THE following is an edition of a *crosántacht* composed by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird. It is addressed to Uilliam mac Seaán mheic Oilbh Éaruis Búrc, of Clann Uilliam Íochtair, in Tír Amhalghaidh in present-day Co. Mayo.

In the poem, Fearghal Óg reproaches Uilliam with rejecting his *comann*, after a formal relationship had been agreed between them. The poet’s anger and enmity (qq. 8, 18–19) having been thus aroused, Uilliam is threatened with the concealment of his fame through the poet refusing to praise him (qq. 13, 15), and with satire (qq. 18–23). These threats are interspersed with praise of Uilliam, and suggestions that a reconciliation is likely (q. 17). In addition to containing the usual humour, the prose is used in places (§§ 8–11, 13–14) to reinforce and restate the burden of the verses, and to emphasise the two interdependent constants of bardic praise-poetry, the subject’s valour and his generosity, *cruas* and *buga*.¹

**Uilliam Búrc**

Uilliam Búrc’s father, Seaán mac Oilbh Éaruis, had been Mac Uilliam from 1571² until his death in 1580.³ He was the subject of lengthy genealogical poems by Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn⁴ and by Ruaidhrí mac Domhnaill Í Uiginn,⁵ and for him was written the illuminated manuscript known as ‘The Book of the Burkes’.⁶ He was considered a loyal and an obedient servant of the crown.⁷

The death of Seaán mac Oilbh Éaruis gave rise to a succession dispute between his brother Risdeard and Risdeard an Iarainn mac Dáibhídh, the *tánaiste*, with the latter winning out.⁸ On the death of Risdeard an Iarainn in 1582/3, he was succeeded by his adversary, Risdeard mac Oilbh Éaruis.⁹ It would appear that there was no expectation among Clann Uilliam that Seaán’s son, Uilliam,

¹Fearghal Óg’s address to Brian Ó Ruairc (‘Brian Ó Ruairc mo rogha leannán’, *Ir. Syll. Poetry*, 23, q. 1) remains a most concise statement of these constants. For this poet’s work in general see Pádraig Ó Macháin, ‘Poems by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird’, *Celtica* 24 (2003) 252–63. In that article, the bibliographical details of *Díomhaoin gach dán acht dán Dé* (p. 261, § 10) disappeared after proofing; they should read: ‘(P). Aith.D. 90 (pp. 331–2; vol. ii, 206)’.
²*Cal. SP Ire. 1509–1573*, 437.
³*AFM* v, 1724.
⁴*TD* 17.
⁵Tomás Ó Raghallaigh, *Fíli agus filidheacht Chonnacht* (Baile Átha Cliath 1938) 147–63.
⁶TCD ms 1440. The commissioning of this manuscript is viewed by Dr Katharine Simms in the context of the interest shown by lords of English and Norman extraction in Gaelic pseudo-history and genealogy (‘Bards and barons: the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and native culture’, in Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (ed.), *Medieval frontier societies* (Oxford 1989) 177–97, at 192–3).
⁸*Cal. SP Ire. 1574–1585*, 270, 272, 284, 291, 294.
⁹Ibid. 441, 443. *AFM* v, 1804.

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would succeed to the title of Mac Uilliam, and this is borne out by the use of the expression *mac ríogh* in the poem edited here (q. 7, Prose 9).  

Nevertheless, the English administration, and perhaps even his father, may have had other ideas, as in July 1579, the year prior to Seaán’s death, Sir Nicholas Malby, Governor of Connacht, sent Uilliam to Sir Francis Walsingham, Secretary of State, in London. Uilliam bore a letter requesting ‘that the bearer may live with Walsingham. He is the only legitimate son of M’William Eighter, an honest gentleman and faithful subject, who will allow him largely for his charges’.  

Shortly before his death, Seaán wrote in Latin to Walsingham, informing him of how his son had written to him telling him ‘with what fatherly affection Walsyngham treats him’, and requested that at Uilliam’s return ‘he may be allowed certain in pay to serve Her Majesty’. If indeed the English were grooming Uilliam to be Mac Uilliam, the succession dispute that followed Seaán’s death persuaded them of the futility of such expectations.  

