A DEATH-BED POEM ASCRIBED TO MUIREADHACH ALBANACH

The poem edited below from the Book of the Dean of Lismore (p. 19) is one of a group of three consecutive pieces ascribed, respectively, to 'Muireadhach Albanach', 'Muirheadhach as abové' and 'Muirheadhach Ó Dálaigh of Lios an Doill, the poet (fear dana)'. Our poem, on the familiar theme of repentance before death, comes first. It is followed by the similar Réidhigh an croidhe, a mhic Dhé (pp. 19–20). The third poem in the group is Créad agaibh aoídhigh i gcéin?, Muireadhach's appeal to Richard fitz William Burke after his estrangement from Ó Domhnaill, which was edited by Osborn Bergin from RIA MS 23 D 14, and has been set in its historical context by Brian Ó Cuív in his fundamental study, 'Eachtra Mhuirígh Albanagh Ó Dhálaigh'.

Transcripts of the text of our poem have appeared in The Book of the Dean of Lismore and in Reliquiae celticae. The former volume also contains a transliteration into 'Scottish Gaelic' and a 'translation'. The poem does not occur in any other extant source. Two interrelated questions are immediately raised by the poem's occurrence in the Dean's Book with its ascription to Muireadhach Ó Dálaigh. (1) Given the 'linguistic drift' which has affected all BDL texts to a greater or lesser extent, how different was the original poem from the form in which it has been preserved? More specifically, how closely did it conform to the linguistic and metrical norms of dán direach? (2) Given the poem's association in the manuscript with one of the genuine, 'historical' poems of Muireadhach, how should one regard the ascription in this case? More specifically, can it be correct?

In cases where (as here) we are wholly dependent upon BDL for the text of a poem the answer to the first question has to be determined on the basis of a careful and open-minded analysis designed to identify and, as far as possible, to separate out the linguistic strata attested or implied by the surviving text of the poem. The results of that analysis, which

1 National Library of Scotland ms Adv. 72.1.37, hereafter referred to as BDL. Note that when discussing texts contained in BDL I use 'MS' to denote the actual reading of the manuscript, and 'B' to denote the text which the Dean of Lismore may have understood when reading his Book, and which we should understand in reading a standardised version of it. See W. Gillies, 'A religious poem ascribed to Muireadhach Ó Dálaigh', Studia Celtica 14–15 (1979–80) 81–6, p. 83 n. 6.
5 Rev. T. MacLauchlan and W. F. Skene, Edinburgh 1862, 120.
6 Rev. A. Cameron, Inverness 1892, 104–5.
7 Book of the Dean of Lismore, 121.
8 ibid., 157.
is conducted below, may be anticipated as follows. The text (or most of it) fairly readily yields up a poem composed in a form approximating to that of classical **séadna**. The poem so revealed employs a level of language which on the whole shows familiarity with the teachings of the bardic schools; but it also exhibits some forms and usages which would not be accounted ‘classical’ in the strict sense, i.e. as set out in the prescriptions of the metrical, grammatical and syntactical tracts. In order to purge the poem of this element and make it comply with the norms of classical **dán díreach** one would have to resort to emendation of a more violent sort. This poses a dilemma. It would appear that either the poem was composed more or less as I have restored it, but not in the strict form which we know was employed by early classical Irish poets including Muireadhach Ó Dálaigh; or an original poem was so composed, but has been transformed to a degree which renders that original inaccessible to us. On either view I hesitate to claim that I present below a composition of Muireadhach Albanach.

One could, of course, seek to mount a defence for the authenticity of the poem (more or less) as it is. One could argue that the surviving tracts do not provide an exhaustive account of the range of linguistic and metrical usage preserved in the extant corpus of classical bardic verse, and still less of Early Modern verse in general. One could argue that not enough is known of the conventions which governed the form of informal compositions by professional poets for it to be safe to exclude poems like this one from the canon. One would, in making this case, lay stress on the earliness of Muireadhach’s **floruit** within the classical period, and on the existence of at least one poem attributed to Muireadhach, preserved in quite different sources, which exhibits similarly non-standard features for possibly similar reasons. (If however, the non-standard ‘original’ forms included Scotticisms it would be difficult to see why an early thirteenth-century Irish poet should have used them; and this would be true even if one could prove them to be early Scotticisms, i.e. established by the beginning of the Early Modern period rather than developments within it.)

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10] It should be added that the non-classical forms and usages which resist easy elimination include a couple which it is tempting to associate somehow with Scottish Gaelic: see notes on 6d, 7d.

11] The examination which these and similar points have received in numerous articles and text-editions by Brian Ó Cuív adds up to the most authoritative view currently available on the parameters of Irish syllabic verse, and is one of his outstanding services to scholarship. See, in the present context, B. Ó Cuív, ‘Some developments in Irish metrics’, *Éige* 12 (1967–8) 273–90. For the poem **Aonar bhaid**, a Bhain Bbáhka see A. J. Goodhew, *Irish and Norse traditions about the battle of Clontarf* (Haarlem 1938) 45–59; and Ó Cuív, *Éige* 12 (1967–8) 287–8.

12] The development of a distinctively Scottish variety of Gaelic is a question which stands in need of refinement and reassessment. For example, if there is any historical reality behind the structural similarities which several scholars have perceived between Scottish Gaelic and Welsh in recent years, it must arise from linguistic interactions within the ‘Old’, or at the latest the ‘Middle’ period of the Gaelic language.
On the other hand, my understanding of the ‘correct’ level to which the poem should be restored may be faulty. I may have overlooked compelling emendations which would permit us to present the poem in a form more like those which we believe were definitely composed by Muireadhach. I offer it to Brian Ó Cuív in its present form in the knowledge that there is no one better equipped than he to resolve that question, whether or not he is disposed to rescue it for inclusion in the edition of Muireadhach’s poetry which we hope he will now find the leisure to complete.

