

‘MUSIC HAS ENDED’: THE DEATH OF A HARPER¹

THE following poem is a lament for Conchubhar Mac Conghalaigh,² harper to Domhnall Ó Donnabháin, who was chief of Clann Chathail³ from 1584 until his death in 1639. In the thirteenth year of the reign of James I (1615) Domhnall surrendered and was regranted his lands. He was married twice: to Oiléan or Eiléan de Barra, and subsequently to the daughter of Mac Carrthaigh Riabhach mentioned in quatrain 12 below. A poem by Maol Domhnaigh Ó Muirgheasáin in praise of Domhnall’s heir and namesake has also been published.⁴

The poet, Tadhg Olltach Ó an Cháinte, is probably to be identified with ‘Teige on Canty, of Clansheane’, who is mentioned in a flant of Elizabeth I dated 14 May 1601, along with his wife ‘Margaret ny Fynan’.⁵ He is mentioned in proximity to Fear Feasa Ó an Cháinte, to whom he may have been related. O’Rahilly suggests that Clansheane might be in the same vicinity as Curravordy to the north of Bandon, Co. Cork, the home of Fear Feasa. However, ‘Clanshane’ appears as part of the Carbery lands of Mac Carrthaigh Riabhach in an inquisition of 1636.⁶ The townlands listed there show that it comprised the northern part of the parish of Desertserges. It is likely that it was named from the *Clann tSeáin* branch of Clann Charrthaigh Riabhach.⁷

One other poem, *Uaidhe féin do fhás Íosa*,⁸ is attributed to Tadhg Ó an Cháinte in the Book of O’Conor Don, but to Ó Dálaigh Fionn in Royal Irish Academy MS 254 (F ii 2) and Maynooth M 70, to Aonghus na Diadhachta in RIA 256 (23 G 23) and Maynooth M 72, to Aonghus Ó Dálaigh na Diadhachta in Maynooth M 96, and to ‘Aongas Ó Dála .i. Ó Dála Fionn’ in RIA 252 (F vi 1).⁹ It is anonymous in RIA 24 L 5, and Maynooth M 84, M 89 and B 9. Since attributions of devotional syllabic poems to Aonghus na Diadhachta etc., especially those lacking

¹The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Dr Damian McManus, who kindly read a draft of this article and made useful suggestions, Prof. Brian Ó Cuív, who was consulted on some difficulties, Mr Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, who provided historical information and helped to identify placenames, and especially Dr Pádraig Ó Macháin, whose expert advice was frequently sought in regard to the edition and translation of the poem. Such errors as may remain are solely the authors’ responsibility.

²See note to 2b below for discussion on the correct form of this surname.

³See below, note to 1a.

⁴R. Black, ‘Poems by Maol Domhnaigh Ó Muirgheasáin (II)’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 13/1 (1978) 46–55.

⁵17th Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Ireland (1885) 213 no. 6516, quoted by T. F. O’Rahilly, ‘Irish poets, historians, and judges in English documents, 1538–1615’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 36 C 6 (1921–4) 109.

⁶J. O’Donovan, *Miscellany of the Celtic Society* (Dublin 1849) 132.

⁷T. Ó Donnchadha (ed.), *An Leabhar Muimhneach* (Baile Átha Cliath [1940]) 153. This information including the preceding reference was provided by Diarmuid Ó Murchadha.

⁸Edited by L. Mac Cionnaith in *Dioghluim dána* (Baile Átha Cliath 1931) 184–6.

⁹See C. McGrath, ‘“Ó Dálaigh Fionn cct.”’, *Éigse* 5 (1945–7 [1948]) 185–95.

a closing quatrain dedicated to Saint Michael,¹⁰ have to be treated with caution, it is not unreasonable to give more credence to the ascription in the Book of O'Conor Don.

Nothing else is known to us of Tadhg Olltach.