Uilliam remained in London, and one year later Malby wrote to Walsingham suggesting that Uilliam might return to Ireland, ‘to receive the goods left him by his father’. Uilliam returned, and the following year, 1582, was made Sheriff in Co. Sligo. Meeting with opposition from his brothers, Uilliam persevered, and, when Sir Richard Bingham succeeded Malby as Governor of Connacht in 1584, Uilliam wrote to Walsingham asking him to use his influence with Bingham ‘to continue him in the pay of 12 horse in the county of Mayo’.  

Uilliam was by now in possession of the town and castle of Ard na Riagh (Ardnaree). Though part of Ballina today, it was then an independent settlement on the eastern side of the river Moy. He also held Castelackan, near Killala. His holdings at this time are outlined in the Composition of Connacht of 1585. It would seem, however, that he had hoped for greater advancement but, despite his professed friendship with Bingham, that he found the Lord Deputy, Sir John Perrot, unforthcoming. For this reason, in January 1586 he again wrote to Walsingham asking that he might have a greater share of the country of Mac Uilliam Íochtair, and mentioning that he had given some thought to quitting Ireland altogether to offer himself for service with the English in Flanders.  

Later in 1586, on the death of his uncle, Risdeard mac Oiliabh Éaruis, many of Clann Uilliam Íochtair went into rebellion protesting that Uilliam—‘the

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10 See Katharine Simms, *From kings to warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge and Wolfeboro 1987) 57–8.
11 *Cal. SP Ire. 1574–1585*, 175.
12 Ibid. 231.
13 Ibid. 284.
14 Ibid. 320.
16 *Cal. SP Ire. 1574–1585*, 516.
18 A. Martin Freeman, *The compossicion booke of Conought* (Dublin 1936) 111–12.
most unworthy and unfittest of us all”—was to be favoured with the best part of the territory. After this date we lose sight of Uilliam Búc, except for a brief glimpse in 1588, when ‘William Burke of Ardnary’ is said to have captured seventy-two Spaniards from an Armada wreck. In May 1591 a rumour circulated ‘of a combat to be performed between one William Burke, of Terawly, and one Alexander M’Hugh Boy M’Donnell, a gallowglass of that barony’.

Under that year the Four Masters record the following:

*Uilliam Búc mac Seaain, mic Oiluerais, mhic Seaain do mharbhadh le duine uasal dá lucht leanamhna fein .i. lé hAlastrann mac Aodha Buidhe Mhec Domhnaill.*

**Tadhg Dall**

Uilliam’s death at the hands of a Clann Domhnaill *gallóglach* recalls the state of turmoil in Sligo and Mayo reported and complained of in his poetry by Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn. Tadhg complained of the depredations of ‘Fir Lonndain, laochruidh Alban’ in an appeal for help to An Calbhach Ó Conchubhair. In another poem, a direct address to these ‘laochruidh Alban’, he complains to Clann Domhnaill of excessive and unjust exactions being made on him by the seven septs of ‘síol gColla’ enumerated by him as being in his territory; one of these septs is ‘síol . . . Aoda Buide’, who were to be responsible for Uilliam’s death.

Clann Uilliam were an important source of patronage for Tadhg Dall, patronage that he attributed to the influence of Cathal Ó Conchobhair. Of the eight surviving poems composed by him to members of this sept, one is addressed to Uilliam Búc’s father, Seaán, and one to his uncle Risdeard.

Tadhg Dall also composed at least one poem to Éamonn Búc, son of Risdeard an Iarainn, Risdeard mac Oibh Éaruis’s sometime rival.

Two poems survive that are addressed by Tadhg Dall to Uilliam Búc. The first, breathless in style and content, urgently seeks Uilliam’s help against the

