*).

²⁴ Breatnach, ‘Ornamentation in *rannaigheacht*’, 297 n. 21 and Appendix B.

TEXT

Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh *cecinit*

1. Corrach do chodlas a-réir:
 codladh do badh docair dhūinn;
 ag so an *crithear* buan *nach* báidh,
 gual an g[h]ráidh ag *ficheadh* fūinn.
2. Mo chodladh fa chodladh saobh:
 tre chodladh *corrach* do-chiam
 bean b[h]ruit uaine is si[o]nn *ar* suan,
 sduagh fhi[o]nn do ba nuaidhe niamh.
3. Trem chadladh do-conncas dūinn –
 níor c[h]omthach rer g[h]abhtha gráin –
 stuagh m[h]ēirsheang fa *meadh* do rīgh,
 bean 'ga mbím i ngēib[h]eann grāidh.
4. Nī hionann grādh oile is í,
 mo thoil-si *mar* tá don mhnaoi;
 truagh gan mo g[h]rādh dhoid, a Dhé,
 's mē 'gum ghoid ar lár an laoi.
5. Doigh s[h]eirce dom tholladh trīom
 ar chodladh ní leigt[h]ear luadh;
 ón g[h]ruaidhg[h]il is tinn a-tám;
 buaidhridh a grādh sinn 'nar suan.

TRANSLATION

1. My sleep was disturbed last night: it was a sleep which was hard for me. The coal of love seething under me is the constant spark which is not pleasant.
2. My sleep was an unnatural sleep: through a disturbed sleep I see while asleep a green-cloaked woman, a fair and stately woman of freshest beauty.
3. Through my sleep there appeared to me a stately woman with slender fingers who was worthy of a king, a woman who holds me in a love-prison – she was not a companion to be despised.
4. No other love is like my love for the woman as I am being taken off in the middle of the day. It is a pity that my love is not for you, God.
5. While a love-pang is piercing through me, mention of sleep is not permitted. I am ill because of the bright-cheeked one, my love for whom disturbs me when I am asleep.

VARIANTS

1. *c* B *crithir*.
2. *b* H *ad* *chiam*; *d* B *sdú*aigh, *fhinn*.
3. *a* B *chadladh*; B *comtach*; *c* *sdú*aigh *mearsheang*.
4. *a* B *ele*; *c* B *dhuid*; *d* B *gum*.

6. Ar gcur m'aignidh 'na gruaidh ghil
suan ar ar n-aire nī uil;
toirc[h]eas na heirce is sí s[o]in:
doigh sheirce trem c[h]lí do chuir.
7. Rug m'aire d'imirt is d'ól
an ainnir is gile grúadh;
rug a tromg[h]rádh sinn dar seól;
ceól mar org[h]án linn a luadh.
8. Searc mná ón dod[h]olta dhúinn
lán robharta ag teacht i dtír;
mar badh moir i gcom[h]dháil chuain
do chuaidh doigh a tromg[h]rāidh trīnn.
9. An tolsain – gā tine is teó? –
im c[h]ridhe 'na cosair chró
'gom shíorghoin as-toigh a-tá:
toil mná gá mīorbhail is mó?
10. 'Na lán mara do mhoigh trōm
an toil nach lam[h]ar a luadh;
cosg na toile is ar gan fhál;
lān do g[h]abh san chroidhe cuan.

6. Sleep is of no interest to me since I have turned my attention to her bright cheek. She is the offspring of the lizard: she has sent a pang of love through my heart.

7. The maiden with the brightest cheek has taken my attention from sport and drink. (My) great love for her has taken me off my course; to hear her mentioned is music like an organ for me.

8. The love of a woman which I cannot escape is (like) a full spring-tide coming ashore. The pang of love for her went through me as if it were a sea meeting a harbour.

9. What miracle is greater than love for a woman? That love which is bleeding in my heart is ever wounding me within. What fire is hotter?

10. The love that one does not dare to mention has burst through me as a full tide. It is a fruitless endeavour to (try to) check the love which has fully established a harbour in the heart.

6. *a* B maighneadh, maire.

7. *d* B linne.

8. *a* B óna; *b* B tocht, *H* teacht; *c* BH muir; *d* B trim, *H* thríom.

9. *a* B toilsin, teine; *c* B gum.

10. *a* B mhuigh.

11. Do s[h]eirc mnā na malach seang,
dā grādh mar do gadadh si[o]nn,
im riocht f{éin ní f[h]uileam a[nn]:
call tar cuileann nī léir liom.}
12. Do-chuaidh m'aithne i n-éinfheacht uaim;
rem aigneadh ní héidear srian;
beith ciallmhar ní
.....
13. A s[h]earc do Bhláthnaid do bhí
is-teach go dtánaig a ré;
tug tol a m[h]eanman don mhnaoi
m... [Con Raoi]
14. Dāl Naoise fá Dheirdre ar ndál
nach feir[r]de faoilte n[á] fíon;
ní reabhradh re neach do-niam,
eac[h] g{an srian go ndearnadh díom.}
15. Cearbhall Farbhlaidh fuair mar mhnaoi:
rem uaill ní samhlaidhte acht sé;
do b[h]í i dtarng[a]ire a theacht dī
's do s[h]ní searc F{harbhlaidhe é.}

11. Due to (my) love for the woman of the narrow eyebrows (and) as I have been taken off by love for her, I am not myself (and) the difference between a hazel and a holly is not apparent to me.

12. I am completely bereft of my (power of) cognition; it is not possible to control my mind; to be sensible ... not ...

13. [Cú Raoi's] love was for Bláthnaid until his life came to an end; [he] gave the love of his heart to the woman ...

14. My circumstance is the same as Naoise's with regard to Deirdre as a result of which rejoicing or wine is not better. I do not play with anyone, so that I have been turned into an unbridled horse.

15. Cearbhall got Farbhlaidh as (his) wife: no pride except his is comparable to mine. It was prophesied that he would come to Farbhlaidh and his love for her caused him grief.

11. c C bhfuileam; c C ass.

12. a B aoinfheacht; b B héidir.

13. a B Bhláthnuid; b astteagh, ttainic.

14. a A tre; b C na, AB no; c A le; B niamh, AC niam.

15. a B Cearbholl, A Cearball, C Cearbhall; B Farbhladh, A Farbhloidhe, C Farbhladha; B an mnaoi, A gnaoi, C mhnaoi; on p. 216 of A is the following note: *Jesus Maria Cearball Farblad fuair mur mnaoi; b B samhlaighthi, A samhladhi, C samhladh; c C ttairngire, A ttairngire, C tarangare, H tarrngaire; d B do sní, A s do shní, gur sní; A fharbl..., C farbhladha.*

16. Ó Duibhne fā G[h]ráinne ar ngrādh:
 nī suirghe tāinig do t[h]aom;
 mo shearc f[h]alaigh fa linn lán;
 samhail {dā ngrádh inn ar-aon}.
17. Mac Coise is Maol M[h]eadha ar meadh:
 Maol M[h]eadha ó chroidhe do char.
 Dá huaill nír bharamhail bean:
 fuair fear fa d{aghshamhail dam[h]}.
18. Sluagh na Grēige is-teach san Traoi
 buan an tsearc fār lēigeadh lé
 an bhean do thairbhir an Traoi;
 do[n] m[h]naoi ar aird[h]ibh {is meadh mé.}
19. Nī aithnim umha tar ór,
 ní aithnim uisce tar fhíon;
 mo c[h]roidhe gonta dá grádh
 lán moire ara docra díon.
20. Nó go bhfé[a]ch[th]ar an folt fann
 agus réalta na rosg gcorr,
 ní faghar glóir acht glóir g[h]earr;
 's dóigh leam gur cadhan an chorr.