The question of the status of the poem may also be approached from a quite different angle. It is natural and legitimate to ask how it may have come to be included in the Dean’s Book. Can one envisage circumstances which satisfactorily reconcile its appearance beside Creid agatbh aoidhígh i gráint, and its ascription to Muireadhach, with its apparent linguistic form?

There are some noteworthy differences between Muireadhach’s poems and those of the other ‘big names’ of early classical verse — Donnchadh Mór and Gofraidh Fionn, Giolla Brighde and Tadhg Óg — as they appear in BDL. In the first place, the majority of the latter group’s poems are also found in Irish sources such as the Yellow Book of Lecan, the Book of Fermoy, the Book of Úi Mhainne or the Book of O’Conor Don. By contrast, five of the eight poems ascribed to Muireadhach in BDL are not found in Irish sources, and a sixth shares only its opening verses with Irish versions. This suggests to me that the compilers of BDL had access to mainstream sources for the other poets, but drew on sources outwith the main channels of dissemination for at least the majority of their texts of Muireadhach. In the same way, a fair number of the BDL texts of the other early poets contain scribal emendations suggestive of the availability of more than one source. By contrast,
A DEATH-BED POEM

159

this sort of activity occurs in only one of Muireadhach’s poems. This may suggest that BDL’s compilers received most of their material on Muireadhach from a single source, perhaps (though not necessarily) the same source. It is surely significant that the BDL poem by Muireadhach which does display signs of editorial interference is Críad aghabh aoidhígh i geòin, i.e. one of the two which also occur in the mainstream sources.

In view of these considerations, I believe we are justified in postulating a particular source (presumably Scottish) with a special interest in Muireadhach Albanach and access to strict-metre compositions (cf. M’anam do scar riom-sa a-reir and Eistigh riom-sa, a Mhuire mhòr). The persons most likely to fulfil these conditions would be members of the Mac Mhuirich bardic family founded by Muireadhach; indeed, it would seem perfectly reasonable to expect his poetic familia to preserve specimens of his most famous and accomplished compositions for commemorative or didactic purposes. In fact, it is tempting to go further and suggest that the intermediary in question may have been the Éoin Mac Mhuireadháigh who contributed courtly love and satiric pieces to BDL and whom we may hence deduce to have been a member of the Dean of Lismore’s intimate circle.16

While this scenario accounts well, in my view, for the preservation of authentic dán direach compositions by Muireadhach, and for their transmission to BDL, it may be asked whether it can as easily account for the rather different textual consistency of Mithidh domh triall go toigh Pharrthais as outlined above. I believe that it can, if we may assume that verses associated with the eschtra (or at least the biographical ‘anecdote’) of our poet would have circulated informally within the poetic family of his descendanta, or more widely amongst members of the Scottish learned order.17 Such verses could well have included ‘death-bed’ poems, since death is a key point in any heroic biography, and ‘last words’ were obviously of interest in the case of wisdom figures like poets. They might even be the work of the poet himself, or at least based on compositions of his, though in some analogous cases the

16If Éoin were the Johannes Mkmurich identified by Professor Derick Thomson (‘The MacMhuirich bardic family’, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness 43 (1960–63) 276–304, p. 287) as the ‘Dean of Knoydart’, who likewise contributed to BDL (O’Rahilly, St. Gaelic Stud 4 (1934) §§), then he would have had an additional link with James MacGregor, as an ecclesiastical colleague within the diocese of Argyll. This identification is not certain, however, since another Éoin Mac Mhuireadháigh, who is actually termed ‘Johannes McMurech Albany’ on one occasion, held lands in Kintyre between 1505 and 1541: see Thomson, Trans. Gaelic Soc. Inverness 43 (1960–63) 291. (The Éoin who was Dean of Knoydart was dead by 1510.) Another possible intermediary would be Giolla Coluim Mac an Olaimh (O’Rahilly, St. Gaelic Stud 4 (1934) §§ 105/107, 118, 126), if he is to be identified with the Gilleanach Mkmurich who held lands in Kintyre between 1502 and 1505 (Thomson, Trans. Gaelic Soc. Inverness 43 (1960–63) 291; cf. J. Bannerman, The Beatties: a medical kindred in the classical Gaelic tradition (Edinburgh 1986) 13 n. 69).

17The single quatrain beginning Seacht bhfíchid mile fá sheacht, attributed to Muireadhach in BDL, is good evidence for the existence of such traditions in the early sixteenth century: see Gillesie, Studia Celtica 14–15 (1973–80) 82.
verses ascribed to a particular poet were evidently not composed by him. During the course of their transmission, in relatively uncontrolled circumstances amongst people who were mostly capable of turning a verse themselves, one may presume that a more or less continuous process of textual dilapidation and renovation would take effect. Such a process would naturally – given the personnel involved in a Scottish context – have introduced Scotticisms of the sort admitted by the Scottish poets edited by W. J. Watson in Scottish verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore (Edinburgh 1937). Although it cannot be proved beyond doubt, I suspect that something like this did happen in the present case.¹⁸

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

The salient textual and linguistic evidence may be set out as follows.