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20Ibid. 201.
21Ibid. 221. *Cal. SP Ire. 1588–1592*, 40.
22*Cal. SP Ire. 1588–1592*, 561.
23*AFM* vi, 1908. It should be noted, however, that Irish Record Commission transcripts of Mayo inquisitions give his date of death as 24 July 1595 (National Archives of Ireland, RC 9/16/73–6). In this source, to which I was directed by Kenneth Nicholls, it is stated that Uilliam was seized, upon his death, of the bawn and villa of Castlelackan (*al.* Castlelecken), no mention being made of Ardnarea.
24*TD* 41.4–5.
25The complaint begins ‘Oraoid sunn go síol gColla’, six and a half quatrains of which were published by Knott in *TD* 42, and a further seventeen, with two half-quatrains, in Pádraig Ó Macháin, ‘Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn: foímse dà shaothar’, in Pádraig Ó Fiannachta (ed.), *An Dán Díreach Léachtai Cholm Cille* 24 (Maigh Nuad 1994) 77–113, at 96–8.
26*TD* 14.20ab; cf. *TD* i, p. xxx.
27Seven, if we exclude *TD* 22a, also ascribed to Brian Ó Domhnailláín.
28*TD* 17 and 20 respectively.
29*TD* 18; for the identification see Pádraig Ó Macháin, ‘Additional readings to some poems by Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn’, *Celtica* 18 (1986) 69–76, at 75.
excessive exactions already complained of to An Calbhach Ó Conchobhair.  
His complaint is particularly bitter in that he has, he says, explored the various 
avenues of English law that are available to him, but with no result.  
This poem can be dated with reasonable accuracy because Tadhg Dall remarks that 
he has been waiting three years for Uilliam’s return, a period that corresponds 
to his absence in England, 1579–81.

Tadhg Dall’s second poem to Uilliam also concerns unlawful depredations 
carried out upon him, this time by Uilliam himself, or more likely the Clann 
Domhnaill nominally under Uilliam’s control. An interesting aspect of this 
poem is Tadhg Dall’s description of himself as Uilliam’s *ollamh* (q. 5), and 
of the mutual pupil-teacher relationship between himself and Uilliam. Tadhg 
Dall would go through ‘An rolla foghlama ar fad’ (q. 7) with Uilliam, while 
the latter would read for Tadhg ‘An leabhar nach léighinn féin’ (q. 8).

*Lament for Uilliam Búrc*

Uilliam’s patronage of poetry, and his interest in learning, provide the con-
text for Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird’s *crosántacht* addressed to him. Tadhg 
Dall’s record of being Uilliam’s *ollamh*, and Fearghal Óg’s discomfiture at his 
rejected *comann*, are not at variance with a date for the latter’s composition of 
the first half of the 1580s.

Uilliam’s interest in learning, and his violent death, suggest that it is he 
who is the subject of a short poem preserved in a manuscript by Seán na 
Ráithineach, RIA ms 3 (23 L 17), f. 148r6–21; both details of learning and 
violet death are referred to in qq. 6–7. Of possible significance to us is 
the verbal echo of Fearghal Óg’s *crosántacht* in q. 2b. For this reason, and to 
elaborate on the context for Fearghal Óg’s poem, I reproduce this short com-
position here diplomatically, except for line division and capitalisation of proper 
nouns.

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Beannocht ar anmuin Uilliam
gníús tseimhidhe sheanguinfhial
fear re mbocht dob uaisle d’fuil
beannocht uaim air anmuin.

Ré Uilliam Búrc branán gall
fá raoir do cheanglas cumann
briste uaidh mo chroidhe am chliabh
tre loighe san uai d’Uilliam.
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30 ‘A theachtaire théid ar sliabh’, *TD* 22.
31 For the painful transition from one legal system to another in this area at the time see 
Bernadette Cunningham, ‘Natives and newcomers in Mayo, 1560–1603’ in Raymond Gillespie 
and Gerard Moran (ed.), *A various country*: essays in Mayo history 1500–1900 (Westport 1987) 
32 *TD* 22.19.
33 ‘Cóir Dé eadram is Uilliam’, *TD* 23.
34 There is no ascription. Tadhg Dall’s *Mairg fhéagas ar Inis Ceithleann* precedes; Gofraidh 
Mac an Bhaird’s ‘A fhir shealbhas duit an dán’ follows.
Miste sinn ar neólas air
móide ar ndobrón na dheaghaidh
rug geall aigne ó gach fior
re caidreamh do bhfearr eision.

A chaidreamh do mheall mise
uch mo thighearna tairise
ní a ndiaig a tharbha atáim
ó tharla a ccriaidh mo chompáin.

Ba file é budh fear dána
budh fear bréagtha bandála
do thuill gnaoi dhá ghné roghluin
budh saoi é sna healadhnaibh.

Budh léagthóir leabhar ndorchha
ag sin cuid dá chomhortha
rug an fithleóir geall an ghrinn
sgribhnneoir do bhfearr a nÉirinn.

Aoincheard mhaith budh misde neach
acht amháin gan bheith suirgheach
maír do chneasghóin a chneas fhial
niorbh feas desboidh air Uíliam.