16. My love is as (the love of) ó Duibhne for Gráinne: it is not love-making that came suddenly. My hidden love was a vast sea; (the love of) both of us is comparable to their love.

17. Mac Coise and Maol Mheadha are a match for us: he loved Maol Mheadha with [all] his heart. No woman's pride was comparable with hers: she got a husband who was very like me.

18. Lasting was the love because of which the Greek host was admitted to Troy by the woman who surrendered (that city). I am a match for the woman as regards characteristics.

19. I cannot distinguish bronze from gold; I cannot distinguish water from wine. My heart (is) wounded by love for her (which is) a high tide against which it is a hardship to protect.

20. Until the soft-haired woman and the star of the round eyes is observed, no glory is attained but a brief one. I think that the heron is a barnacle goose.

16. *a* B *gradh*, C *ngradh*; *b* B *a taomh*, C *do thaom*; *d* B *ar gradh*, C *da ngrádh*; B *rin*, C *inn*.

17. *b* B *charuidh*, A *croi...e*, C *croidhe*; C *deighshamhuil*.

18. *a* B *astigh*, AC *asteach*; *b* C *bheart*; *c* B *thoirbhir*, C *thoirbhir*, A *tairbhir*; *d* B *do mnaoi*, A *don mhnaoi*; *d* B *airgibh*, A *airrignibh*, C *argibh*; B *fa m...*, C *as*.

19. *d* BAC *mara*.

20. *a* B *bhféchar*, A *bfeighthar*, C *bhféachtar*, H *bhfáicear*; BA *a*, CH *an*; *c* B *faghtar*, A *faghaoibh*, C *facthar*, H *faghtar*; *d* *as*, ACH *deest*; BAH *gur*, C *gurab*.

COMMENTARY

Though this love poem begins with a series of three quatrains which refer to the speaker's sleep being disturbed by the sight of a beautiful woman, it would appear that it is not an *aisling* (*reverdie*, vision) in which an unknown woman appears to the speaker, but rather an expression of his love for his mistress which is so intense that it makes it impossible for him to sleep peacefully. This is one of the tropes of *amour courtois* in which love is represented as an illness which causes pain and upset. So for the speaker in this poem love is a prison (q. 3*d*). It is like burning coal seething under him and creating an unpleasant sensation (q. 1*cd*); no fire is hotter (q. 9*a*). It is a piercing pang (qq. 5*a*, 6*d*, 8*d*) which wounds him (qq. 9*c*, 19*c*). It makes him unable to relax and enjoy life (qq. 7*a*, 14*c*) and confuses his senses so that he cannot distinguish a hazel from a holly (q. 11*cd*) nor bronze from gold nor water from wine (q. 19*ab*) nor a barnacle goose from a heron (q. 20*d*).

Together with the influence of the foreign tradition the native voice is clearly heard in this poem. It is mediated through the use of the standard lexicon of bardic praise poetry such as the references to the woman as *stuagh fhionn do ba nuaidhe niamh*, *stuagh mhéirsheang*, *an ghruaidhgheal*, *an ain-nir is gile gruadh*, *bean na malach seang*, *an folt fann*, *réalta na rosg gcorr* (qq. 2*d*, 3*c*, 5*c*, 7*b*, 11*a*, 20*ab*) and through the use of phrases such as *bean bhruith uaine*, *toirrchneas na heirce*, *ar gan fhál* (qq. 2*c*, 6*c*, 10*c*). So too, through its series of references to salient figures of tales of love (qq. 13–18), the poem is seen to belong to the same native tradition of love poems as *DG* nos. 7²⁵ and 71, which consist almost entirely of such references, *DG* 70, qq. 4–7, and Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn's two *aislings*, *Néall mná síthe sunn a-réir* 'There was a vision of a fairy woman here last night', qq. 15–19, and *An tusa an bhean do bhí sunn* 'Are you the woman who was here', qq. 9–17.²⁶ While four of the tales (qq. 13–16) referred to by Ó Cobhthaigh end in tragedy, the last two (qq. 17–18) do not seem to fit this pattern. However, all six tales are concerned with the tribulations of love, and, though the speaker does not overtly refer to that in every case, the poet may have expected that the hearer/reader of the poem would be sufficiently conversant with those tales to be able to appreciate

²⁵It is perhaps worth noting that a partial copy of this poem, with the quatrains in the order 1, 5, 3, 2, 7, 10, 6, 4, 8, occurs in UCD-OFM MS A 25, 126–7, though not in the hand of the main scribe. This, taken together with the poem under discussion here, may be taken to suggest that the interest of the scribes was not in the love poems *per se*, but in their references to tales, one of which, *Tochmharc Farbhlaidhe* 'The wooing of Farbhlaidh' = *Bás Cearbhaill agus Farbhlaidhe* (see note on q. 15 below), occurs at 217–30, prefaced by q. 15*a* of Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh's poem. Indeed some of the manuscript's notes, in hands other than that of the principal scribe, express a negative attitude to love. On p. 210 occurs the following Latin couplet (the first half-line of which is also found on p. 124): *Nescio quid sit amor: nec amo, nec amor, nec amavi. / Sed scio, si quis amat, uritur igne gravi* 'I do not know what love is: I neither love, nor am loved, nor have loved. But I know, if someone loves, he is burned by a great fire.' Also on p. 210 occurs a line and a half in Irish which, with a reference to *grádh baoth*, 'foolish love', would seem to chime with the negativity of poems such as *DG* nos. 22 and 63.

²⁶Ed. Eleanor Knott, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn*, ITS 22 and 23, 2 vols (London, 1922 and 1926), nos. 39 and 40.

that the impact of the speaker's description of his own difficulties is heightened by his references to those tales.

More personal to Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh is the device of varied and pervasive repetition of words and phrases which is a salient feature of all four of his poems and to which I have already referred. The bardic poets frequently repeat, as an intensifying feature, a key word or phrase in successive quatrains of their poems.²⁷ However, Ó Cobhthaigh's practice is much more varied and as a result his diction is highly insistent. Thus *codladh* occurs in qq. 1ab, 2a (x2), 2b, 3a, 5b, and its synonym *suan* in q. 5d, 6b; *doigh* in qq. 5a, 6d, 8d and from the same semantic range *goínidh* in q. 9c; *grádh* in qq. 1d, 3d, 4ac, 5d, 7c, 8d, 11b, 16ad, 19c, its synonym *searc* in qq. 5a, 6d, 8a, 11a, 13a, 15d, 16c, 18b, and from the same semantic range *caraidh* in q. 17b; *gruadh* in qq. 5c, 6a, 7b; *lán* in qq. 8b, 10ad, 16c and 19d, associated in each of five cases with a term for a body of water (*robharta*, *moir* (twice), *cuan* and *linn*); *meadh* in qq. 3c, 17a, 18d; *moir* in qq. 8c, 10a, 19d, and from the same semantic range *robhorta* in q. 8b, *cuan* in qq. 8c, 10d and *linn* in q. 16c; *tol* in qq. 4b, 9ad, 10bc, 13c. Some of those occur as part of a phrase (*doigh sheirce* in qq. 5a, 6d; *lán robharta / mara / moire* in qq. 8b, 10a, 19d) or of a compound word (*grúaidhghéal* in q. 5c, *tromghrádh* in qq. 7c, 8d, *siorghoin* in q. 9c).

NOTES

Q.2c *bean bhrúit uaine*: This phrase is common in the literature, the sense being that the green cloak of the woman signifies either that she is of noble birth or that she is of the *aos sídhe* (fairy folk).

