MODERN IRISH FUAIDH

The verb téit ‘goes’, as is well known, forms its perfect paradigm in Old Irish by substituting *de-cum-fed for the present root *tiag: do-coíd, do-coaid, do-cuaid (3 sg.); do-cótar, do-cuatar (3 pl.), etc. In all varieties of Modern Irish the past tense of the verb is formed from the historic root chua-:

1 sg. do chuas/chua mé 1 pl. chuamair/chua muid
2 sg. chuais/chua tú 2 pl. chuabhair/chua sibh
3 sg. chuaidh/chua sé/sí 3 pl. chuadar/chua siad

However, variant forms in fua- have also been recorded: an tan a fua sé amach /fua s’/e/ ‘when he went out’, fuaidh an fear amach /fuoj/ ‘the man went out’, fua s’ísteach /fuo s’e/ ‘he went in’, fuadar /fuadar/ ‘they went’.  

Although the variation chua-/fua- has been noted for specific dialects by several scholars, no attempt has been made to delineate its distribution in either geographical or dialectal terms. The material provided by Wagner in his Lingistic atlas and survey of Irish dialects shows that the variant paradigm in fua- is attested for a wide geographical area, one which comprised informants in Cos. Waterford (pts. 3–4), Cork (pts. 8,10–12,14), Kerry (pt. 18), Clare (pt. 24), Galway (pts. 25, 27–31, 33, 36–40, 48–50), Mayo (pts. 51, 54–9, 62), Sligo (pt. 61), Donegal (pts. 68–70, 72–3, 80–3), Tyrone (pt. 66) and Louth (pt. 65). The following representative examples of both the forms themselves and their variations are taken from that material.

1. Munster (LASID ii)
   pt. 3: fua mé amú ‘I went astray’ (q. 91), is mó Éireannach a chua go dtí Sasana Nua ‘many an Irishman went to America’ (q. 366);
   pt. 11: fuaidh go leor Éireannach go Meirice, is mó Éireannach a chuaidh go Meirice (q. 366);
   pt. 14: fuaidh sé go dtí an pósadh ‘he went to the wedding’ (q. 690), is mó Éireannach a chuadh go hAmaraise (q. 366);

1 I would like to thank Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh, Damian McManus, Peter McQuillan, and Jürgen Uhlich for discussing various aspects of this paper with me. Naturally, I alone am responsible for the presentation and interpretation of the material.
2 R. Thurneysen, A grammar of Old Irish (Dublin 1946, repr. 1998) §§ 534.4, 692, 769, 830A; DIL s.v. téit.
4 See, in particular, K. McConne et al. (ed.), Stair na Gaeilge, in ómós do Phádraig Ó Fiannachta (Maigh Nuad 1994) VI 8.77; VII 2.37, 5.19; VIII 8.9; and fns. 8–10 below.
5 Volumes i–iv (Dublin 1958–64, repr. 1981–82). I use the abbreviation LASID henceforth for this work; pt(s). = ‘point(s)’, q. = ‘question’.
6 This point (pt. 11) corresponds to Cape Clear, Co. Cork; I also recorded forms in f- from two other informants.
pt. 18: *fuadar ag triall air* ‘they went to see him’, *níor stadaradar gur fuadar go dtí doras ifrinn* ‘they didn’t stop until they went to the door of hell’ (Vocabulary s. v. *dul*), *chuaidh móran Éireann daoine dtí Aimeiriced* (q. 366).