1. There is, as usual, an overlay of vernacular/modern pronunciations and forms. These are to be associated with the latter stages of the poem’s transmission, and may well be attributable to our scribe. The following list is not exhaustive. It is confined to clear-cut categories and examples, and ignores features which are obscured by imprecision in BDL’s orthographic system (e.g. with respect to the representation of palatalized consonants or of the diphthongs /ia/ and /ua/).¹⁹ The point of linguistic departure assumed is classical Early Modern Irish. Discussion of specific points will be found in the notes to the text.

1.1. /e/> /a/ before velar/velarized consonants: na¹ (neach) 1d; lagga (leag) 3c; shal (seal) 6c; sachin (seachain) 6c; sakke (seacadh) 7c.

1.2. (/a/> /o/> /e/) before palatal/palatalized consonants: teig / teyg (toigh) 1a, 1c, 5a; cherri (chaire/choire) 1c; el (oile/eile) 1d.

1.3. Weakening or loss of internal spirants:
   – intervocal: meith/meicht (múigh) 1a, 7d; doyn (domhan) 4c; oyn (omhan) 4d.
   – preconsonantal: cwne (cuimhgh) 2b.
   – postconsonantal: pharr (pharrthais) 1a; ymî (iomdha) 5d.

¹⁸ Even if one accepted the suggestion that a dán díreach poem lay behind the present text this would not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the poem was composed by Muireadhach Albanach. Nevertheless, this would become a tempting proposition in the new circumstances.

¹⁹ A detailed analysis of BDL’s orthographic practices and their phonetic and phonological implications, based on the poems of Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy, is to appear in Scottish Gaelic Studies in due course.
1.4. Weakening or loss of final spirants:

- closing stressed syllables:

\[(\theta)/h > \emptyset\]
\[(\beta)/\gamma > \emptyset\]
\[x > h/\emptyset\]
\[\ddot{v} > h/\emptyset\]

dlaw (\textit{dliadh}) 2\,b.
graw (\textit{grkiadh}) 5\,b; he (\textit{shiodh}) 4\,a; in nei (\textit{dionadh}) 5\,b.
na\textsuperscript{1} (\textit{neach}) 1\,d.
dot (\textit{domh}) 1\,a.

closing unstressed syllables (post-tonic):

\[(\beta)/\gamma > \emptyset\]
\[(\theta')/\gamma' > \emptyset\]
\[\ddot{v}'/(\theta')/\gamma' > h/\emptyset\]

ardre (\textit{airdsriog}) 5\,a; sakke (\textit{seacadh}) 7\,c;
bega (\textit{beacadh}) 7\,d; threige (\textit{threigeadh}) 5\,a.
cwne (\textit{cuimhnigh}) 2\,b; deche (\textit{deachaidh}) 6\,d.
chenny\textsuperscript{1} (\textit{cheannaig}) 7\,a; meilth/meicht
(\textit{mithlip}) 1\,a, 7\,d; fegki\textsuperscript{2} (\textit{pheacthaibh}) 3\,a (?).

- closing unstressed syllables (\textit{aisirmbaerlasf}):

\[(\theta)/h > \emptyset\]
\[x > h/\emptyset\]

tra (\textit{trith}) 5\,b.
na\textsuperscript{1}/no\textsuperscript{1} (\textit{nach}) 6\,b, 6\,d.

1.5. Loss of final schwa:

- in disyllables: el (\textit{oile}) 1\,d; ag (\textit{aga}) 2\,c; dan (\textit{deana}) 3\,a (?).

Perhaps also in: (i) dane (\textit{deana}) 2\,a, 4\,a; grane (\textit{granna}) 3\,b; aikre/aigre
(\textit{agra}) 2\,d, 3\,d; cholle (\textit{cholla}) 7\,b; (ii) donna (\textit{duine}) 5\,c; (iii) cherri
(\textit{choire}) 1\,c; ymmi (\textit{iomdha}) 5\,d.\textsuperscript{20}

- in trisyllables: ynnis (\textit{innise}) 3\,b; gone (\textit{dheonaigh}) 1\,b (?);

ahyre\textsuperscript{1} (\textit{aithrighe}) 2\,c (?).

1.6. Loss of final -(e)\,adh:

- in nominal forms: scrut (\textit{sgruadadh}) 2\,a. Perhaps also (cf. note 20):
sakke (\textit{seacadh}) 7\,c; bega (\textit{beacadh}) 7\,d.

- in infinite verbal forms: perhaps (cf. note 20); threige (\textit{threigeadh})
5\,a.

1.7. Devoicing of internal and final stops: scrut (\textit{sgruadadh}) 2\,a;
ymmit (\textit{iomad}) 2\,b; aikre (\textit{agra}) 2\,d; chut (\textit{chuid}) 3\,c; brek (\textit{brig}) 6\,b, 2\,\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} The reason for the uncertainty in (i) is that by the early sixteenth century Scots orthography was using final \textit{-e} without phonetic value, especially as an indicator of /V:C#/ in sequences of the shape VCe#. In (ii) and (iii) we have to reckon with stratagems employed in BDL to indicate word-boundaries - i.e. where (C)\,C and (C)\,Ca represent /C#/.