Braon do ghrasaibh an té as triar
go bhfaghaíd hanam a Uíliam
Amen ós a ccriaidh dhá chorp
na dhaiag do bhfear mo bheannocht. Beannocht

**Textual tradition**

The manuscript tradition shows that the *crosáintacht* enjoyed a wide distribution over time and space. The text survives in seven manuscripts.

**C**: RIA ms 672 (23 C 21), pp. 107–12; by Eoghan Caoimhánach, 1816–17.

**D**: Dunnington MS 2, pp. 197–202; by Tomás Ó Iceadha, c. 1819.\(^{35}\)

**F**: UCD Department of Archives, Franciscan MS A 25, pp. 120–122 (breaks off); scribe unknown, early seventeenth century.

**L**: RIA ms 111 (23 L 32), pp. 48–51; by Richard Tipper, 1716–17.

**M**: NUI Maynooth MS B 8, pp. 89–92; by Heinrí Ó Carraic, 1701–8.

**O**: RIA ms 1382 (23 O 73), pp. 217–21; by Tomás Ó Iceadha, 1814–30.


\(^{36}\)Formerly the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland.

The tradition consists of two distinct families, with notable variations within both. CDLOR form one family, and FM the other. Within the first family, separative readings show that R is relatively autonomous, while conjunctive readings unite CDLO. Variants in Prose 8, 12 and 17, as well as the omission of qq. 8c and 22ab, give L an independence within this latter sub-group. L and R have a conjunctive reading in Prose 9. A small number of separative readings distinguishes F—which breaks off in the middle of Prose 12—at q. 2c and in Prose 11.

The relation between the witnesses may be summarized stemmatically as follows:

R L C D O F M

The FM family is, on the whole, the more stable of the two. I have chosen M to represent this family, and as the basis for the text established here. Significant variants are supplied from all witnesses.

Editorial method

The metre of the poem is *snéadhbhairdne*—commonly used in *crosántacht*—with alternating octosyllabic and quadrasyllabic lines ending in disyllables, linked by rime, alliteration and consonance, groups of quatrains being interspersed with passages of prose. Capitalisation, punctuation and line-division are all editorial. The usual editorial modifications to the orthography have been effected silently. Intrusions in the matters of vowel-length and lenition are indicated with macrons and italics respectively. Substitution of variant forms, permitted by the tracts and required by the

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38 E.g. om. q. 4; variants in 6d, 17a, 23c, 24a, 29a, 30a, Prose 8, 13.
39 E.g.: 2a, 2c, 5c, 13d, 25c, 26a, 30d, om. q. 27.
40 E.g.: 17b, 23a, 25c, 26a, 26d, and variants in Prose 12, 13 and 15. Prose 5 presents a curious situation, where a separative reading occurs in D that contradicts the close conjunctive evidence for CDO: *an chuisele do ghearraidh tarsna chum fola do tharraint* is substituted for *an mhagarll do bhuaín amach i riocht na cloiche fuail*. This prompts the extra-textual consideration that, being a patron’s manuscript—probably written for Fr Símeon Breathnach—it may be that D’s reading represents a scribal expurgation and substitution on the part of Tomás Ó Iceadha.
41 For the close relationship between C and O see Ó Macháin, ‘Tadhg Dall’, 90.
42 A text of this poem, without translation, was included in an unpublished thesis by the late Alan Harrison (‘An chrosántacht’, Ph.D thesis, University of Dublin, 1971, pp. 230–44). This text was established from mss L and C, and incorporated the flawed readings of those witnesses.
metre, is generally allowed to pass without annotation—though deducible from the apparatus—except in qq. 7 and 20, where matters of consonance are involved. In the prose passages, the ampersand & is represented by agus, and Et is allowed to stand when used; square brackets are employed in sections 3 and 11 to indicate letters obscured by staining in M, and in 15 to supply a word missing from that source.

Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird .cc.\footnote{43}

1 Maíngim dheaghaidh cheanglas comann:
   is cúis tnúidhe;
   orm fá choill do-chóidh mo chéile,
   gér dhóigh dhúinne.
2 An fear comuinn do chaill orum,
   d’iúl na bhfáidheadh,
   dob é ar ngrádh é tar gach n-éinfhear,
   cré nár cáineadh.
3 Comann tar ais d’éis a dhéanta
   do níorbh ionchuir,
   mo bhile cnuais, mo thrágh thorchuir,
   tar chlár gCríomhthuin.
4 Muna bheith ar éirigh eadruinn—
   ní hiúl céillidh—
   ní thréigfinn choidhche an fial faoilidh
   ar fhíadh nÉibhir.