In *ABM* 102.12a, *Bé Bhinn bhratúaine*, and in *PB* l. 2147, *bean b[h]roit uaine*, nobility is implied (see also *PB* l. 2141, *Bean shróill deirg*, a woman dressed in red satin). So too in 'The songs of Buchet's house',²⁸ in *ben brathúaine*, the green-cloaked woman (268, q. 48b), *Eithne thóebfhata*, is the daughter of the provincial king, Cathair, and foster-child of the nobleman, Buchet. The use of the colour of an individual's cloak as a marker of identity or function is seen here also in that Eithne's foster-father is *Buchet brattdeirg* (262, q. 62c, q. 11d), that fifty warriors in Buchet's house are properly (clad) in crimson cloaks, *i mbrattaib corcra co ccert* (272, q. 62c) and that fifty noble maidens there are also dressed in green cloaks (273, q. 63). In *Aided Con Rói*

²⁷In *Téamaí Taighde Nua-Ghaeilge* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1997), 21, Pádraig A. Breatnach suggests that this is a distinctive feature (*ciúta sainiúil*) of the poetry of Maoil Eachlainn na nUirsgéal Ó hUiginn. This is hardly the case, for it is found in the work of many of the poets: e.g. *fol* in q. 1a of Muireadhach Albanach Ó Dálaigh's *An foltsa dhuir*, a *Dhé athar* 'This hair I offer thee, O God the Father' (*AithDD*, no. 43) is repeated in qq. 1d, 2d, 3c, 4ac (x 2), 5bd, 8d, 9d (and the synonymous *cúl* in q. 6c, *ciabh* in q. 18c and *barr* in q. 9ac); *léine* in q. 1a of Seán Ó Clumháin's *Leasaightheair libh léine an ríogh* 'Repair ye the Prince's tunic' (*AithDD*, no. 4) is repeated in qq. 1c, 2a, 3a, 4bd, 6a, 8c, 9c, 10c, 11c, 12c, 13a and 23d (and the synonymous *truail* in qq. 7c and 10a); *saoghaila* in q. 1a, of Donnchadh Mór Ó Dálaigh's *Saoghaila sin, a shaoghail* 'That is worldly, O world' (*DiD*, no. 53) is repeated in qq. 1cd, 2d, 3d, 15d, 17d, and *saoghal* in q. 1a is repeated in 2d, 4c, 5b, 6a, 7ad, 8d, 9c, 10d, 11a, 12d, 14a, 16d, 18a, 19c, 20d, 21b, 22b, 23d, 24d, 25b, 26d, and its synonyms *bioth* and *domhnán* in 13d and 27d.

²⁸Ed. Mary Hayden, 'The song of Buchet's house,' *ZCP* 8 (1912), 261–73.

mac Dáire Cú Rói, who practises magic, is referred to as *fer broit lachtna*, a man in a grey cloak,²⁹ while in the Early Modern *Eachtra Bhodaigh an Chóta Lachtna* the eponymous churl in the grey cloak is a deity in disguise.³⁰

However, in *Seirgligi Con Culaind* ‘The wasting sickness of Cú Chulainn’,³¹ one of the two women who visit Cú Chulainn in a dream wears a green cloak while the other wears a purple one, the woman in the green cloak being Lí Ban who came as a messenger from Fand, the wife of Manannán mac Lir (ll. 73–4, 127–33). So too, in *IGT* II, p. 121, citation 1587 *Bean bhroit úaine* would appear to be a member of the fairy folk since she is able to be *i n-ilreachduibh*, ‘in many shapes’, while in *ABM*, no. 215, q. 33 the *cumhal bruit uaine*, ‘green-cloaked servant’, who is sent from *síth Bóinne* to seduce Maoileachlainn Ó Ceallaigh is certainly a fairy woman, and the giantess wearing a green cloak (*Bratt úaine impe*) whom mac Coise met at Lough Lene, Co. Westmeath, was also an otherworldly figure.³²

Given that I have suggested above that this poem is not an *aisling*, I take it that Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh intended the reference here to be to a noble woman, or at least, as the speaker suggests, to a woman who was beautiful enough to be a worthy partner for a king (q. 3c: *stuagh m[h]éirsheang fa meadh do rígh*).

Q.6c *toirrcheas na heirce*: This phrase also occurs in the Irish translation of *Visio Thugdali*.³³ The author of the *Visio* was an Irish monk of the twelfth century, Marcus, who went to Regensburg where he was either a visitor or a member of the Irish Benedictine community.³⁴ While there he composed in Latin, about 1149, an account which he claims had been narrated to him in Irish by Thugdulus of the latter’s experiences when brought by an angel to visit purgatory, hell and heaven.³⁵ The work, which Marcus dedicated to Giesela, abbess of the Benedictine convent in Regensburg, contains descriptions of the punishments which Thugdulus saw meted out in purgatory and hell to various categories of sinners, among which is that suffered by members of religious orders who in life had committed sexual and other sins. The souls of these, both men and women, were impregnated by a horrible beast and then descended into an icy swamp to await their time to give birth. There they were

²⁹Ed. R.I. Best, ‘The tragic death of Cú Rói mac Dáiri’, *Ériu* 2 (1905), 20, §2; see also *FFÉ* ii, 222, l. 3456; see note on q. 13 below.

³⁰Gerard Murphy has suggested that this tale is ‘certainly as late as the sixteenth century’ (see G. Murphy, *The Ossianic Lore and Romantic Tales of Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1955), 50). Deirdre Nic Chárthaigh has provided evidence that the surviving version of it was composed between 1543 and 1731 in her new edition of it (see Deirdre Nic Chárthaigh, ‘*Bodach an Chóta Lachtna*: eagrán nua’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin (2019), 149), in which she has discussed the motif of the grey-coated man at pp. 14–18.

³¹Ed. Myles Dillon, *Seirgligi Con Culaind*, Medieval and Modern Irish Series 14 (Dublin, 1953).

³²Ed. Kuno Meyer, ‘Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Elfenbegräbnis’, *ZCP* 8 (1912), 559–60.

³³See also *Toirrchas eirci d’órbhlaoscaib*, ed. Osborn Bergin, *IGT* II, citation 1078.

³⁴See Nigel F. Palmer, ‘*Visio Thugdali*’: *The German and Dutch Translations and their Circulation in the Later Middle Ages* (München, 1982), 11.

³⁵See Albert Wagner (ed.), *Visio Thugdali* (Erlangen 1882, reprinted 1989), 4.

bitten in the bowels by the foetuses as occurred, the author states, in the case of the viper.³⁶ This is probably an allusion to the ancient belief that the female viper was killed by her young ripping their way out of their mother's body.³⁷ This belief survived, at least in metaphorical usage, down to the seventeenth century.³⁸

An Irish translation of the *Visio, Aisling Tundail*, was made by Muirgheas mac Pháidín Ó Maolchonaire (d. 1543) in the second decade of the sixteenth century.³⁹ An early seventeenth-century copy of his translation 'made by a careful scribe ... probably from the original itself' is found in TCD MS H. 3. 18 (1337).⁴⁰ The text, which is in archaised Early Modern Irish, 'often abridges considerably [but] is on the whole accurate and spirited'.⁴¹ The relevant passage in the original reads as follows:

... viderunt bestiam omnibus, quas ante viderant, bestiis valde dissimilem ... Que bestia sedebat super stagnum glacie condensum. Devorabat ... bestia quascumque invenire poterat animas, et dum in ventre ejus per supplicia rediguntur ad nihilum, pariebat eas in stagnum glacie coagulatum, ibique renovabantur iterum ad tormentum. Impregnabantur vero omnes anime tam virorum quam mulierum, que descendebant in stagnum, et ita gravide prestolabantur tempus, quod eis conveniebat ad partum. Intus vero mordebantur in visceribus more viperino a prole concepta. (Wagner, *Visio*, 27.17–28.6)

'... they saw a beast which was quite unlike all beasts that they had previously seen... That beast used to sit upon a swamp which was thick with ice... The beast used to devour what souls it could find, and while in its stomach they were reduced to nothing by sufferings, it gave birth to them into the swamp which was thick with ice, and there they were renewed to be tormented. In fact all the souls, both of men and of women, which descended into the swamp were impregnated, and thus pregnant they awaited the time which was proper for them to give birth. Indeed in the manner of a viper they were bitten inside in their intestines by the offspring that they had conceived.'