\textsuperscript{21} Other points of interest at this level include the reduction of do (with whatever meaning) to a (as in dod \textit{chuid} a 3\,c, a-niodh 5\,b); interchange of historical dh and g, especially in proverbs such as \textit{d(h)k}, \textit{d(h)a}, go, ga (e.g. "go for dha 4\,b"); 'double nasalisation' (e.g. \textit{go d\,d\,d\,e\,d} 6\,d, \textit{m\,m\,beacadh} 7\,d); dedimensional simplification (e.g. \textit{toigh} (accus.) 1\,c; \textit{fadham} (nom.) 5\,d); and the development of sub \textit{\=f} "before" to \textit{md} (3\,d, 4\,d).
Some of these divergences from the classical norm (e.g. loss of non-morphological -(e)adh) invite comparison with modern Perthshire Gaelic. Others (e.g. devoicing of internal consonants) would be regarded as characteristically Scottish. Others again (e.g. raising/fronting of /a/ or /o/ before palatal/palatalized consonants) are best described even more widely, simply as Modern Gaelic phenomena. That they may all be discounted for the purposes of apprehending the language of composition of the poem is rendered more than probable by the existence of more conservative, ‘classical’ pronunciations side by side with these ‘progressive’ forms. Thus, for example:

To 1.1: deche (deachaidh) 6d; phekke (pheacadh) 5b, cf. 3a, 7d; sermon (sarmoin) 6a; chenny (cheannasigh) 7a.

To 1.2: soirbh (soirbh) 18; marga (mairi) 5a.

To 1.3: feyñ (fiadhain) 5d; awveve (Adhaimh) 6a, 7a; averon (aimhadhain) 4b.

To 1.7: haggrt (shagart) 2a; ag (aga) 2c; lagga (leag) 3c; marga (mairi) 5a; theige (thréigeadh) 5a; ded (dletd) 6d; aiğre (agra) 3d.22

Taking the phonological evidence as a whole we may describe the form of language attested by MS as varying along a spectrum whose poles are the classical Early Modern dialect and the local dialect of Perthshire Gaelic. It is not necessary for present purposes to go beyond that formulation; nor would it be an easy matter to do so, especially given the shortness of the poem.

2. Although the evidence is not so abundant, it would seem that a similar conclusion can be drawn at the level of morphology and syntax. Discussion of the following examples will be found in the notes to the edited text. I have, as before, avoided quoting examples which are obscure or vexed.

2.1. Non-classical forms which can easily and plausibly be replaced by classical forms: toíg 1c; innis/inne 3b; má mbi 3d, 4d; fiadhain 5d.

2.2. Non-classical forms which cannot be replaced easily by classical forms: déan 3a (perhaps also at 4a; possibly also at 2a); mí 7d; díon 7d (?)

The existence of these categories beside the unexceptionable classical forms (whether visibly present or thinly disguised by a vernacular-oriented pronunciation-spelling) suggests the following conclusions. First, an element of morphological adaptation was involved in the transmission of the poem. This could be associated, like the phonological innovations, with the latter stages of transmission, and need not carry any implications for the composition of the poem. Second, and more
controversial, we seem to have a little hard evidence for sub-classical forms more deeply embedded in the text, which could indeed involve the 'composition' of the poem. On the other hand, I would wish to suggest that this does not necessarily involve the original composer. In order to clarify this point, we should consider briefly the more strictly textual evidence this poem provides.

3. In discussing the more problematic sections of the poem, I have at several points been led to suggest that B, as we have it, incorporates textual corruption of one sort or another. The categories of corruption which I identify as most likely to be involved are as follows. (See the notes for details.)

3.1. Corruption involving oral/aural misunderstandings:

   a) dhuinne [is] soirbh
   b) 'aithrighe
   c) luicht *dr*...*
   d) fulang a[n] bhais
   e) rem peacadh

3.2. Corruption involving visual (i.e. scribal) misunderstandings:

   a) (shagart) sdiuraidh

In addition to the above, I would identify a third category, where the text makes sense (albeit sometimes rather feeble sense) but is artistically or technically sub-standard. Here I would raise the possibility of 'improvement', typically the result of textual degeneration followed by refurbishment, during the course of transmission.

3.3. Textual modification over and above categories 3.1 and 3.2:

   a) do chuid chleachadh
   b) agra diabhail
   c) siol nÁdhaimh
   d) a r a réir

Corroboration evidence for such textual 'growth' is not absent from the Gaelic poetic tradition as a whole, whether amongst the learned poets of the Middle Irish period or in the attempts of eighteenth-and

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23 I leave open for the time being the question whether these may result from oral transmission at a pro-scribal stage (and, if so, whether the oral transmission nevertheless involved the scribe of our poem) or from 'dictation' to our scribe (and, if so, whether this involved a 'dictator' other than the scribe himself).

24 I believe I have established the existence of written exemplars in the case of some of Duncan Campbell's poems: see, e.g. W. Gilles, 'The Gaelic poems of Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy [II]', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 13/2 (1981) 263-88, p. 278. While additional evidence is lacking in the present poem, see Gilles, *Studia Celtica* 14-15 (1979-80) 85 (note on 1a), for the suggestion that the error in MS results from the misreading of an ornate capital 'R' as 'B' in the poem which follows ours in BDL, and was apparently written by the same scribe on the same occasion. If this is correct, an exemplar with the same orthography as B's is implied. The existence of lenition dots (e.g. dot (dharab) 1a) and other signs of familiarity with Gaelic orthography and scribal practices does not count against this, since such familiarity was clearly part of the general equipment of the compilers of BDL.
nineteenth-century Irish scribes to cope with dán dimrach compositions. The aim of the interference could equally be to revise the substance of a text or to retrieve sense which was actually or apparently lacking. It flourishes as a corrective to the effects of oral transmission, though it frequently compounds them. It can be shown to be present in BDL where we have other versions of the same text to compare with B. It is difficult to gauge its extent where a unique copy is involved, since successful editing will in principle result in a reading which is at least unexceptionable. Its presence in our poem would be particularly interesting since it would offer a possible solution to the problem of a largely but not completely strict text.