Conchubhar Mac Conghalaigh belonged to a military family in the service of Ó Donnabháin of Clann Chathail.¹¹ There is some evidence for hereditary harping families: Uí Lonargáin of Ballynabanaba in Co. Galway were, it is claimed, harpers to Uí Cheallaigh.¹² Clann Sheanaigh were harpers to the Lords of the Isles at the beginning of the sixteenth century and held lands in South Kintyre by virtue of their office.¹³ Many harpers, however, bore the surnames of important literary families. Uí Dhuibhgeannáin, whose most frequent profession is *seanchas*, or *seanchas* and *flidhecht*,¹⁴ produced *Daioghre* [sic] *O Duibhgeanain, doine ro bhind suilcuir* [leg. *súlchair*] 'a most affable musical man'.¹⁵ Uí Chianáin of Fermanagh similarly produce one harper *soei fhir thed*¹⁶ and several *senchaidhe*.¹⁷ Uí Chianáin poets and musicians in Co. Kildare were pardoned in 1542.¹⁸ It is clear that many Irish and Scottish harpers were blind, e.g. Nioclás Dall Mac Piarais,¹⁹ Ruaidhrí Dall Ó Catháin,²⁰ Ruaidhrí Dall Mac Mhuirich.²¹ Perhaps because of the vagaries of musical talent, harping seems to have been more 'open' than other learned professions, which were usually the exclusive preserve of certain families. A blind person of an aristocratic background, suitably talented, would have had the opportunity of training as a professional harper in order to retain his social position.

To our knowledge the poem edited below, *Torchoir ceól Cloinne Cathoil*, is to be found only in two manuscripts: RIA 5 (23 D 4), pp. 140-42, and RIA 888 (12 F 8), pp. 63-4. Since the latter is merely a

¹⁰See L. M'Kenna, *Dánta do chum Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh* (Dublin and London 1919) xiii.

¹¹See note to 2b below.

¹²J. O'Donovan, *The tribes and customs of Hy-Many* (Dublin 1843) 92.

¹³D. S. Thomson, 'Gaelic learned orders and literati in medieval Scotland', *Proceedings of the Third International Congress of Celtic Studies* (ed. W. F. H. Nicolaisen, Edinburgh 1968) [= *Scottish Studies* 12 (1968)] 57-78, pp. 69-70.

¹⁴W. M. Hennessy, *The Annals of Loch Cé* II (London 1871) 58 (AD 1384), 72 (1390), 154 (AD 1432), 192 (AD 1495), 336 (AD 1542); *ollamh* is used without reference to a specific discipline, *ibid.* I (1871) 632 (AD 1347), II (1871) 16 (AD 1357).

¹⁵*ibid.*, 496-7 (AD 1589).

¹⁶W. M. Hennessy and B. Mac Carthy, *Annals of Ulster* III (Dublin 1895) 614 (AD 1537).

¹⁷*ibid.*, 18 (AD 1387), 44 (AD 1400), 54 (AD 1406), 198 (AD 1459), 226 (AD 1469), 534 (AD 1520); J. O'Donovan, *Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* IV (Dublin 1856) 656 (AD 1373), 1126 (AD 1483).

¹⁸O'Rahilly, 'Irish poets . . . in English documents', 111.

¹⁹See J. H. Pierse, 'Nicholas Dall Pierse of Co. Kerry, harper', *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society* 6 (1973) 40-75.

²⁰See C. Ó Baoill, 'Some Irish harpers in Scotland', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 47 (1971-2) 143-71.

²¹W. Matheson, *The Blind Harper: the songs of Roderick Morison and his music* (Edinburgh 1970) xxxviii-xxxix.

nineteenth-century transcript (possibly by O’Curry) of the former, it has been ignored for the purpose of this edition. RIA 23 D 4 is a seventeenth-century paper manuscript. Its scribe is unknown but O’Rahilly reckons him by his spelling to be a Munsterman,²² while Bergin declares his work ‘unscholarly, and therefore unconventional in style and orthography’.²³

The poem is in *deibhidhe* metre and fulfils the metrical requirements perfectly but for two lines, 6*c* and 8*c*, where proper alliteration is missing. Both lines, as they stand, include a form of alliteration unrecognized in *dán díreach*.

In this edition *éu* and *é*, which occur in the manuscript for *éa* in monosyllabic words, have been normalized to *éa*; *bh* has been substituted for *mh* in (*n*)*D(h)onnabháin*; historical *dh* has been substituted for *gh*; *gc* has been substituted initially for *cc*, and *dt* for *tt*; *i* is written in place of *a* when ‘in, into’ is meant. The length mark written once over the diphthong *ia* has been removed. Missing length marks are indicated by macrons; expanded contractions are in italics; *h* is used where lenition is supplied. Punctuation and the use of the apostrophe and hyphen are editorial. All other alterations are accompanied by manuscript readings.