1 Woe to him who, after my experience, forms a bond of friendship: it is a cause of resentment; my spouse has avoided me to my disadvantage, though we had hope of him.
2 The lover who failed me, according to the information of the poets, he was our love above every man, one who [never] was faulted.
3 It was not proper for him to reject a friendship after it had been formed, my fruit-tree, my beach [rich in] produce above [everyone in] the plain of Criomhthan.
4 Were it not for what arose between us—a ridiculous tale—I would never leave the cheerful, generous one [not even] for the land of Éibhear.

\footnote{43}{D adds ‘da charaid Uilliam Búrc’; no ascription in F.}
5 Mo chomann do chur ar gcúla
do chleith Mhuaidhe
is cíodh meanman, nó claon céille,
nó is taom truaighe.

Prose 1 Et is truagh don mharcach do mhuinntir Í Dhomhnuill do leag a
each do chur craoithe uirre, óir níorbh fhéidir craoithe do chor ina seasamh
uirre le a dóirbhce agus re a dofhulang. Et tar éis cheithre gcru do chor 'na
luidhe uirre, a raibhce i n'Uílltuibh uile do theacht 'na timecheall. Níorbh fhéidir leó
cur 'na seasamh níor gora beanadh na ceithre craoithe cèadna uaithe arís.

Prose 2 Agus giodh ait sin, ní haite leam féin é iná mar deireadh óglach
Í Fhialáin, agus é aga bháthadh: 'Neamhchaint! Neamhchaint!'

Prose 3 Et giodh ait gach ní dhiobh sin, ní haite liom féin é iná mar do
tachtadh in b[h]ean roimhe le méad a greama ar tórramh a fir.

5 The rejection of my friendship by the tree of the Muadh is a weakening of spirit, or a
perversion of reason, or a pitiful tantrum.

Prose 1 And it is pitiful about the horseman of Ó Domhnaill's people, who felled his
mare to put shoes on her, as it was impossible to shoe her when she was standing
because of her contrariness and her irritability. And after four shoes had been put on
her when she was lying down, everyone in all of Ulster gathered round her. They were
unable to stand her up until the same four shoes had been removed from her again.

Prose 2 And though that is amusing, I myself do not think it more amusing than how
Ó Fialáin's servant was saying, when he was drowning, 'No speech! No speech!'

Prose 3 And though each one of those [stories] is amusing, I myself do not think it
more amusing than how, previously, the woman was choked by the size of the piece of
food [that she was eating] at her husband's wake.

5 a ch(h)umann FLCDO; chuir L; c elo FLCD; nò] is F, no is LCD; as cíodh ceille no as maoth
meanma R.

LCDO; do chor] om. F; 'na] as a R; uirre] urthe F, uirthe LCDO, urrtha R; a raibh] an rabh R
(roimh F, raibh LCDO); uile] om. F; Níorbh éidir leó a cur 'na seasamh] ni chuirfedh na seasamh
i R; leó] uile add L; craoithe] cru F; uaithe] dhi R

Prose 2 deireadh] deirghe L, adeire C, adeir DO; Í Fhaoláin L. inä etc] R reads: na mar a deireadh
o óglach ris O Bhładhóin 7 é ag dol le fanúidh caisil abhann deirgthuile 7 do iar ar a oglách a
chabhair no éimhghad dhaoiníb oíle da chabhair neamhchaint neamhchaint Í Fhaghláin a déradh
seisean.

méad a greama] om. R; torrughadh R.
6 Fir Chonnacht uile dhá n-áirmhinn, 
is ē thoghuim; 
annamh fear a chlú do-chluinim, 
cní dhá gcrobhuing.

7 Tearc mac ríogh eile mar Uilliam, 
urra ar gcabhrá, 
fear 'ga bhfuil cridhe gan chumhnga, 
bile Banbha.

8 Gē a-tám buidhioch do bhaidhbh Thailltean, 
is tuar pudhair: 
do thuill uaim fheirg agus fholuidh, 
níor c/heird chubhaidh.

Prose 4 Agus níor chubhaidh don ollamh re dán, dán Mēig Amhalg/uidh Bhaile Locha Luatha do bhreith d’ionnsoigh Í Dhubhda.