4. In this context, it is appropriate to conclude with a word about metre, which is intimately connected with language in dán dimrach, and which may be expected to shed some light on the status of the text, inasmuch as intermittent loss of finer metrical points might be taken as a sign of transmissional re-working of a strict text. Professor Ó Cuív has stated the rules for séadna in dán dimrach compositions as follows:

In it the poem had to conform to the syllabic pattern $8^2718^27^1$, with (1) perfect end-rime between b and d, (2) perfect rime (sicilí) between the last stressed word in c and the last stressed word but one in d, (3) perfect rime between every other stressed word in d and a word in c, (4) alliteration in every line, the alliteration in the last line being between the last two stressed words, and (5) alliteration between the last word in a and the first stressed word in b.

As applied to our poem the above criteria yield somewhat contradictory results. The rhymes show near-perfection as regards end-rhyme and sícilí (i.e. rules (1) and (2), the only exception being the imperfect rhyme aga : agrá in 2cd. But the results for rule (3), internal rhyme in second couplets, are much less impressive: 5 perfect rhymes out of a possible 12, or at best 9 out of 12 if suggested emendations were adopted in quatrains 2, 3, 4 and 7 (see notes). This might suggest that the poet had adopted a relaxed attitude towards internal rhyme, and composed his poem in 'óglaighs of séadna', rather in the manner of the óglaighs of rananighacht and of deibhidhe found in BDL poets like Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy. However, it is noticeable here that the rhymes which do appear are all (with the exception of aga : agrá) perfect rhymes, whereas Duncan Campbell and his like would admit various relaxations in rhyming standards as a matter of course.

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26See the Introductions to Duncan's poems (Gilles, Scottish Gaelic Studies 13/1 (1978) 18-45, 13/2 (1981) 253-88, 14/1 (1983) 59-82) for details of the relevant metrical rules and practices.
There are similar difficulties with rules (4)–(5) governing alliteration. Whereas I reckon that up to 24 out of the poem's 28 lines contain (or could have been intended to contain, or could easily be emended to contain) alliteration, there are at least four lines (4a, 4b, 5b, 7d) where it is hard to envisage alliteration, at least without 'major surgery'. Moreover, the total of 24 requires the acceptance of five ('easy') emendations (2a, 3d, 6a, 7a, 7c), and includes three strictly unacceptable alliterations (2a as emended, 6b, 6d) and three alliterations in strictly unacceptable positions (3d as emended, 5d, 7c as emended). As for alliteration linking a and b, only one quatrains shows it (7ab) beyond doubt. (It could be present in the corrupt 4ab.) Is this sole occurrence precious testimony to an earlier stage in the poem's 'life', or mere coincidence?

To sum up, the linguistic and metrical evidence taken together would appear to suggest one or other of two conclusions. Either we are dealing with a poem composed, more or less as we have it, in a less than strict form of séadna by a poet who was careful to observe metrical rules (1)–(2), but pretty happy-go-lucky about rules (3)–(5); or we have a poem which was composed according to the strict conventions, but which was subsequently altered fairly extensively in transmission by tradition-bearers or scribes who understood rules (1)–(2), but whose number included persons with a relatively relaxed attitude to rule (3) and innocent of the niceties of rules (4)–(5). I follow Brian Ó Cuív27 in believing that ógáchas should not be defined in purely negative terms as a loose imitation of dán díreach. I am therefore impressed by the virtually unanimous correctness of the rhymes which are present in the poem, and hence tempted to entertain the second alternative. 28 But I recognize that this can be no more than a hunch.

EDITION

Edited text: The encrustation of vernacular and dialectal forms which characterizes B is eliminated here, so far as that is possible, and the poem is presented with editorial punctuation, etc., normalized to an Early Modern Irish standard. (The text of B is given, in an orthography which borrows where necessary from the practices of Scottish Gaelic writers or the editors of dialect texts, in the notes, wherever it differs from the edited text.) I have, however, been chary of introducing emendations into the edited text, beyond a necessary and obvious minimum level. (Where this occurs, square brackets ([ ]) indicate material supplied editorially, angled brackets (⟨ ⟩) indicate material to be deleted.) Discussion of all textual matters is contained in the accompanying notes. Diplomatic text: I give the text of MS as nearly as possible in the form in which it appears in BDL; italics indicate the few contractions involved (for further details see Scottish Gaelic Studies 13/1 (1978) 21–2).

28 We should also bear in mind the rarity of ógáchas of séadna in general (cf. Ní Dubhghaill, Óannaireacht, 78).
Au[c]tor Muireadhach Albanach

1 Mithidh domh triall go toigh Pharrthais:
   an uair dhéonaighge dhuinne [is] soirbh;
   cosnam an teach tréan gan choire
   gan sgel ag neach oile oirn.

2 Déana do sgrúdadh red (shagart) adúraidh,
   cuimhnhigh go dlúth iomad t'olc;
   na beir aithrighge go n-aga:
   sgéal is préamh re agra ort.

3 Ná déan falachán id pheachtaibh
   gé gránna re innse h'olc;
   leag dod chuid cleachtadh diamhair
   má mbi agra dhiabhail ort.

4 Déan(a) do shiodh . . .
   dhá dheóin dhá ainmhdeóin led chorp;
   sgar red locht do dhul don domhan
   má mbi a oile is a oman ort.

1 'It is time for me to travel to the hall of Paradise: when You will it, it is
   (an) easy (journey) for me (or happy is the hour that you grant it to me).
   Let me attain the mighty abode unblemished, (leaving) no-one else with
   a complaint against me.'

2 'Examine yourself in the presence of your spiritual guide, recall assiduously
   the multitude of your misdeeds. Do not bring equivocal repentance: you
   will be called on to give an account and explanation (of yourself).