³⁶*Ibid.*, 27–8.

³⁷Cf. Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, book 10, ch. 62.82, composed AD 77–9; Konrad von Megenberg, *Das Buch der Natur*, of AD 1475, ed. Franz Pfeiffer (Stuttgart 1861), 285.

³⁸See the following citations in *OED*, s.v. viper, 3 (a): 1602, Ben Jonson, *Poetaster* 5.3. sig M., 'Out Viper, thou that eatest thy parents, hence'; 1609, William Shakespeare, *Pericles*, act 1, scene 1, 107–8: 'I am no Viper yet I feed / On mother's flesh which did me breed'.

³⁹See V.-H. Friedel and Kuno Meyer, *Aisling Tundail* (Paris 1907), 89 n. 3.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 89 n. 2.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 91.

Ó Maolchonaire rendered this as follows:

[A]tconnaire ... Tundal an mbesd n-angbaid ... Is amlaidh ro buí ina suide for loch oigre ... No sluiged sí na hanmanna ainbfeachdnacha et dono no díleagodh iad go madh uillide a piana, accus no dothad isin loch oigre iad con athnúaidhighthi iad afritisi .i. dia pianodh. Ba torrach in beist sin o uiliph anmonnaibh co hinbaid a tusmedo, et siad aga cnamh accus ag a cognam amail toirrchius na herci slebi. (V.-H. Friedel and Kuno Meyer, *Aisling*, 103–4)

‘Tundal saw the fierce beast... It was sitting on an icy lake... It used to swallow the unfortunate souls and indeed used to digest them so that their pains were complete, and it used to bring them forth into the icy lake so that they [viz. their pains] were renewed again i.e. causing them pain. That beast was pregnant with all the souls until the time of their delivery while they were gnawing and biting her in the manner of the offspring of the lizard.’

Ó Maolchonaire’s translation is inaccurate in that it has the beast pregnant with and giving birth to the souls, whereas in the original it is the souls of the damned which are impregnated and give birth. Furthermore, he translates ‘viper’ as *earc sléibhe*, ‘lizard’, presumably because the Irish language had no word for ‘viper’, since there were no vipers in Ireland.

In the sixteenth-century vellum RIA MS C ii 2 (1235) there is a copy of *Aisling Tundail* which Kuno Meyer believed is ‘based upon’ Ó Maolchonaire’s translation.⁴² However, the text is fairly heavily edited. In the passage with which I have been concerned *angbhaidh* is replaced with *adhuathmhar* ‘terrible’, *na hanmanna ainbfeachdnacha* with *anmanna na bpeacthach* ‘the souls of the sinners’, *no dothadh* with *do thumadh* ‘plunge, immerse’ and *cnámh* with *sgoltadh* ‘split, cleave’. The most important change is one of substance as it refers to the time at which the foetuses injured their mother. The text in TCD MS H. 3. 18 (1337) seems to follow the original Latin text in having this occur during the pregnancy. However, in RIA MS C ii 2 (1235) it occurs at the time of birth, as is highlighted by the phrase *gā mbreith*:

Ba torrach an peist an tan sin co haimsir a mbreithi dona hanmannuibh 7 iad ag a cognam 7 ag a sgoltad ga mbreith mur bis toirrces na herci slebhe. (V.-H. Friedel and Kuno Meyer, *Aisling*, 129).

‘The beast was pregnant then until the time when the souls were born chewing and splitting her [viz. the beast] as they were born as does the foetus of the lizard.’

⁴²*Ibid.*, 119.

This version is quite appropriate in the context of the comparison with the lizard and may be based on the scribe-editor's awareness of what could actually happen at the birth of a lizard.

The common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*, formerly (until 1906) *Lacerta vivipara*) is Ireland's only native terrestrial reptile. After a gestation period of about three months the viviparous (live-bearing) female gives birth to an average of five live young, each enclosed in the shell-less membrane in which it developed inside the mother's body. The young break free of the membranes usually during birth or a few seconds afterwards.⁴³ If a foetus were observed ripping open the membrane during birth, it could appear that it was in fact tearing out some of its mother's insides. This could be understood to be extremely painful, so that the pain of love being endured by the speaker in Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh's poem can be described as comparable to it. In view of the number of literary references in his poem, it is probable that this reference is also to a literary source, in all likelihood *Aisling Tundail*.⁴⁴

Q.7d org[h]án: While it is likely that the word refers here to the specific instrument, this is not necessarily so, as the word was often used to refer to any musical instrument and indeed even to melody: see *DIL* s.v. *orgán*.

Q.10c ar gan fhál: Literally 'an unfenced field'. In his poem *Do bháidh teine Tír Chonaill* (*DiD* no. 81, 'Fire has overwhelmed Tír Chonaill') Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaire points out that an unfenced field is ever a reproach (q. 33c, *gnáth éagnach ar ar gan fhál*) and, according to Tadhg Óg Ó Dálaigh in *Ní cluain ghabhála grás Dé* (*AithDD* no. 71, 'No fenced field is God's grace'), the human race would be an *ar gan fhál* (q. 12c) if we had not been saved by Christ. A highly amusing take on *gort gan fhál* is the logical impossibility *fál gan ghort* which is an anonymous composer's metaphorical description in *DG* no. 94, l. 12, of the attempts of a jealous husband to protect his uncomely morose wife from the approaches of other men.

⁴³See the website of the Herpetological Society of Ireland at <https://the.hsi.org/nativer reptiles-and-amphibians/common-lizard>. Accessed November 2018.

⁴⁴After I submitted this essay, including the note on q. 6c, for publication in *Celtica*, the editor, Ruairí Ó hUiginn, brought to my attention Pádraig Ó Macháin's essay 'Two poems by William Nugent', *Ríocht na Midhe* 28 (2017), 36–52, in which (at pp. 45–6) he has discussed how Nugent, who was a near-contemporary of Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh, used in the second of the poems (p. 43, q. 7cd) as an analogy for love the phrase *toircheas na heirce sléibhe*, which Pádraig has translated as 'the pregnancy of the viper', and in which (at p. 51 n. 37) he has referred to a line from a fifteenth-century poem (transcribed in *ABM* 264.24a) which is the citation from *IGT* II given above in n. 33. Pádraig has also discussed an interpolated sentence in Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's translation (Louvain, 1616) of the Spanish *El Desseoso* which reads in part: *gu samhlaighthe ar an duine feargach ris an nathair neimhe dá ngoirthe ar uipera, dá tugann a toircheas féin bás*, 'so that the angry person is likened to the snake which is called *vipera*, which its own foetus kills' (see F. Ó Maolchonaire, *Desiderius*, ed. Thomas F. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1955), ll. 1493–5). I believe that Ó Maolchonaire's use of the Latin name for the viper means that he had no Irish name for it and that, *pace* Pádraig, this would suggest that the earlier authors' *earc* (*sléibhe*) was not their name for the viper.

Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh was fond of this metaphorical phrase and of versions of it. As well as using it here, in his poem *Folamh Éire d'easbhaidh Bhriain* (ABM, no. 246) he refers to Ireland and the Irish as *gort gan fhál* and *ar gan fhál* (qq. 6d, 25d) and quotes what seems to be a proverb, *beag toradh abhla gan fhál* (q. 4c, 'an unfenced apple tree produces little fruit').

Q.11 Line *c* is defective in B and line *d* is missing: the readings are based on NUIM MS C 74 (g).

Q.12 Line *c* is defective in B and line *d* is missing. No other MS has this quatrain.

Q.13 Apart from the initial letter which appears to be *m*, line *d* is missing in B and none of the other MSS has this quatrain.

The name *Bláthnaid* in line *a* indicates that the reference is to *Aided Con Rói mac Dáire*.⁴⁵ The name *Cú Raoi* is required in line *d*: the genitive of *Cú*, *Con* would provide internal rhyme with *tol* in line *c* and *Raoi* would provide *aicill* with the final word in line *c*, *mhnaoi*. Some elements of the various versions of the *Aided* are mutually incompatible. However, the following narrative can be extracted to provide a context for Ó Cobhthaigh's reference. *Cú Chulainn* loved *Bláthnaid*, the daughter of the king of the *Fir Falga*. The men of *Ulster* pillaged the land of the *Fir Falga* with the vital support of *Cú Raoi*, to whom *Cú Chulainn* promised his choice of the booty which they would take as a reward. They carried off *Bláthnaid* and the valuables of the fort of the king, and when *Cú Raoi* demanded *Bláthnaid* as his reward, *Cú Chulainn* refused to let him have her. However, *Cú Raoi* took her away in secret; *Cú Chulainn* pursued him; they engaged in combat and *Cú Raoi*, having felled *Cú Chulainn*, shamed him by cutting off his hair with his sword,⁴⁶ and then brought *Bláthnaid* to his home in west *Munster*. A year later *Cú Chulainn* came to west *Munster* and met *Bláthnaid* who informed him that she loved him, asked him to come at *Samhain* to carry her away and promised to arrange that *Cú Raoi* would be almost completely alone. When *Cú Chulainn* came with his army, *Bláthnaid* sent him a message saying that she would steal *Cú Raoi*'s sword and would then pour milk into the stream which ran through the wood in which *Cú Chulainn* was encamped. When *Cú Chulainn* saw the milk in the stream he attacked *Cú Raoi*'s fort, found *Cú Raoi* alone and killed

⁴⁵Ed. R.I. Best, 'The tragic death of Cúrói Mac Dáire,' *Ériu* 2 (1905), 18–35.

⁴⁶This *mebal* (shame) is described thus in an early version of the *Aided*: *roberr máil fair cosin chloduib* γ ... *rochomail cacc ina mbō inna chend*, 'he cropped his hair on him with his sword, and rubbed cow-dung into his head' (Best, 'The tragic death', 22, ll. 10 and 2–3) and it is frequently referred to in the literature as *bearradh géoin (na Con)* 'the mocking shearing of *Cú Chulainn*': *DG* no. 70, ll. 17–20; Gearóid Mac Niocaill, 'Duanaire Ghearóid Iarla', *Studia Hibernica* 3 (1963), 7–59, at 28 no. 11 q. 3, and p. 55 n. 387; Kuno Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', *ZCP* 13 (1921), 166–84, at 11, q. 16, the reference to which in *DIL s.v. gén* is incorrect. In *DG* no. 70, ll. 21–2, it is stated that it was in retribution for that insult that *Cú Chulainn* killed *Cú Rói*: *Mac Dáire i ndíol a mhasla / ciorrbhas an Cú éachtach-sa*.

him, and took Bláthnaid to Ulster where she was subsequently killed by Cú Raoi's poet, Feircheirtne.⁴⁷

Q.14 The reference is to the story of the tragic love of Deirdre and Naoise, the early (late ninth or early tenth century)⁴⁸ version of which is *Longes mac nUislenn* 'The exile of the sons of Uisliu'⁴⁹ and the later (fourteenth or fifteenth century) *Oidheadh Chloinne Uisnigh* 'The violent death of the children of Uisneach'.⁵⁰ Deirdre was only unwittingly and indirectly responsible for Naoise's death: it was the jealous king of the Ulstermen, Conchobhar, who had him slaughtered so that he might have Deirdre for himself.

Q.15 The reference is to another story of tragic love, *Bás Cearbhaill agus Farbhlaidhe* 'The death(s) of Cearbhall and Farbhlaidh'.⁵¹ Proinsias Mac Cana's synopsis of the story runs as follows: 'It tells of the love that Cearbhall [Ó Dálaigh] and [Farbhlaidh] the daughter of the king of Scotland bore each other and how it was finally frustrated in a Tristan-style dénouement'.⁵² The prose and poetic versions of the Tristan legend offer different accounts of his death. It appears that Mac Cana's characterisation of the ending of *Bás Cearbhaill agus Farbhlaidhe* refers to the poetic version by Thomas of Britain in which Tristan has been wounded by a poisoned lance and can only be healed by Isolde, but is tricked by his wife into believing that Isolde will not come to heal him and dies of grief; whereupon, when Isolde comes to him, she swoons over his corpse and dies. So too, Farbhlaidh's father tricks his daughter into believing that Cearbhall has died, and when she dies of grief, he sends messengers to tell Cearbhall of her death, so that he too dies.

Q.15b There would seem to be an anacoluthon in this line, in that a word such as *duine* is required by the grammar of the sentence after *samhlaighthe*. Thus the literal translation of the sentence is: '(no-one) except him can be compared to my pride.' There are other examples of similarly constructed sentences (without anacoluthon) in qq. 16a and d and 17c. I have given the sense in each case in the translation above.⁵³

⁴⁷See Best, 'The tragic death', 18–35; *FFÉ* ii, 222–6; R. Thurneysen, 'Der Sage von Curoi', *ZCP* 9 (1913), 189–234.

⁴⁸See Máire Herbert, 'The universe of male and female: a reading of the Deirdre story', in Cyril J. Byrne, Margaret Harry and Pádraig Ó Siadhail (eds), *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples* (Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1989) 53–64, at 53.

⁴⁹Ed. Vernam Hull, *Longes mac nUislenn: The Exile of the sons of Uisliu* (New York and London, 1949).

⁵⁰Ed. Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, *Oidheadh Chloinne Uisnigh*, ITS 56 (London, 1993).

⁵¹Versions of this tale have been edited by Siobhán Ní Laoire, *Bás Cearbhaill agus Farbhlaidhe* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1986).

⁵²P. Mac Cana, 'The sinless otherworld of *Immram Brain*', *Ériu* 27 (1976), 95–115, at 105.

⁵³See Mícheál Hoynes's discussion of further examples of *comparatio compendiaria* in 'Early Modern Irish miscellanea', *Ériu* 67 (2017), 169–86, at 172–3.

Q.16 The suggestion in line *a* that Diarmaid (Ó Duibhne) loved Gráinne (daughter of Cormac mac Airt) misrepresents *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* ‘The pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne’,⁵⁴ to which it presumably refers. However, like the stories referred to in qq. 13–15, that tale ultimately ends in tragedy. When Cormac agreed to give Gráinne as wife to Fionn mac Cumhaill, a banquet was held during which Gráinne placed Diarmaid under an injunction (*geis*) to elope with her. Since he could not ignore her injunction, he agreed reluctantly to do so. Fionn, eaten by jealousy (*éad*) and furious at the insult (*masla*), pursued the couple, threatening to kill Diarmaid. Eventually peace was made between Fionn and Diarmaid. Later, however, Diarmaid was mortally wounded by a magical boar that he was hunting and Fionn, who could have cured him, failed to do so, because he was still smarting from the insult of the elopement, and Diarmaid died.