Tadhg Olltach Ó’n Cháinte *cecínit*

- 1 Torchoir ceól Cloinne Cathoil,
rug orra éag anachoin,
teidhm bhus gomh síoruidhe so,
dol dā síodhuighe seanma.
- 2 Múisigtheach dorcha domhoin,
Conchubhur Mac Conghalaigh,
a gcúis gháire, a ngníomh doiligh,
re síol nDáire dealuighidh.
- 3 Ceól na gcuradh ó Chuan Dor,
maírg, a Dhé bhí, *dār* beanadh,
méar beoighlin*n* iúl*m*hur aithneach
ciúnghlan ceoilbhini*n* cuartuightheach.

1 The music of Clann Chathail has ended, a grievous death has overtaken them, this is an affliction which will be perpetual anguish, the departure of their fairy musician.

2 An enigmatic profound musician, Conchubhar Mac Conghalaigh, their cause for laughter, their difficult deed, he departs from the descendants of Dáire.

3 The music of the heroes from Glandore, woe, o living God, to those who have been deprived of it, a lively and reliable, knowledgeable, understanding finger, – calm and clear, sweet, ubiquitous.

1 *c* sin *d* sioguidhe 2*b* Coinghéalai*gh* 3*d* ciún *ghlan*

²² *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy* I (Dublin and London 1926–30) 30–31.

²³ O. Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry* (ed. D. Greene and F. Kelly, Dublin 1970) 175.

- 4 Dúsgadh leōin, losgadh anáidh,
ceōl codoil crū Donnabháin,
a éag rob *gh*nīomhradh *gh*oimhe,
bēad rīoghban is rīoghraidhe.
- 5 *Sliocht* Dáire Cearb nār ceileadh,
uatha trá ní tuigfidhear
labhra faoilte na bhfoghur;
damhna a gcaointe Conchubhur.
- 6 Ní shaoilid filidh náid fáidh,
ní mheasoid mná náid macáimh,
céim soirbhis 'na dhiaidh d'*fh*agháil,
liaigh doirbhis ó nDonnabháin.
- 7 Glac lúthbhras ionar lia gean,
Dallán Forgoill na bhfileadh,
glór búidh budh clisdi croidhe,
cisde rúin na rīoghroidhe.
- 8 Taidhiuire a théad, tiún a chor
– mar tā a-niú is neamhthuar meanman –
lúth saor an ríghmheoir mhire,
fighleoir caol ar gcruitire.
- 9 Dá mhéad do-gheibhin dā ghrádh
ní bhraithinn choidche im chompán
– an dallsa nār dhall croidhe –
acht barr annsa ar n-ionmhoine.

- 4 Awakening of grief, pain of tragedy, the sleep-music of the blood of Donnabhán, his death was a sorrowful event, the grief of royal women and men.
- 5 The famed descendants of Dáire Cearb, from them indeed will not be perceived the joyful sound of melodies; Conchubhar is the cause of their lamenting.
- 6 Neither poets nor prophets believe, neither women nor young men expect, to receive any degree of cheer in his wake, the healer of grief of the descendants of Donnabhán.
- 7 A swift-moving hand loved by many, the Dallán Forgaill of the poets, a tender voice of lively spirit, the confidant of royalty.
- 8 The plaintiveness of his strings, the tune of his melodies – as he is today he promises no elation – the noble agility of the swift kingly finger, a subtle artist was our harper.
- 9 However great the love I received from him, I never felt in my companion – this blind man who was not blind of heart – but ever greater love in return for my affection.

5 *b* tráth *d* caointe *expunged between* damhna *and* a ccaointe 6 *a* filidhe *c* dhiaig *df*aghail. 7 *b* Forghoill 8 *a* Taigiuire *c* ríghmheoir mhire. *d* ar bhfighleoir. 8 *syllables*. 9 *c* ar *ar*

- 10 Déanomh aoibhnis ní heōl damh
im thoirchim trá nā im dhúsgadh,
ar gclódh cēille, ar gcás cumhadh,
bás mo chéile Conchubhar.
- 11 Mēar lūthmhur bhār lia anáir,
croidhe dil Í Dhonnabháin,
fáidh amhra an fhoilcheasa fuinn,
damhna doirbhcheasa Domhnuill.
- 12 Cumhthach ar aoi a daltáin daill
inghean Eōghuin mheic Dhomhnuill,
is baoth mar oire a hosna,
saoth lem chroidhe an Charrthachsa.
- 13 Graifneadh muisigtheach meōir bhrais,
uaigneach 'na dhiaidh dā dhīoghras,
teagar coimseach rob chaoin cuir,
toirseach dā thaoibh a dtorchuir.