2. Connacht (*LASID* iii)

pt. 28: *chua sí go tobar* ‘she went to a well’ (q. 44), *fua sé ag an mbainis* ‘he went to the wedding’ (q. 690);
pt. 29: *fua sí ag an tobar* ‘she went to the well’ (q. 44), *fua/chua na caora amú* ‘the sheep went astray’ (q. 91), *chuaidh fua sé ag an bainis* ‘he went to the wedding’ (q. 690);
pt. 30: *fua mé ag an tobar* ‘I went to the well’ (q. 44), *is iomaí duine Éireannach a fuaidh go Meiriced* (q. 366);
pt. 40: *cua sí go tobar* (q. 44), *fua an chaora ar seachrán* (q. 91), *beirt a choidh* ‘two who went to the fair’ (Texts § 10), *nuair a fua mise chuici* ‘when I went to her’ (Vocabulary s.v. *téighim*);
pt. 65: *fua mé ag an tobar* (q. 44), *fuidh na caoire ar seachrán* (q. 91), *beirt a choidh* ‘two who went to the fair’ (Texts § 10), *nuair a fua mise chuici* ‘when I went to her’ (Vocabulary s.v. *téighim*);
pt. 69: *chua sí chun tobar* (q. 44), *fua an chaora ar seachrán* (q. 91), *chuaidh misce duine go Meirice* (q. 366);
pt. 75: *cho sé chun tobar* (q. 44), *chua sí ar seachrán* (q. 91), *is iomaí Éireannach chuaidh go Meiriced* (q. 366), *chua tu/fua tu* ‘you went’, *chua muid/fua muid* ‘we went’;
pt. 83: *chua sí chun tobar* (q. 44), *is iomaí Éireannach fuidh/a chuaidh go Meirice* (q. 366).

7 *Chóidh* could be a direct reflex of the Old Irish form (*do-coïd*) or could be explicable in phonological terms (*ua > o*); for forms of the verb in *ó*/*o* see fns. 8, 10, 18.

8 In material I recorded from Peter Sloan (1885–1974) from Bavan, Omeath, Co. Louth, forms in *f-* (*fua sé*, *fua mé*, *fua muid*, etc.) were the norm.


10 J. N. Hamilton, *A phonetic study of the Irish of Tory Island, Co. Donegal* (Belfast 1974) 204. This monograph does not give the form *cho (*/xo*)/* recorded by Wagner (see fn. 9).
Forms in *fua-* were also recorded by Sommerfelt in south Armagh and the variation *chóidh/fóidh* by Holmer in the Glens of Antrim.\(^\text{11}\)

Although *fua-* forms are not attested, as far as I know, in the earlier sources, I have noticed some examples in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mss, particularly in material emanating from south-east Ulster:

- *Fúaidh sé fútha agus tarsduibh* ‘he went under them and over them’ (RIA ms 96 (24 P 10) 206),
- *a mhuintirse a fuaigh amach* ‘his people who went out’ (212),
- *fuaidh sé féin go Bruighean Chaorain* ‘he himself went to BC’ (215),
- *fúaigh Goll féin leis* ‘Goll himself went with him’ (218),
- *fuadur i gceann a sleagtha* ‘they had recourse to their spears’ (220);\(^\text{12}\)
- *fuaidh siad ar seod* ‘they went astray’,
- *mar fuaidh orthu leis an aos* ‘as happened to them with age’,
- *ón saol do fuaidh thart* ‘from the life that had departed’;\(^\text{13}\)
- *fuaidh mo bhean* ‘my wife died’;\(^\text{14}\)
- *fuaidh sé ar a ghláine insa ngairdín* ‘he went on his knees in the garden’;\(^\text{15}\)


\(^\text{12}\)This ms was written in Co. Down in 1799; it also contains forms in *chua-* (*chuaidd sé futha* 7 tharsda, 218).

\(^\text{13}\)C. Beckett, *Fealsúnacht Aodha Mhic Dhomhnaill* (Dublin 1967) §§ 3, 43, 142; the author of this text, which he wrote c. 1853, was a native of Co. Meath. Cf. also from the same author *an bhliithain so fuaidh thart* ‘the year past’ (*Éigse* 5 (1945) 42 § 234).

\(^\text{14}\)From an eighteenth-century ms written in Co. Tipperary (Cambridge University Library Add. 6567: 2); ms *fuaigh*.

\(^\text{15}\)From an eighteenth-century ms (Maynooth C 11: 85) written in Munster (Co. Clare?).