3 'Do not make any concealment in respect of your sins, however unpleasant
   your wickedness may be to relate. Throw off your secret practice(s) (!)
   lest you make yourself vulnerable to the Devil’s advocacy.

4 'Make your peace . . . with your body perforce. Part with your wrong-
   doing before leaving the world, lest its evil (taint) and its (cause for) fear
   weigh upon you.

   Cosname in teyg trane gin cherri gyn skail ag na' el crñ
[2] Dane dy scruit rad haggri stiér owne gi dlow ymmnit tolk
   Na bea a hy re’i gyn ag skail is prever ra aikre ort
[3] Na dan falchaf id fagki’ ga grane re ynnis a holk
   lagga di chut a chac davyr mar’m he aigre sylvel ort
[4] Dane dy’ be ria in lucht drac ga dön ga aweson lad corp
   Scar red / locht / = gyl dyn døyi ma ym be olk se cyñ ort
5 Maírg do threigeadh teach an Airdriogh
    ar ghrádh pheactha, tráth do-niodh:
    an t-olc do-ni duine go diabhar
        iomdha ainn-sín fiadhain 'man ghnimh.

6 Ag so searmóin do Shiol nÁdhaímh,
    mar shaolim nach bhfuil sí i mbréig,
    fulang a(n) bháis seal go seachain
    an fear nach deachaidh, go dhiéid.

7 [An F]ear do cheannaigh Shiol nÁdhaímh
d'fhuil a cholla agus dá chri,
    ar a réir do-ghéánaíonn seachadh,
    gion go ndìon rem peacadh mi.

    Mithidh.

5 'Woe betide anyone who would shun the abode of the High King for the
    love of sin, whenever he might commit it: the evil that a man does secretly
    (finds) many a witness there to the deed.

6 'Here is a precept for the race of Adam: for I reckon that it is no lie that
    the man who has not (so far) departed avoids the suffering of death (only)
    for a while, until he (eventually) goes.

7 'The One who purchased the race of Adam by the blood of His body
    and by His flesh, in accordance with His will would I become set (in my ways)
    - even though that does not protect me from my (burden of) sin.'
While the first and last verses are clearly spoken by the man who is approaching death, verses 2–4 are as clearly addressed to him. (Verses 5–6 are probably to be taken as part of the advice given to him, but could possibly be uttered by him.) The poem is thus a dialogue in form: cf. perhaps A Mhuireadhaigh meil do sgn (T. F. O’Rahilly, Measgra dánta II (Dublin and Cork 1927) no. 69).

Title Muirich B.
1 a Mithid (rather than mithgh or mitheich) is suggested for B by the non-lenition of domh.

teach Ph.: The original composition may have had teach hP.: cf. teach for teach in c.

b nar a dheón (adh) or dheóna (sgh) or dheónaigh (adh) B. One could also consider reading pretetite passive deónadh or deónaighadh. (If MS nar a were taken as nár, dheóna or dheónaigh would be indicated.) The reading chosen harmonizes best with my interpretation of the latter part of the line.

gona or gona MS. (1) I associate this form with duine (Sc.), gonn (Scottish Gaelic Studies 13/2 (1981) 281, VI 9a), donnna (E. C. Quiggin, Poems from the Book of the Dean of Lismore (Cambridge 1937) 77, LXI 6a) – i.e. a BDL spelling of duine ‘man’. Compare M. Ó Murchú, Scottish Gaelic Studies 15 (1988) 26, for East Perthsire/dun/ for dun(e), and see below 4b for g/dh confusion. (2) While I can believe that our scribe may have thought the poem mentioned a duine scóirbh, I cannot construe this ‘affable fellow’ within the verse as a whole, and believe that our scribe misheard or misread dune as dune. (The former would appear more likely, in view of the omitted is before the s-of scóirbh).

c an toigh trián B. Rhyme with teach necessitates the restoration of teach.

The original composition may have had an teach dréan.

cherrí (MS): cf. Mod. Sc. G. differentiation of coiré ‘flaw’ (usually with centralized vowel) from coiré ‘kettle’ (with [ɔ]). MS probably represents choir(e) or choir: cf. on ýnmi ʃd.

d olde: euil(e) C.

2a Déana (a) do sgrúid (adh) red shag(a) yrt stór (a?) B. The reconstruction printed above assumes (1) that the uncommon agent noun sduiraidh either generated a gloss (sagart) which then became incorporated into a later version of the text, or was taken as the (Scottish) genitive of the verbal noun sduírath, thereby generating the need for a preceding noun, which was then duly supplied; and (2) that the resulting hypermetric line has been subject to some desperate procrastanizing by our scribe. The main difficulty with all this is the spelling stór in MS; for BDL elsewhere uses the expected stur (see p. 284 line 6, i.e. Denaa mo theasga, a Thrimheid, 3a). Moreover, for what it is worth, the line lacks alliteration. Alternatives abound, but each raises fresh difficulties. (1) One could read sc[h]eir and construe it as súr-chuimhneagh in b; but this would have undesirable effects on the line-length of b. (2) One could postulate an early use of the modern sagart sgíre ‘parish priest’, since sgíre must have been in the language for a
long time; but this leaves the line-length problem unresolved. The reading adopted must thus be regarded as extremely tentative.

b cuí(mh)n(ígh) B.

c ná beir (?) or na[ch] b’fhéarr (?) atharaigh (perhaps for aithríge) gan ag(a) B. (The final -a of MS bera quite possibly has no syllabic value: cf. iagga (3e), marga (5a).) I have opted for the former alternative in view of the preceding and following imperatives; but (1) the verb beir is slightly unexpected with aithríge, (2) sense requires us to replace the usual gan aga with the unusual go n-agá, and (3) the metre looks to require a word to rhyme with sgéal or préamh (i.e. with the shape bár). The second alternative would presumably lead us to restore náth fhéarr and take the line as an interjection: ‘would it not be better to repent unstintingly?’