TORCHUIR// CEŌL// CLOINNE// CATHOIL//

- 10 I know not how to enjoy myself in slumber indeed or awake; my loss of reason, my sorrowful predicament is the death of my companion Conchubhar.
- 11 The dexterous finger regarding whom was very great honour, the beloved darling of Ó Donnabháin, the wonderful seer of recondite melody, the cause of Domhnall's painful grief.
- 12 Sorrowful for her blind darling is the daughter of Eóghan son of Domhnall; her sigh is senseless as a burden; this lady of Clann Charrthaigh is distress to my heart.
- 13 The musical inscribing of a bold finger – lonely in his wake are his intimates – a seemly gathering whose melodies were sweet; tragic what has ended on his account!

10 *a* ainis *with bh above in different ink b* tráth *c* ccumhadh 12*b* mhic
13*a* muisigtheach

NOTES

- 1*a* *Clann Chathoil*, *gs. Cloinne Cathoil*: According to *An Leabhar Muimhneach*, 231, the Cathal in question was the father of Donnabhán (see note to 4*b*). John O'Donovan (*Four Masters* vi 243), however, on the authority of An Dubháltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh states that this Cathal was the son of Crom, a descendant of Donnabhán, and lived in the thirteenth century, and that Uí Dhonnabháin were divided into *Clann Chathail*, *Clann Lochlainn*, and *Clann* (or *Sliocht*) *Aineislis*, named after the three sons of Crom. *Clann Chathail* was the principal branch. *Clann Chathail*, Anglicized Clancahill, as a placename referred to a considerable area in Carbery, Co. Cork.

- 1b *éag anachoin*: *an(fh)achain* or *an(fh)ochain* is a compound of *fochonn*, which was originally a masculine o-stem but appears as *fochain*, *fachain*, *fochaind*, *fachaind*, a feminine ā-stem, in *Irish grammatical tracts II* (declension) (ed. O. Bergin, supplement to *Ériu* 8–10 (1916–28)) § 150, genitive *faichne*, ex. 2000. Genitive singular *anachoin*, therefore, appears to be at variance with Classical usage. Examples of the genitive singular of *anachoin* are rare in this period. Céitinn uses *anfhochaine* (O. Bergin (ed.), *Trí biorghaoithe an bháis* (Dublin and London 1931) line 8451). The word seems to be feminine and indeclinable in the modern dialect of north Galway and Mayo (Colm [Ó Lochlainn], *Éigse* 9 (1958–61) 271).
- 1d *síodhuighe*: References to *síodha* and to *Tuatha Dé Danann* musicians are often found in syllabic verse where musical skill is praised, e.g. E. C. Mac Giolla Eáin, *Dánta, amhráin is caointe Sheathrúin Céitinn* (Baile Átha Cliath 1900) no. 7 §§ 3a–5d; Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry*, no. 15 §§ 8b, 10a–15d; no. 25 §§ 4b, 6b–11d; no. 54 § 10d; C. McGrath, ‘Two skilful musicians’, *Éigse* 7 (1953–5) 88–90 §§ 1a–5b, 9a–d; M. Ní Cheallacháin, *Filíocht Phádraigín Haicéad* (Baile Átha Cliath 1962) no. 43 lines 253–6. For an example from accentual verse see P. A. Breatnach, ‘Roinnt amhrán ar comhfhoirm’, *Éigse* 23 (1989) 77–8.
- 2b *Conghalaigh* is required for rhyming purposes against *Coinghéalaigh* of the ms. In Rev. P. Woulfe, *Sloinnté Gaedheal is Gall* (Baile Átha Cliath 1923) 334, 471, and E. MacLysaght, *Irish families* (Dublin 1957) 87, it is asserted that the correct form of this surname as regards the Cork family is Ó (or Mac) *Coingheallaigh*. Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, in *The family names of County Cork* (Dún Laoghaire 1985) 126, refers to them as *Clann Chonghalaigh* and supposes them to be a branch of Uí Dhonnabháin. A family called *Uí Choinghealtaigh* is mentioned in Mac Fhir Bhisigh’s genealogy (University College, Dublin, MS Add. 14, p. 442) as belonging to Dál Cairbre Aradh, who occupied lands in North Munster. Perhaps they are to be identified with the ‘Connollys’ of Co. Cork, but no evidence for such an identification has presented itself. The *Mac Conghalaigh* form is supported by this poem, but it is also possible that the name was made to fit the metrical requirements: cf. *Eóghain: ghlaineólais* in a poem to Eoin Ó Callanáin (P. de Brún et al., *Nua-dhuanaire I* (Baile Átha Cliath 1971) no. 23 § 1).