\(^\text{16}\)First line of an Armagh poem (Catholic Bulletin May 1921, p. 299; An tUltach Márta 1925) sometimes ascribed to Art Mac Cumhaigh (1738–73).

\(^\text{17}\)BL Eg. 117: 36, a collection of Connacht folk-songs written in the nineteenth-century; ms *fuaigh*.

\(^\text{18}\)BL Eg. 152: 13, a collection of sermons written in Co. Louth in 1738–73.

\(^\text{19}\)NLI G 200 b: 77, an Ulster ms written in the year 1822; the line in question is the initial line of a poem written by Mac Cuarta (c. 1650–1733); cf. *is béarthaigh fuaidh* . . . (RIA ms 369 (23 A 49) 9, 1766), *is buartha fuaidh/chuaidd mo shuan* . . . (Queen’s University Belfast G 16: 7, 10). For similar forms (*foich*), cf. footnote. 8.

\(^\text{20}\)RIA 23 O 79: 288, a ms written in Co. Meath in 1824; ms *fauidh*.

\(^\text{21}\)Maynooth MF 4: 203, a collection of sermons written in Co. Louth in 1796–1816.
plearáca na Ruarach fuaidh i gcluais . . . ‘the revelry of the O’Rourkes which went into the ear . . . ‘;22

The origin of the variant paradigm in fua- has not hitherto been satisfactorily explained. Several scholars—Sommerfelt and de Búrca in particular—have explained it as a phonological development.23 However, such a rule (/x/ > /f/), although a possible phonological development, is not regularly attested in the onset of stressed syllables in any dialect of Modern Irish; it is particularly significant that no such regular development occurs in the common verbal forms chuala ‘heard’, chuir ‘put’ and chonnaic ‘saw’.24 I am not suggesting, of course, that these disparate verbs conform to any phonological or historical pattern, merely that if such a phonological rule operated, one might expect to find it in other verbs, other than chuaidh, as well as in other words, particularly those containing an initial historic ch-(chun, chomh). Given the wide geographical incidence of the variant forms in fua- (literally from Cape Clear in Co. Cork to Tory Island in Co. Donegal),25 and that the variation does not correspond to any general phonological rule in Irish, one is led to conclude that, most probably, the variation is not a recent development. Accordingly an explanation should be sought not in a phonological context, but rather in a morphological diachronic one.

One should consider the verbal form fuair (3 sg. past, < faigh ‘to get’), since its phonological structure corresponds to that of chuaidh. As a consequence, it seems, some confusion has arisen between the verbs fuair and chuaidh in, at least, one variety (Co. Mayo) of Modern Irish:

Agus fuair sé a choddladh ‘he went to sleep’,
Fuair Jack amach ‘Jack went out’,
Fuair mé fhéin agus triúr fear eile amach ag iascaireacht ‘myself and three other men went out fishing’.26

However, since the variation fuair/ chuaidh is not widespread and since it seems to be a recent development, it could hardly provide the trigger for the universal variation fuaidh/ chuaidh. In characterising the variation as ‘universal’, I should point out that its universality relates only to Ireland: neither chua- nor