Q.17 Since each of the other quatrains in the series (13–16 and 18), makes reference to a story which contained an account of a love relationship, it seems reasonable to take it that in this case also reference is made to a story of love between a man who is only identified by the patronymic, mac Coise, and a woman called Maol Mheadha. As far as I am aware, no such story exists now. There are two, and perhaps three, individuals named mac Coise of whom a tradition exists. The poet, Airbheartach mac Coise Dobhráin, *fear léighinn* and later *airchinneach* of Ros Ailithir, whose death is recorded in *AU* s.a. 1016.8 and the Annals of Loch Cé s.a. 1016.7 is believed to have been a historical figure. Iorard mac Coise, *prīmēces Érend* ‘principal poet of Ireland’, whose death at Clonmacnois is recorded in *AU* s.a. 990.2, in the Annals of Tigernach s.a. 990.1, in the Chronicon Scottorum at 990, but in Conall Mac Eochagáin’s translation of the Annals of Clonmacnois (1627) at 983 and in *AFM* at 1023.10, may also have been a historical figure, but, due to the problems of dating relating to the year of his death and due to the language of the poems attributed to him, this is not universally accepted as true.⁵⁵

An individual identified only by the patronymic *mac Coise*, may have been fictional, but the name would seem to refer to Iorard in many instances. What is clear, however, is that several prose and verse texts exist which relate to a character called mac Coise and these, or at least some of them, may be parts of a longer tale or pseudo-biography.

In the poem ‘*Abair damhsa re Dearbháil*’ “‘Tell Dearbháil for me’”,⁵⁶ the poet sends a messenger to Dearbháil, daughter of Tadhg (q. 1*b*), to advise her that the death of her son, Aodh (q. 4*b*), should not cause her to be at variance with God (q. 2*a*), since he was not her possession, but was a gift (q. 1*d*) from

⁵⁴Ed. Nessa Ní Sheaghdha, *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, ITS 48 (Dublin, 1967).

⁵⁵See Osborn Bergin, ‘A dialogue between Donnchad son of Brian and mac Coisse’, *Ériu* 9 (1921–5), 175–80, at 175; Colm Ó Lochlainn, ‘Poets on the battle of Clontarf’, *Éigse* 3 (1941–2), *passim*; Aideen M. O’Leary, ‘The identities of the poet(s) Mac Coisi: a reinvestigation’, *CMCS* 38 (Winter 1999), 53–71, at 69.

⁵⁶Ed. Kuno Meyer, ‘Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Mac Coissi cecinit’, *ZCP* 6 (1908), 269–70.

God which he was free to take back (q. 3*d*).⁵⁷ So too, Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn (d. 1478) composed a poem, ‘*Cia do-ghéabhainn go Gráinne*’ (AithDD no. 13, “‘Whom can I get (to send) to Gráinne?’”), imparting the same advice to Gráinne (d. 1440), daughter of Maoilsheachlainn Ó Ceallaigh and wife of Tadhg Ó Briain, on the death of her son, Ruaidhrí. Tadhg Óg’s poem is highly intertextual. In an apologue in his poem (qq. 8–15), he refers to the earlier poem which he attributes to mac Coise (q. 13*b*), paraphrasing its first line (q. 13*c*, 15*c*) and others (qq. 13*d*, 15).⁵⁸ Mac Coise did not specifically identify Dearbháil, apart from giving her father’s name as Tadhg (qq. 1*b*, 4*a*) and her son’s as Aodh (q. 4*b*). Tadhg Óg did, naming her father as Tadhg an Eich (q. 11*b*), i.e. ‘Tadhg an Eich Ghil Ó Conchobhair (d. 1009)’,⁵⁹ and her husband as Domhnall Dúin Monaidh (q. 12*a*), *ri Oiligh* (q. 11*c*, ‘king of Aileach’) i.e. Domhnall Ó Néill; and in the final quatrains of the apologue (qq. 16–17) he states that though Dearbháil initially found mac Coise’s advice bitter, his words eventually caused her grief to ease, so that she promised God that she would grieve no more (qq. 16–17*ab*). It is possible that those identifications were made independently by Tadhg Óg and that his account of the effect of mac Coise’s advice was his own creation. It is also possible, however, that the poem attributed to mac Coise was part of a fictional biography of him or of a tale based on his life such as ‘Eachtra Mhuireadhaigh Uí Dhálaigh’ which may have been based on the life of Muireadhach Albanach Ó Dálaigh.⁶⁰ In that case the fuller identifications of Dearbháil and the remark on the effect on her of mac Coise’s advice could have been made in the prose preceding and following the poem.

It would seem that the poet to whom Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn refers as mac Coise (qq. 9*b*, 13*b*) was Iorard mac Coise, for he calls him *ceann na n-éigeas* (q. 9*b*, ‘chief poet’) just as the Annals of Ulster, when recording Iorard mac Coise’s death at 989 (990), refer to him as *prīmēces Ērend* (‘principal poet of Ireland’) and as the Annals of Clonmacnois do at the year 983.⁶¹ Tadhg Óg also refers later in his poem (q. 22) to the High-king Maoilsheachlainn giving

⁵⁷In q. 3*d*, *antí dorat as ē ruc*, the poet paraphrases the biblical words of the patient Job (Book of Job 1.20): ‘Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken back’ (which are translated by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird in *DiD* no. 46, q. 10*b*: *Dia thug, Dia rug a-rise*).

⁵⁸Tadhg Óg’s engagement with the earlier poem is not confined to the apologue. The word-play in q. 1*b*, where Tadhg Óg echoes the name *Dearbháil* (which has not yet occurred in his poem) in *dearbháile* (‘grief’) is note-worthy. He also paraphrases mac Coise’s q. 3*d* (see preceding note) in his q. 7: referring to Ruaidhrí as a gift which was given to Gráinne (q. 7*a*, *torchuirthe tugadh dhí*), he says: *an té rug é as a haithle / is é thug an torchairthe* (q. 7*cd*, ‘he who took the gift away afterwards was he who gave it). And later in the poem (q. 22) he refers to the story of mac Coise having received the kingship of Ireland for a year from Maoilsheachlainn (see below).

⁵⁹For this version of his name see *AithDD*, p. 47 (introduction to poem 13). See Nollaig Ó Muraíle, ‘Uí Ainlí Taoisigh Chineál Dofa, sna Ginealaigh agus sna hAnnála’, in Eoin Mac Cárthaigh and Jürgen Uhlrich (eds), *Féilscribhinn do Chathal Ó Háinle* (Indreabhán, 2012), 807–62, at 816.4*a*, 817.4*d*.

⁶⁰For detailed discussion of arguments for and against the existence of such an account of (part of) Muireadhach’s life see Damian McManus, ‘In defence of manslaughter: two poems by Muireadhach Leasa an Doill / Albanach Ó Dálaigh for Domhnall Mór (mac Éigneacháin) Ó Domhnaill († 1241)’, *Ériu* 64 (2014) 145–203, at 145–56.