Seán Ó Coileáin, the Myross poet, mentions this family in his account of the inauguration of Domhnall na gCroiceann, the father of the Ó Donnabháin mentioned in this poem: ‘. . . Mac Conolly, who had served as captain under his father and grandfather, and whose ancestors, for a long time prior to that period had been a kind of hereditary life guard to the O’Donovan family, and on that account had seven ploughlands assigned to them by O’Donovan in the parish of Drinagh’ (J. O’Donovan, *Genealogies, tribes and customs of Hy-Fiachrach* (Dublin 1844) 449). A more detailed account of the lands occupied by them is given in an inquisition held in 1607 to discover the extent of Domhnall Ó Donnabháin’s lands: ‘[“]That the quarter of Munan” [now Minane, in Drinagh parish] “and Lahanaght, containing three ploughlandes, holden of the said Mannor by the Slight of Clanconelig” [Clann-Connelly], “&c. That the quarter of Garren” [now Garrane] “and Ballyvroig, conteining three ploughlandes, is holden of the said Mannor by Slight Clan Conelagh,

&c. That Kinglyny, conteining one ploughlande, is holden of the Mannor of Castell O'Donyvane by the sept of Clanconelly, &c.[ⁿ]' (O'Donovan, *Four Masters* vi 2442-3; forms in square brackets are supplied by O'Donovan). 'Ballyvroig' is probably Ballyroe, and 'Kinglyny' Killinga, both in Kilmacabea parish adjoining Drinagh. Perhaps O'Donovan's identification of 'Garren' with Garrane in Caheragh parish is mistaken, the form 'Carran' used in the fiant quoted in the next paragraph being more correct, and it is to be identified with Corran North, South and Middle, also in Kilmacabea parish. The fact that the 'Connollys' were retainers to Clann Chathail need not imply that they were of the same family.

In a fiant of 1601 (17th Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records (1885) 206-7 no. 6515) we find the following: 'Donell O Donnevan alias O Donovan of Castledonevan, gent., Joan ny Cartie, his wife, Donell m'Donell O Donevan, of same, Teige m'Donell M'Enestlis, of the Mynive, Conoghor O Flahavane, of Castledonevan, Conoghor oge M'Kennella. . .'. However several other *M'Kennellas* are mentioned in this fiant including some whose first names are also *Conoghor*: 'Conoghor oge m'Ea M'Kenella, of the Carran, Donogh m'Conoghor m'Ea, Conoghor, m'Donell oge M'Kenella . . . Conoghor m'Awliff M'Kennella, of Laghenaght . . . Conoghor m'Dermot M'Kennella, of Laghenaght'. It seems likely that the Conchubhar of this poem is the first mentioned, since it is appropriate for the chief's harper to be named among the family of the chief.

- 2c i.e. Conchubhar both entertained them and encouraged them to valour. Cf. *sás meanman do mhóruhadh* 'expert in exalting courage' (Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry*, no. 54 § 11b).
- 2d *Dáire*, 5a *Dáire Cearb*, Eóghanacht dynast, son of Oilioll Flann Beag, ancestor of Uí Fhithgheinte (to which Uí Dhonnabháin belong) and Uí Liatháin.
- 3a *Cuan Dor*, Glandore Harbour, Co. Cork.
- 3cd Here, in 8a, cd, and in 11a, Conchubhar's skill is praised emphasizing the rapidity and accuracy of his fingerwork. These are qualities of a good harper frequently praised by poets along with the sweetness of the harp-music: e.g. McGrath, 'Two skilful musicians', 89 §§ 6bc, 7; Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry*, no. 25 § 3c; P. Ua Duinnín, *Dánta Phiarais Feiritéir* (Baile Átha Cliath 1903) 19 line 500; Mac Giolla Eáin, *Dánta . . . Sheathruín Céitinn*, no. 7 § 2bcd; Ní Cheallacháin, *Filíocht Phádraigín Haicéad*, no. 17 § 1cd. Outside observers, beginning with Giraldus Cambrensis c.1200, also noted these features in Irish harpers: 'It is remarkable how, in spite of the great speed of the fingers, the musical proportion is maintained' (Giraldus Cambrensis, *The history and topography of Ireland* (transl. J. J. O'Meara, Portlaoise and Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1982) 103-4). Edward Bunting also was pleasantly surprised by the speed at which the old harpers played at the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792 (E. Bunting, *The ancient music of Ireland, arranged for the pianoforte* (Dublin 1840) 18-19).
- 4b *ceól codail*: In *The book of Magauran* (ed. L. McKenna, Dublin 1947) no. 11 § 28, we find the following instance of a chief being lulled to sleep by the harp: *Gan chruit nó gan tiompán téidbhinn / ní théid n-a cholludh craobh Liag; / [a] dá ghormshúil mar bhláth mbugha / do mhongdhúin snáth umha iad*, i.e. 'Liag's branch never sleeps but to the strains of harp