Prose 5 Et níor chubhaidh don ollamh re leigheas an mhagarll do bhuain amach i riocht na cloiche fuail.

Prose 6 Agus níor chubhaidh don ollamh re seanchas a rádh gorbh ē Goll mhac Morna athair Conchobhair mheic Neasa.

6 [Though] I consider the men of all Connacht, it is he I choose; seldom do I hear of a man of his reputation, [choice] fruit of our cluster.
7 Few other princes are like Uilliam, one who is sure to help us, a man who has an expansive heart, tree of Banbha.
8 Though I am grateful to the warrior of Taillte, it is an omen of sorrow: he has earned anger and resentment from me, it was not proper behaviour.

Prose 4 And it was not proper for the professor of poetry to bring the poem composed for Mág Amhalghuidh of Baile Locha Luatha to Ó Dubhda.

Prose 5 And it was not proper for the professor of medicine to extract the testicle instead of the bladder-stone.

Prose 6 And it was not proper for the professor of history to proclaim that Goll mac Morna was the father of Conchubhair mac Neasa.

6 d os crobhuing LRDCO.

7 a eile] oile FR, a bhfoghluim mar CDO; c croidhe MLCDO; chumhga MFCDO, chumhdha L, 
chuime R.

8 a Gidh L; táim FLRCDO; Thailltean] FRO, thailtin M, tailtenn LCD; c om. L; uaim] orm R; 
fholuidh] fhalaigh R, foghla(idh) CDO; d cear(r)d CDO.

Prose 4 Order of sections in F: 6, 5, 4, 7. don] ó D; ollaimh R; amalgaibh C; Bhaile] om. F; 
Luatha] Lua FLOD, luain R, luadh C.

Prose 5 ollaim R; liaighios DO; magairle R; an chuisle do ghearraidh tarsna chum fola do tharrain D.

Prose 6 ollaimh R; a rádh . . . Neasa] om. LCDO; chonnchuir R.
Prose 7 And it was not proper for the professor of law to deliver a judgement that Mac Con Shnámha of Corr Boiginnsi had a closer claim to the kingship of Éire than Ó Néill.

Prose 8 And if the nobility and elite of Éire are jealous of the fame and pre-eminence that I have bestowed on Uilliam Búrc, I would say [in reply]—were it not for the little grievance I have against him—that for the sons of kings or great lords to contend with or oppose him would be like chopping an oak with [bare] hands, or swimming against the waterfall, or putting one’s hand in a snake’s nest, or counting stars, such is the prosperity and power he possesses.

9 In the matter of honour and valour Máire’s heir is as Ó Néill; [he is] a man who follows Guaire’s practice in the payment of poets.

10 Despite my anger towards Ruaidhrí’s grandson, a moon not darkened, I will, after all, give [my] pledge to him above [all in] the land of the warriors.

11 That he who is the focus of my affection should incur my wrath amazes me, seeing as how no poet leaves him with a refusal; it is an omen of jealousy.
Prose 9 Agus mar théid an ré ós na réalannuibh, agus an mhuir mhóir ós na mionshreabhuibh, agus Sliaabh Sión ós na sléibhite, is mar sin do-chuaidh mac Seáin mheic Oilbh Eáras tar a bhfoil i gcoimhre agus i gcomhaimísir ris do mhacuibh ríógh gan fhreasabhra.

Prose 10 Agus do thuig Uílliam Búrc gor buaine bladh ina císde, agus gorbh é coigill an chonáiche a chaitheamh; agus, ó tá a theisd mar a thuarasghníl, do mhluinn féin don tseabhac uasal éachtach gan oirbhire nò easaonta do thuilileamh ó dheighfhhean dhána, ná uaim féin d’áiridhe.

Prose 11 Agus gë adeirim sin, fós is urusa d’Uílliam Búrc éirghe ó dhiomdha [éa]nduine amháin re healadh in oir ní sluagh neach ’na aonar oír, dá dtairginn féin cor i n-aghaidh Uílliam Búrc, do rachdhois éigsi agus ollamhuin Éireann im aghaidhsi i n-aoineacht; agus ní hiongnadh do thuilleamh ó dheighfhear dhána, ná uaim féin d’áiridhe.