22Maynooth MF 11: 163, a ms written in south-east Ulster early in the eighteenth century; the line in question is the first line of a poem written by Carolan (1670–1738).
23Sommerfelt, ‘South Armagh Irish’ § 192; de Búrca, Irish of Tournakeady § 469; Mhac an Fhailigh, Irish of Erris § 408; cf. McCone et al. (ed.), Stair na Gaeilge, 537, 625.
24Wagner did record fuala (= chuala) in Cos. Louth and Tyrone (LASID iv, pt. 65, Vocabulary s.v. cluinim; Lochlann 3 (1965) 115 s.v. clainstin), but É. Ó Tuathail states that ‘fuaidh is the only instance noted’, Sgéalta Mhuintir Luinigh (Dublin 1933) xxv, and neither was fuail recorded by me in Co. Louth (fn. 8). The rule /x/ > /f/ does occur in medial position: /kli/’a/ cluiche, /de/’ul/ doicheall (Mhac an Fhailigh, Irish of Erris §§ 311, 411; de Búrca, The Irish of Tournakeady §§ 357, 468); the development, most probably, being ch > th > f.
25The variation has not been recorded, as far as I am aware, in west Kerry (Corca Dhuibhne).
26J. N. Hamilton, ‘Phonetic Texts Of The Irish of North Mayo’, Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie 30 (1967) 269, 303; cf. fuair na caoirre amú ‘the sheep went astray’, faa mé amú ‘I went astray’ LASID iii, pt. 57, q. 91; is iomai Éireannach fuair go Meiriceá ‘many an Irishman went to America’ (‘fuair [got] and fuaidh [i.e. chuaidh] are confused in this dialect’), ibid. q. 366.
fua- forms are attested for Scottish Gaelic (nor for Manx). Some of the Scottish Gaelic forms corresponding to chuaidh in Irish retain hiatus (/xa-i/chaidh, chathaídh) and provide dialectal evidence for the existence of forms in chá- (/xa:j/ cháidh). Forms in chá- are also well attested in bardic poetry:

a fhir do cháidh isan chran ‘o thou who didst die on the cross’ Dán Dé 9.2, gidh cian do-chámar ‘n-a cheann ‘though we went far to find it’ DDána 17.3, do-chádair mar cheo do mhuigh ‘they departed like fog from the plain’ DDána 93.13, do-chádar d’ég uile iad ‘they all departed’ IGT iii § 8.

I am not aware, however, that similar forms are attested for earlier sources. If not, this would suggest that the forms in chá- were confined to the poetic register of dán direach and that they, most probably, represent another manifestation of the regular variation á/o (cóir/caír, fóid/fád, anóir/anáir, meadhóin/meadhóin, etc).

One could, of course, derive cháidh directly from OIr. chóidh, and if cháidh and similar forms were once widespread they would provide a formal and semantic parallelism with ro-fáith, the 3 sg. perfective form of fethid/feidid ‘leads’. This verb, which derives from the same root as is in *de-com-fed, acquired the meaning ‘go’ in the perfect:

ro-fáith sam ‘summer has gone’ Murphy Lyrics 53.1d, ro-fáith Nin . . . ro fáith Solam ‘Ninus has gone . . . Solomon has gone’ LL ii 15978-9, ro-fádatar ‘exciderunt’, ‘who have fallen away’ Wb 29c13, mairg ro-fáthatar flathi fer ‘woe that the princes of men have gone’ LL ii 13848.

Accordingly, do-cháidh and ro-fáith were synonymous, and since do-cháidh was a variant of do chuaidh one could envisage the form do-fuaidh developing in such a context: do-chuaidh/do-cháidh ~ ro-fáith > do-fuaidh.

That explanation would place the development of fuaidh in the late Middle Irish period (eleventh century) but, as I have already pointed out, it is dependent on the supposition that cháidh had emerged and was well attested by then. An alternative explanation, which also invokes ro-fáith, would explain the emergence of both cháidh and fuaidh in the same context. Since pairs like do-cuaidh/ro-fáith; do-cuatar/ro-fádatar were synonymous, one could easily imagine ‘mixed’ forms like fuaidh and cháidh emerging in that context. The process can be thus illustrated:

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28 For the variation do-chuaidhas/do-chóidhas/do-cháidhas, etc., see IGT iii § 8. Cf. also this example from seventeenth-century accentual poetry: a séan do cháidh is d’fhas a leacadh ‘their good fortune has vanished and their sins have increased’ Ó Bruad. i, 32 § xvii.
do-chuaidh ~ ro féith > do cháidh
do-chuatar ~ ro fáthatar > do fuadar\(^a\)

\(^a\) Another possible, albeit unlikely, explanation is that fuaidh derives from *fo-ved.