or sweet stringed lyre; (only) brass strings can make their lashes close over his two hyacinth-blue eyes'. Among the gifts bestowed by the king in the poem *Tilleadh Raghnaill Oig is cruít fo theudan / Agus cead a seinn 'na sheòmar* 'a stringed harp and permission to play it in his chamber', apparently a metaphor for the king's favour (A. M. MacKenzie, *Orain Iain Luim: songs of John MacDonald, bard of Keppoch* (Edinburgh 1964) 6–9 lines 66–7). What is possibly an early reference to the same custom occurs in *The instructions of king Cormac mac Airt* (ed. K. Meyer, Todd Lecture Series XV, Dublin and London 1909) no. 31 line 26): *mílsem ceól ceól i ndoirche* 'music is sweetest in the dark'. Meyer ascribes to this work a date in 'the first half of the ninth century' (p. xi). According to the Annals in 1490 a Monaghan harper, Diarmaid Ó Cairbre, cut the throat of his patron Aonghus Óg Mac Domhnaill, son of the Lord of the Isles, at Inverness as he slept (A. Martin Freeman, *The Annals of Connacht* (Dublin 1944) 592–4, Hennessy, *Annals of Loch Cé* ii 186, Mac Carthy, *Annals of Ulster* iii 350, O'Donovan, *Four Masters* iv 1184). Cf. W. S. Watson, *Scottish verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Edinburgh 1937) 96–9, 280; A. Cameron, *Reliquae Celticae* II (Inverness 1894) 162; J. R. N. Macphail, *Highland papers* I (Edinburgh 1914) 51–2 (= *Collectanea de rebus Albanicis* (Iona Club, Edinburgh 1847) 318–19).

- 4b *Donnabhán*, gs. *Donnabhāin*, eponymous ancestor of Uí Dhonnabháin, mentioned for having kidnapped Mathghamhain the brother of Brian Bóroimhe in S. Mac Airt, *The Annals of Inisfallen* (Dublin 1951) 160 (AD 976) and O'Donovan, *Four Masters* ii 700 (AD 974). It is possible that he is the *Donnubán* mentioned in *Annals of Inisfallen* who died in 980. According to *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* (ed. J. H. Todd, London 1867) 102, he was killed in a battle with Brian Bóroimhe which is also recorded in *Four Masters* ii 707 (AD 976) and *Annals of Inisfallen* 162 (AD 977 § 3).
- 5a *Dáire Cearb*, see note on 2d.
- 5bc Other instances where the absence of music, or at least of joyful music, is a sign of distress are to be found in C. Ó Háinle, 'An ceol san fhilíocht chlasaiceach', *Léachtaí Cholm Cille* VII (Má Nuad 1976) 34, 41–2.
- 6c Alliteration is wanting; no emendation suggests itself.
- 7b *Dallán Forgoill*, sixth-century poet, composer of *Amra Cholúim Chille*, styled *ardollamh* of Ireland in P. S. Dinneen (ed.), *Foras feasa ar Éirinn: The history of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D.D.* III (Ir. Texts Society IX, London 1908) 94, leader of the *tromdhámh* in *Tromdhámh Guaire* (ed. M. Joynt, Dublin 1941). This epithet implies that Conchubhar was also a worthy poet.
- 7c This probably refers to Conchubhar's singing voice. The deaths of two harpers are recorded in the *Annals of Ulster*, both of whom are noted for their singing voices as well as for their accomplishments on the harp, described *bud bhinn lamh 7 bel* (*Annals of Ulster* iii 340 (AD 1489)), and *fer budh roibhind do bel 7 do laimh* (ibid., 398–400 (AD 1496)). Cf. *Binn a ghille a gcan do bhéal / binn gotha na dtéad ód mheór* i.e. 'sweet o youth the singing of your mouth, sweet the sounds of the strings from your finger' (P. Walsh, *Gleanings from Irish manuscripts* (Dublin 1933) 113). In *Mesce Chúanach* (ed. M. O Daly, *Ériu* 19 (1962) 78 § 8) the sound of a singing voice along with harp music is praised and a harper is requested to sing.