This allows us to retain gan aga, but still does not provide an internal rhyme. Could one read na[ch] bár[a]... sgéala (‘Will you not...?’)? The reading must be classed as uncertain.

d Cf. ‘Innis Ó dána... sgéala gach éid den ealta, fhríomha a n-cóid’s a n-aintheacht’s ‘(E. Knott, The bardic poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn (1550-1591) I (Ir. Texts Soc. XXII, London 1922 for 1920) no. 15 st. 27).

3a Ná déan fa(e)chán id pheachadh B (The final -idh could perhaps represent a treatment of -ibh, though vocalization of final /v/ usually results in -ev, -ew, i.e. /(j)u/, in BDL.) If the expected déana were read the line would be hypermetric: assuming déan seems the simplest way of understanding B, for what it is worth. Other ways of reconstructing the line so as to preserve déana involve further changes or difficulties: e.g. (ná déana) faillighe id pheachadh or faigh each(t) (ann) ad ph. or faigh each(a)ibh (t). For faigh each(a)ibh, which I am loth to discard, cf. T.F. O’Rahilly, Dánta grádaí 2nd ed. (Cork 1926) no. 13 st. 1 (glossed as clúdach by O’Rahilly in Laotho cumann (Baile-Ath-Atha Cliath agus Corcaigh 1925) 32). I take it that the idea here is of a ‘cover-up’.

b gá gráin(a) re sinne (e) B. In order to read classical sinse one could omit re and take ocl as genitive plural.

c a clach (MS) is problematic. It should include a rhyme with aigré (MS) in d, which seems to stand for agrá like aisre in 2d; cf. thréige 5a beside bhrék 5 d for variation in the representation of devoiced post-tonic /g/. Moreover, to judge from the practice in the rest of this poem, the voiced reading should provide alliteration with either cluid or diamsair. It is here tentatively assumed that MS corresponds to a (= de) c[h]léachtadth d[h]amshair ‘(your portion) of covert practice(s)’. The difficulties are (1) the villainous rhyme, (2) the semantics, and (3) the syllable count. As to (1), it is possible that agrá in d should itself be replaced by another word; see notes on d for some possible alternatives, including a couple which would rhyme better with cleachtadth. Regarding (2), the problem is that neither cleachtadth nor diamsair in itself carries the sinister associations we would expect here. One could supply this by reading [d]-[h]cleachtadth (though mɪ-čłeachtadth or drōsč-cleachtadth would be more usual for ‘evil practice’ etc.); but while this would solve (2) by adding the required extra syllable, it would bring further – and serious – problems for the rhyme with d. In the circumstances, I have refrained from attempting to go beyond the reading which seems to be suggested for B, though one could tackle the question of line-length in various ways – e.g. by adding an emphatic suffix to cuaid.
4ab déan (a) do shíodh ri a n lucht dra... (or dra...) / gá déonín gá amsbhlasain le òr corp B. In view of the uncertainty as to the conclusion of a, shíodh cannot be regarded as certain: e.g. one could take heris as one word and speculate on déan do thoirse. Nevertheless, shíodh is the most obvious reading for B.

On that hypothesis I see two possible ways of taking the couplet: (1) 'Make your peace with [certain people or similar] whether your body likes it or not', or (2) 'Make your peace [under certain circumstances] with your body (i.e. come to terms with your mortality) whether it likes it or not'.

(1) In this case we should reconstruct gá déonín gá amsbhlasain le òr corp which accords well enough with MS and B; cf. also Sc.G. o clíc mhath leis 'whether he like it or no, willy-nilly' for the general shape of the idiom.

(2) In this case we should reconstruct dhá d[h]e snín dhá amsbhlasain, which equally does no violence to MS or B: cf. corp 4b, teyg 5a, cree 7b for omission of lenition, and ghn a 1b for g/dh confusion in proclitics. Cf. also Sc.G. a dheán nó a dh'tainneoin (< de dh. nó d'a) 'willy-nilly' for the continuation of the idiom.

One is thus thrown back on the vexed conclusion of a. It seems to have been taken by the scribe as containing luxt + defining genitive, but it is not clear to me what he understood (lucht dreacatha 'the poets'? lucht g/radh 'the clergy'?). There is a problem, of course, with any such reconstruction, in that the line would be hypermetric, though one could supply a monosyllabic imperative déan or compel an intrusive definite article to remedy this. It would also be in keeping with B's orthographical practices (cf. on e) to write a word with internal -cht- as two words, to signify the careful or learned pronunciation /xt/. This raises the alternative possibility that we should be looking for a word containing the sequence /luxtra/. In either case we should be looking for (1) a noun (e.g. 'Almighty', 'Church', or similar) or (2) some adverbial phrase (comparable to do dhul don domhan in e). I am at present unable to identify such a word. (Under (2) I have considered some declensional form or compound involving thradh.)

c locht dì (MS) could be taken as lochta, the word-break indicating a phonetic sequence unfamiliar in the speech of the scribe: the orthography of BDL shows signs that the development /xt/ > /x(k)/ was established at the spoken level by that time. However, this would require us to read
oka, which is ill-attested as a nominal form, in d. We should therefore take B to read locht do dhul, with do added above the line, but apparently by our scribe at the time of writing. While the syntax is, to my mind, not impossible, it is not natural: one would have expected ré" or ag or ar sooner than do. But the scribe, who also inserted a slash indicating word-division within MS radlocht, may have taken the line differently: e.g. he may have taken do as 'thy'.

d mán b' (or b?) B: see on 3d. Certainly, suil rabh (: sgar) would help metrically.

se oyn (MS): This would represent /sin om('). Could the scribe have intended (rightly or wrongly) Si-óm 'of Zion'? (Presumably the reference would be to the 'ill' of Judgement Day.) Yet we should recall that a vernacular form something like *Su-thú(i)n seems to be implied elsewhere in BDL; see Scottish Gaelic Studies 13/1 (1978) 27 (st. ?a). It is probably easiest to take the spelling se as a simple mistake for si', sy' or similar.