⁶¹*AU* s.a. 990.1, see above; Denis Murphy (ed.), *The Annals of Clonmacnois, being annals of Ireland from the earliest period to A.D.1408, translated into English, A.D.1627 by Conell Mageoghagan* (Dublin, 1896), s.a. 983.

the gift of the kingship of Tara for a year to a poet whom Tadhg Óg does not name. In a poem lamenting the death of Maoilsheachlainn, ‘*Dursan mar táí, a Dhúin na Sciath*’ “‘You are sorrowful, Dún na Sciath’”,⁶² the putative author refers to himself as *mac Coise ceann na gliar* (q. 8b, ‘mac Coise, chief of the poets’) and tells of the gift of the high-kingship that he received from Maoilsheachlainn (q. 5). Two other sources specify Iorard mac Coise as the poet to whom Maoilsheachlainn gave that gift. One is an anonymous poem, ‘*Freccair meisi, a meic Coisi*’ (“‘Answer me, mac Coise’”) the first part of which is in the form of a conversation between Donnchadh mac Briain and Iorard mac Coise (q. 1ac) during which Iorard gives an account of how Maoilsheachlainn gave him the high-kingship for a year and of how the poet refused to give it back at the end of the year, only to have Maoilsheachlainn take it from him by force (qq. 8–13).⁶³ The other is a more detailed account of the same transaction in Conall Mac Eochagáin’s translation of the Annals of Clonmacnois following the record of the death of Iorard mac Coise at the year 983.

In the seventeenth-century manuscript NLI MS G 131, the main scribe of which was Cú Choigcríche Ó Cléirigh,⁶⁴ a group of six poems lacking scribal attribution occurs on pp. 215–26.⁶⁵ As already noted, ‘*Abair damhsa re Dearbháil*’ (NLI MS G 131, pp. 225–6) has been attributed to mac Coise, and the putative author of ‘*Dursan mar táí, a Dhúin na Sciath*’ (ibid., p. 222) refers to himself as mac Coise, while the putative author of a third (ibid., pp. 222–3) *Gol mnā sídhe sunn re gaoith* ‘The weeping of a fairy woman (comes) here on the wind’ refers to himself as *mac Coise ó C[h]luain* (q. 11a, ‘mac Coise from Clonmacnois’).⁶⁶ Two other poems, ‘*Marthain duit, a Ioraird fhēil*’ (ibid., pp. 215–18, “‘Long life to you, noble Iorard’”) and ‘*Freccair meisi, a Meic Coisi*’ (ibid., p. 219), consist of conversations, in the case of

⁶²Ed. Kuno Meyer, ‘A medley of Irish texts’, *Archiv für celtische Lexikographie* 3 (1905–7), 302–26, at 305.

⁶³Osborn Bergin edited the first fourteen quatrains of the poem in ‘A dialogue’, omitting silently the remaining twenty-two. Though closure is marked at the end of q. 14 by repetition of the opening word of the poem, and though this first section occurs without the second in at least two late manuscripts, NUIM MS M 13, p. 264 and RIA MS 23 M 18 (154), p. 298, it is not so in Bergin’s source, RIA MS B iv 2 (1080), fol. 30, nor in NLI MS G 131, where the second part of the poem repeats the structure of the first part, viz. a query in a single quatrain from Donnchadh, followed by the poet’s description of an astounding act of generosity on the part of Aonghus mac Carraidh, which parallels Maoilsheachlainn’s, with closure again marked at the end of q. 36 by the repetition of the opening word of the poem.

⁶⁴See Nessa Ní Shéaghdha, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland*, fasc. 4 (Dublin, 1977), 51.

⁶⁵Another poem *Moelseachlainn sinnsear Goidheal* which is attributed by the scribe to mac Coise occurs at pp. 181–3.

⁶⁶The author of an elegy for Fearghal Ó Ruairc, *Brónach ollamh d’éis a rígh* ‘Sad is a master poet after his king’, ed. John O’Donovan, ‘Elegy of Erard Mac Coise ...’, *Journal of the Kilkenney and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society* 1.2 (1857), 341–56, at 348 q. 13a, refers to himself in precisely the same terms. So too in the poem ‘*A úa Fhiacrach dar dhiall goil*’ “‘Ó Fiacrach to whom conflicts submit’” in the late fourteenth-century manuscript, *The Book of Hy Many*, fol. 118rb, the author refers to himself as mac Coise: *As mē mac Coise go [g]céill* (q. 34a, ‘I am intelligent mac Coise’): see Kathleen Mulchrone, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, fasc. 26 (Dublin, 1942), 3352.

the first between two poets, mac Liag and Iorard mac Coise, and of the second between Donnchadh mac Briain and Iorard mac Coise. Given its context at *ibid.*, pp. 223–5, it is entirely plausible to attribute to mac Coise the fifth poem in this group, ‘*Dubhach sin, a Mhaol Mheadha*’ “‘That is sad, Maol Mheadha’”.⁶⁷

I believe that it is not fanciful to suggest that some, if not all, of those poems could have formed part of a pseudo-biography of the poet Iorard mac Coise or of a tale about him,⁶⁸ as could prose narratives, such as the narrative about Iorard in the Annals of Clonmacnois mentioned above and the narrative which precedes it which is quoted below, and two brief anecdotes, one of which recounts mac Coise’s meeting with a giantess and his helping her to take her dead husband to be buried in Clonmacnois,⁶⁹ and the other which narrates his shooting a swan which then becomes a woman.⁷⁰

In the part of ‘*Freccair meisi*’ which Bergin did not edit, mac Coise describes how he first met and fell in love with Maol Mheadha, *inghean Congalaigh ... dalta sin ... do reachtaire ríogh Éireann* (q. 29bcd, ‘the daughter of Congalach who was a fosterson of the steward of the king of Ireland’): *mar do chonacsa a cucht cōir / rom līon a grādh i gcēadóir* (q. 32cd, ‘when I saw her beautiful form I was filled with love for her at once’). She was Aonghus mac Carraidh’s lover, but when he saw that mac Coise had fallen for her he gave her to him. Mac Coise then escorted her to *dūnadh Cluana Creamha* (q. 35ab, ‘the encampment of Cluain Creamha’), where presumably he was living.

The Annals of Tigernach at 989 and the Annals of Clonmacnois at 983 record that mac Coise died at Clonmacnois *in penitentia* or ‘penitently’.

⁶⁷It is perhaps significant that, as well as ‘*Freccair meisi*’, three of the other poems attributed to mac Coise which are found in NLI MS G 1, viz. ‘*Dursan mar tái, Moelsechlainn sinnsear Goidheal*’ and ‘*Marthain duit*’, also occur in RIA MS B iv 2 (1080) which was written by Micheál Ó Cléirigh: see Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, fasc. 24 (Dublin, 1938), 3022 and 3024–5. At least it suggests that poems attributed to Iorard mac Coise were of particular interest to Cú Choigeriche and Micheál Ó Cléirigh.

⁶⁸It is not unusual that poems, which originally formed part of a prose text, would occur independently in manuscripts. Thomas F. O’Rahilly published a poem in *Measgra Dánta* 1 (Dublin and Cork, 1927), no. 11, ‘*Gabh, a mhic, mo mhúnadh-sa*’ “‘Son, accept my instruction’”, to which he attached the following prescient note: ‘It seems very probable that the poem originally formed part of some prose romance’ (*ibid.*, 70). In fact it consists of seven of the eight quatrains of a poem from the sixteenth-century translation of ‘William of Palermo’, see Cecile O’Rahilly (ed.), *Eachtra Uilliam* (Dublin, 1949), from which he had already published three poems in *DG* (nos. 15, 56 and 64).

⁶⁹Ed. Kuno Meyer, ‘Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Elfenbegräbnis’, *ZCP* 8 (1912), 559–60, and Colm Ó Lochlainn (trans.), ‘Poets on the battle of Clontarf 2’, *Éigse* 5 (1943–4), 33–47, at 33–4.

⁷⁰Quoted and translated by Colm Ó Lochlainn, *ibid.*, at 34. The tale *Airec Menman Uairid maic Coisse* (‘The mental invention of Iorard mac Coise’, ed. Mary E. Byrne in *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts* 2 (Halle, 1908), 42–76 is not relevant here since it is little more than a device to provide for a listing of the tales which should be known to a *fili*.