- 8 c Alliteration is wanting; only a drastic emendation would supply it.
- 8 d *fighleóir*: **figleóir** 'a watcher' in *Dictionary of the Irish language* (Royal Irish Academy 1913–76), clearly unsuitable, is based on two examples on the same page of *Irish grammatical tracts* II (declension) § 50, (ed. O. Bergin, supplement to *Ériu* 8–10 (1916–28)) the first no more than a word in a list, the other in ex. 1301: *do-ghén t'fighleadh co heólach / a inghean an fighleóirach*. The word *fileóir* appears in Risdeard Pluincéad's 'Vocabularium Latinum et Hibernum : Foclóir Laidne 7 Gaidheilge' (Marsh's Library, Dublin, MS Z4.2.5) of 1662 under the headwords *Classarius*, explained in Thomas Thomas, *Dictionarium linguæ Latinæ et Anglicanæ* (Cantebrigie [1587]), and Thomas Holyoke, *A large dictionary in three parts* (London 1677) as 'a ready fellow and diligent', and *Trossulus* 'A well set fellow: a dapper or delicate person'. (Pluincéad drew heavily on the Latin–English dictionaries of his day: references are to the first of the Thomas dictionaries and the last of the Rider–Holyoke series.) Edward Lhuyd in *Archæologia Britannica* (Oxford 1707) has *fileoir* in the section *A comparative vocabulary s.v. Trossulus*, and in the section entitled *An Irish dictionary s.v. fileóir*, gives 'a spruce fellow, &C.' but adds 'a crafty fellow' in the *Appendix* to this. Many subsequent Irish–English dictionaries give both meanings. It is so in Tadhg Ó Neachtain, 'Foclóir Gaeilbhéarlach' (1739), Trinity College, Dublin, MS 1290 (H.I.16), John O'Brien, *Focalóir Gaoidhilge–Sax–Bhéarla* (Paris 1768), Edward O'Reilly, *An Irish–English dictionary* (Dublin 1821). The word does not occur in Thomas De Vere Coneys, *An Irish–English dictionary* (Dublin 1849), which concerns itself mainly with the vocabulary of the Irish Bible, or in P. S. Dinneen, *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla* (Dublin 1904). In Peter O'Connell, 'An Irish–English dictionary' (1826), British Library MS Egerton 83, it is explained only as 'a beau, a dapper or spruce fellow'. Lhuyd's spelling with short *i* has persisted. Dinneen in his revised edition (Dublin 1927) introduces 'a poetaster, a lover', the latter due to a suggestion by Tadhg Ó Donnchadha ('Seán Ó Gadhra, file V', *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* 14 (1904–5) 834, 16 (1906–7) 200) that it is a cognate with Greek *philos*. It means only a 'poetaster' according to N. Ó Dónaill's *Foclóir Béarla–Gaeilge* (Baile Átha Cliath 1977).

The late seventeenth- / early eighteenth-century poet Seán Ó Gadhra (An tAthair [S.] Mac Domhnaill, *Dánta is amhráin Sheáin Uí Gadhra* (Baile Átha Cliath 1955), as originally published by T. Ó Donnchadha in *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* 14–17, 1904–7) has the following examples: *an dlightheóir gan char ceilge / fileóir glan na Gaidheilge* (30 lines 23–4), *séanmhar an scríbhneóir géir glic / fileóir trénmhar sa teóiric* (44 lines 15–16), *Scríbhneóir is dlightheóir is órtha réal / Fileóir na Tríonóide is Pól na nGaedheal* (48 lines 39–40). Dáibhí Ó Bruadair uses *fileoir feartach* as a complimentary epithet (J. C. Mac Erlean, SJ, *Duanaire Dháibhidh Uí Bhruadair: The poems of David Ó Bruadair* I (Ir. Texts Soc. XI, London 1910) 14 § 12a).

Ó Bruadair also provides two instances of *pileóir*, which may or may not be the same word. In both cases *pileóir* seems to be rather pejorative: *mun bhudh eagal Dia fa dheoidh / don té do phriocfadh pileoir* (Mac Erlean, *Ó Bruadair* II (Ir. Texts Soc. XIII, London 1913) 214 § 22ab, or C. Mhág Craith, *Dán na mBráthar Mionúr* I (Baile Átha Cliath 1967) no. 88 § 22ab)

and *ní bhus congnamh cluas don phileoir / lonnradh na gcnuas gcineoil d'fhás* (*Ó Bruadair* ii 276 § 29 *cd*). The word 'fop' or 'delicate person' makes sense in both contexts, and it is within the bounds of possibility that Pluincéad intends to convey both the positive and negative meanings of *trossulus*. However it is equally likely that *pileóir* is a separate word. Cf. *The Oxford English dictionary*, Piller and Peeler 1: 'a robber, despoiler, plunderer; a thief', which is appropriate, especially in the second example.