5a Maír's (a) thréigeadh B. The second a of marga (MS) is presumably orthographic, and the relative a counts as an insertion to the text. For the reconstructed 'original' one could as easily supply the copula: [at] maír thréigeadh. . . . Note that the -g- of MS thréig seems to counsel against thréigeadh. The secondary sequence is required by do-níadh ((: gnìomh) in b. Th. th-seems to follow Gaelic orthographic practice.

tòigh B; cf. on 1c for the restoration of teach.

b pheachta: MS represents /lek/, i.e. pheac(adh)or pheactha, or /bki/, i.e. pheacadh (the normal Scottish Gaelic o-stem treatment of verbal nouns in -adh). I print pheachta somewhat arbitrarily on grounds of compatibility with either trath or an trath: see next note.

MS trra has an otiose r on account of an re-action over the tr-. Could this be somehow connected with the absence of the definite article, which is more normal when trath is used as a temporal conjunction, and should perhaps be read here?

an-ní(adh) B.

c d'ún B. (See on 16 for this form and spelling of dúine.) The line is hypermetric as it stands: if we substituted the much less common i ndaímhra 'in secrecy', this would be resolved, and would also permit us to put classical fadaí for fadaín in d.

d symò (MS) probably represents Perthshire Gaelic iom' for Scottish Gaelic iomadh rather than iom( dh)\textsuperscript{a}, the final -i being an orthographical device (cf. chòiri i d') comparable to the -a discussed in relation to bera (2c).

ann-séin: an sin B, but a stressed form is needed for alliteration. (If the elision between iomadh and ann-séin were felt too harsh then the enclitic -séin could be omitted.)

fadaí: see on c.

'man ghìomh (so B): This may be a careful pronunciation (since g(h)n-regularly becomes g(h)r- in B), or it may point somehow to an original 'man gnìomh, which should probably be assumed in any case.

6b nach bhfuil B (?): am bhrìg B.

c a (or a'?) bhása (or bhása-se ?) B. The genitive bhása is cited, but as an incorrect form, in O. Bergin (ed.), 'Irish grammatical tracts', Ériu 8-10 (1915-28) suppl.: Deckson, § 96). In either case the line is hypermetric. The last point can be met by restoring the classically correct (and usual)
genitive bás: see text. However, B's reading (whichever is meant) is not easy to motivate; possibly the original had *fulang pháise*.

cd I take it that the message of the couplet as a whole is, 'We all have to die some day'. Cf. the anonymous quatrain quoted by Keating (O. Bergin (ed.), *Tri bhor-glaíthe an bháis* (Dublin 1931) lines 3810–13):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cidh bé agaibh is sia sacghal} \\
\text{ís an t-éan agus é is sás:} \\
\text{ná macailheadh sé a aga uainne,} \\
\text{ní fada ón té is buaine an bás.}
\end{align*}
\]

There is a certain awkwardness about the text as printed, and it may be that it has suffered adaptation in its transmission before reaching BDL; cf. previous note and note the peculiar alliteration in *deachaidh dtéid* in d. As an alternative we might read *gé* for *go* in c, and translate: '(no lie) that although the man who has not (so far) departed avoids the suffering of death for a while, (eventually) he goes'. In that case we might have expected *go raghadh*—unless, indeed, *téid* is an example of Scottish Gaelic present/future coalescence.

7a *Fhear a cheannach/-aich* B. The missing alliteration could be supplied if we substituted *clann* for *siol*.

b chré: see on d.

c *air a réir go ndéanann* B (presumably with asseverative *go* as often in Scottish Gaelic poetry). This lacks alliteration and internal rhyme with *d*: perhaps the original had *air, far-ior, do-ghéanann*. . . 'for Him, alas, I would . . . '; or perhaps we should read *gén* in *d*.

seacadh: The basic meaning is 'freeze, become fixed'. Here an extension of meaning seems necessary. The translation offered is tentative; other possibilities might include 'I would waste myself (by self-mortification)' or 'I would become rigid or cold (in death)'.

d *gion gá dón* B; cf. on c, however, for another possibility. The verb looks very much like a Sc.G. dependent future.

rem *beacaadh* B, perhaps misunderstanding the delenition of the homorgonic consonant after *rem* and hypercorrecting; or perhaps giving secondary nasalisation to an original *ré beacaadh*.

mi: So B, and so the metrical requirement of a *dúnadh* echoing *mithich*. (Otherwise we could have considered *chré: mé* in *a*.) The form *mi* is common in BDL poems of Scottish origin; and, of course, in Scottish Gaelic in general. It is not unknown in later Irish poetry (e.g. M. Mhac an tSaoi, 'Filiocht den teachtú acis déag', *Celtica* 1 (1946) 141–57, p. 165 line 222); but it is, at the least, characteristically Scottish.

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