However, the Annals of Clonmacnois also seem to suggest that he had lived at Clonmacnois or in its vicinity for some part of his life:

Erard McCoyssie cheef poet of Moyleseachlin and all Ireland ... for his devotion to God and St. Queran had his residence in Clonvicknois, to the end he might be near the church dayly to hear mass, and upon a night there appeared an Angle unto him that reprehended him for dwelling soe neere the place, and told him that the paces of his journey comeing and goeing to heare mass dayly would be measured by God, and accordingly yeelded him recompence for his paines, & from thence foorth McCoysee removed his house a good distance from Clonvicknois to a place among boggs to this day called the place of McCosseyes house, from which hee did use daily to repaire to Clonvicknois to heare mass as he was wardned before by the angle. (Murphy, Annals of Clonmacnois, 161)

The place of mac Coise's house may well have been in Cluain Creamha, lit. 'meadow of garlic', in English 'Cloncraft'.⁷¹ The townland of that name is on the east of the Shannon north-east of Clonmacnois. Originally the name applied to a topographical feature which was a green island in the middle of a boggy area. It lay roughly at a distance of about 3.5km from Clonmacnois, surely 'a good distance' from the monastery. If mac Coise's house was indeed there, it could well be described as being in 'a place among boggs'.⁷²

At the end of '*Freccair meisi*', the poet says that Maol Mheadha is still with him (in Cluain Creamha ?) and is old (*go b[h]fuil sunna ina seanōir* (q. 35d, 'so that she is here as an old woman'), which would mean that he himself is also elderly. However, according to the poem '*Dubhach sin, a Mhaol Mheadha*' their relationship was not without instances of tension. The poet recalls a night when they were drinking and they had an argument which led to a falling out which lasted for six months and almost led to a separation:

6. Do b[h]āmar adhaigh ag ól,
mé, agus tú, a Mhaol Mheadha mhór,
...
tarla eadrainn imreasain.
7. Dā rāithe dhūinn i ndeabhaidh:
suail nār áille dhūinn deadhail ...

⁷¹Also known as 'Bloomhill'. This name, which has no basis in Irish and is the only one now used locally, dates from at least the early nineteenth century (see William Larkin's map of King's County 1809 in Arnold Horner, *Mapping Offaly in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Bray, 2006), appendix C2).

⁷²Cloncraft was linked to the surrounding dry land by toghers on all sides, and one of these crossed the bog and joined the Pilgrims' Road to Clonmacnois, having passed by three rocks which were associated with a folk legend about the theft of St. Ciarán's famous cow: see John Feehan, *The Landscape of Clonmacnoise* (Offaly, 2014), 47, 13. The existence of this pathway could explain the existence of the narrative about mac Coise's transfer from Clonmacnois to Cloncraft after his vision of the angel.

‘You and I, tall Maol Mheadha, were drinking one night and we had a dispute.

For six months we were at variance; it was almost the case that it would have been better for us to separate.’

It is clear that in the poem it is posited that a reconciliation had been effected, for the poet speaks quite lovingly to Maol Mheadha, referring to her as *colann mar chluimh n-eala* (q. 3b, ‘(you whose) body is as the plumage of a swan’) and sympathetically speaking of her sorrow: *a Mhaol Mheadha, a Mhaol b[h]rónach* (q. 4, ‘sorrowful Maol Mheadha’).

These two poems, ‘*Freccair meisi*’ and ‘*Dubhach sin*’, either as independent poems or as parts of a biography of mac Coise or of a story about him, reflect a tradition about mac Coise’s love for Maol Mheadha which was available to Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh in the sixteenth century, just as the poem ‘*Abair damhsa re Dearbháil*’ was available, perhaps as part of a longer text, to Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn in the fifteenth.

Q.18 The reference is to Helen, daughter of Zeus and Leda. She married Menelaus and together they ruled Sparta. Paris, a prince of Troy, came to Sparta and abducted Helen; according to another version she eloped with him. Menelaus came with his army to Troy to recover Helen and he laid siege to the city. There are conflicting accounts of Helen’s behaviour during the siege. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, according to Deiphobus when the Trojan horse was admitted into the city, she feigned Bacchic rites, leading a chorus of Trojan women, and, holding a torch among them, she signalled to the Greeks from the city’s central tower:

[C]um fatalis equus saltu super ardua venit
Pergama et armatum peditem gravis attulit alvo,
illa chorum simulans euhantis orgia circum
ducebat Phrygias; flammam media ipsa tenebat
ingentem et sua Danaeos ex arce vocabat ...
intra tecta vocat Menelaum et limina pandit,
scilicet id magnum sperans fore munus amanti,
et famam extinguere veterum sic posse malorum.

‘When the fatal horse came with a leap above high
Pergamon, and heavy in its womb it brought armed infantry,
that woman, pretending a dance, led around the Trojan women
singing ‘euhoe’ in Bacchic revels; she herself in their midst was holding
a huge torch and was calling the Greeks from the top of the citadel ...
She called Menelaus in[to] the house and opened the door
surely hoping that this would be a great gift for her lover,
and thus she could extinguish the renown of her longstanding evils.’⁷³

⁷³Text and translation from Meredith Prince, ‘Helen of Rome?: Helen in Virgil’s *Aeneid*’, *Helios* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2014), 200–1.

This version of events would seem to be the basis for Ó Cobhthaigh's narrative here.

Q.18d ar aird[h]ibh The mss readings are **B** *airgib*, **A** *airrgnibh*, **C** *argibh*. The noun *airdhe* is occasionally spelled with *-gh-* and though its nominative plural form is normally *airrdheana*, the nominative form *airdhi* and dative *airdhibh* (and *airghibh*) also occur (see *DIL* s.v. 1. *airde*).

In another reference to the siege of Troy in his poem *Folamh Éire d'easbhaidh Bhriain* Tadhg Ó Cobhthaigh used this same phrase as he compared Brian Ó Conchobhair to Hector: *Eacdair na Traoi ar airg[h]ibh é* (*ABM* no. 246, q.18d).

Q.20cd The perfect rhyme between the two instances of *glóir* in line *c* and *dóigh* in line *d* is an example of the ornament *breacadh taibhse*.⁷⁴

Q. 20d This final example of the trope of the mental confusion caused by love is quite awkward here, and would appear to have been introduced simply to provide the word *corr* as closure, corresponding to the first syllable of the opening word *corrach*.⁷⁵

ABBREVIATIONS

- AithDD* Lambert McKenna, *Aithdioghlum Dána*, 2 vols (Dublin 1939, 1940).
- DG* Thomas F. O'Rahilly [Tomás Ó Rathile], *Dánta Grádha: Cnósach de sna Dánta Grádha is Fearr san Ghaeilge (1350–1750)*, second ed. (Dublin and Cork, 1926).
- DiD* Láimhbheartach Mac Cionnaith, *Dioghlum Dána* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1938).
- FFÉ* David Comyn, Patrick S. Dinneen (eds), *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, ITS 4, 8, 9, 15, 4 vols (London, 1902, 1908, 1914).
- OED* *Oxford English Dictionary*
- PB* James Carney, *Poems on the Butlers* (Dublin, 1945).

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⁷⁴See Cáit Ní Dhomhnaill, *Duanaireacht* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1975), 55 §95.

⁷⁵I am extremely grateful to Eoin Mac Cárthaigh, Ruairí Ó hUiginn and the anonymous reader for their helpful comments on this essay and to Mr. Colm Ennis, Trinity College, Dublin, for sharing his expertise in herpetology with me.