In the present case and in the unedited poem (kindly brought to the authors' attention by Dr Pádraig Ó Macháin) *Beannacht ar anmuin Uilliam* (RIA 3 (23 L 17), p. 148) the rhyming partner of *fighleóir* shows it to have a long stress vowel: *rug an fithleóir geall an ghrinn / sgribhneóir do fhéarr an Éirinn*. Since Seán Ó Gadhra's rhymes cannot always be relied on, the fact that in examples of his verse quoted above it rhymes both with long and short *i* need not concern us. Neither does the *pileoir*: *gcineoil* rhyme necessarily imply that the stress vowel of *pileóir* is short since Ó Bruadair elsewhere in the same poem rhymes short with long vowels in *aicill*, e.g. *mughadh*: *múraibh* (*Ó Bruadair* ii 278 § 34 *cd*).

It is likely that *fighleóir* is the correct spelling for *fileóir*, *fileóir* of the dictionaries. It seems that in a positive sense it means 'a clever person', 'a skilled person', 'a knowledgeable person'. *The Oxford English dictionary* gives 'skilful, dexterous, clever, ingenious' as an archaic or dialectal meaning of *crafty*.

- 9 *c* Cf. *Nioclás Dall nach dall croidhe* (McGrath, 'Two skilful musicians', 88 § 5 *a*).
- 12 *bd* *inghean Eōghain mheic Dhomhnuill* and *an Charrthachsa* refer to Domhnall's second wife: 'He married secondly about the year 1584 Joane or Joanna, the daughter of Sir Owen, who was the son of Donnell Mac Carthy' (O'Donovan, *Four Masters* vi 2447).
- 12 *c* In *Dictionary of the Irish language* the word *baoth* (s.v. *báeth*) is explained as 'foolish', 'silly', 'wayward' etc. However in later language the meaning 'buoyant, light' [sc. of a boat] is also attested. Cf. 'Do shnámhaidís ana-bhaoth', C. Nic Pháidín, *Cnuasach focal ó Uíbh Ráthach* (Baile Átha Cliath 1987) s.v. *baoth*. Under *ales* in Pluincéad's Latin-Irish dictionary of 1662 we find: *eádtrom, lúath, báoth, sgiathámach, eitidheach, ar a bhfuil sgiatháin* corresponding to *Light, quicke, swift, which hath wings* in Thomas's *Dictionarium* (1587). It is likely that a paradox and pun are intended here.
- 13 *a* *múisigtheach*, more correctly *múisiceach* also occurs in Pluincéad's dictionary as a noun s.v. *musitabundus*, and as an adjective s.v. *murmurabundus*, where it means 'a hummer', 'humming'. In this instance it could also be interpreted as a noun in the genitive plural, i.e. 'the inscribing of musicians of bold finger', but *méar* throughout refers to Conchubhar, and the third person singular possessive adjective, contained in *dā* in the next line, reads better with an antecedent in the same quatrain.
- 13 *b* *díoghrais* occurs in the sense of 'best beloved', 'favourite', in T. F. O'Rahilly, *A miscellany of Irish proverbs* (Dublin 1922) no. 358: *is dual deireadh don díoghrais* 'the last place is meet for the best beloved'. This proverb is quoted or referred to in several bardic poems, references to which are given by O'Rahilly; see also idem, *Measgra dánta* II (Dublin and Cork 1927) no. 63 line 16, and J. Carney, *Poems on the O'Reillys*

(Dublin 1950) lines 143–4. Conchubhar's 'intimates' in this context are his fellow musicians, the 'seemly gathering' of the next line.

However, the word can also mean 'artistic fervour or excellence'; cf. *an í do mhúin díoghrais duit / lámh Chraiftine. . . ?*, translated 'its secret' (Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry*, no. 25 § 7), and *díoghrais mh'ealadhna is hí an t-each* 'the fervour of my art is the horse' (P. A. Breatnach, 'The chief's poet', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 83 C 3 (1983) 49). The line would then translate 'scarce in his wake is his fervour'.

13cd i.e. the musicians of Clann Chathail have come to an end with Conchubhar's death.

SEÁN UA SÚILLEABHÁIN

School of Celtic Studies

SEÁN DONNELLY

Na Píobairí Uilleann, Dublin