12 Oineach cáich do chor do mheabhair, mór dá m/aoaidheamh, oighre Seaán, nár éar éinhear; sgéal do sgaoileadh.
13 Níor sgaoileadh fós d’éineach Uilliam fa iath nÉireann;
tiocfa dom dhiomdhá ar chleith Chualann
cleith a chéimeann.

14 D’éis mo dhiomdhá ar mhaic Mheic Uilliam
is é a-déaruinn:
‘fear a aoisí is fhearr i n-aoineing,
an seang séaghuinn’.

15 Ní mholfá meisi barr Baoille
go mbiam roiréidh,
planda toruidh do choill cheiníf
nár thoill toibhéim.

16 Níor dhíult mac mheic Oilibh Éarois
fhearr dhá bhfacaidh;
tearc i nÉirinn aon do eitigh,
is taom tapaidh.

13 Uilliam’s honour has not yet been broadcast throughout Éire; from my displeasure
with the hero of Cuala will come the concealing of his exploits.
14 After [the assuagement of] my dissatisfaction with Mac Uilliam’s son I would say:
‘he is the best man of his age in any territory, the slender, distinguished one’.
15 I will not praise the chief of the Baoill until I am quite ready, fruitful plant from his
race’s wood, who has not [previously] earned reproach.
16 The son of Oilibh Éarus’s son has not refused any man whom he has seen; there is
hardly anyone in Éire whom he has refused, it is a fortunate impulse.

13 a Ni F; sgaoil CDO; oinech LDO, aoineach C; b eirionn L; d cleith R, ceilt MFLCDO;
chéimeann] choimheud DO.
14 a déaruinn FL; c aoining M, aoining F, eineing R, einnigh L, eining CDO; d saoguin CDO.
15 a bar buille F; b mbem F, mbim R; c chiníl MLRCDO, cineoil F; d thuill FLRCDO.
16 a oiliéirois M, oileberuis F, oilberus L, oillberuis R, oilbheuras C, oilbeurais O, oilbhéiris D;
b fear FLRCDO.
Prose 12 Et ní tapuidh don cheithearnach do ghoid a mhart ó shagart Fiodhnach: agus mar fríth fios agus faisnéis air, seacht mionna Fiodhnach do thabhairt innte go dtáinig do mhíorbhuilibh Dé agus Caillín naomh, an tan do bhf sé ag marbhadh in mhairt ina dtug sé na mionna éithigh, an tráth do chuir sè an tuagh thairis a mhac do bhí aga connmháil dó, gor bhual sé a gceartlár a aighthe agus a éadain é, gor leig a inchinn ina caobuíbh cró tre shinisdríbh a chinn agus a cheanmhuillaigh, agus do léig in mart amach.

Prose 13 Et ní hamhlaidh so theagmhais don airseigh iorghaiile agus don bheithir bheóidha bhithaigmhèil i. Uilliam Búrc an uair thóid fa thir a fhoghладh agus a easgcarad: acht a gcruidh agus a gceathra, a mbuar agus a mbótháinte do thabhairt leis dá thir agus dá thalamh. Agus tar éis na n-áirgheadh agus na n-éadáladhso do thabhairt in tuadh do mhíorbhuilibh, is amhluidh so sgoileas iad ó chéile i. a dtabhairt ar eachaibh seanga siobhlacha, agus ar lúireachtaibh leabhra lándaine, agus ar fhíontaibh daora doicheannaigh, agus ar dhántuibh disncheart a dhaímh disnchearta.
Prose 14  Et is iongadh dhamh féin a dtabhairt do theisd agus do thuarasgbháil ar Uilliam Búrc, agus dar liom féin go bhfuilim diomhdhach dhe; agus is baoghlach do go madh é súgradh in chait ris an lochaidh ar ndála fa dheireadh.

17 Budh í sin ar ndáil fa dheireadh:
dul i rēidhe;
déanta dhúinn, do thol gach taoibhe,
cor re chéile.

18 Fiodh catha do chosg a bhiodhbhadh,
gi bé thiosadh;
tuilleamh m’fhheirge níor dhual dósan,
gruadh nár griósadh.

19 Uaim, a dhreagain dhúinn na Teamhrach,
ná tuill fhalaide:
guais duit sgol Éirne agus Oíligh
d’éirghe it aghaidh.

20 Me féin ort i ndiaidh mo dhiaimhda
daor an t-urradh;
ná tuill do ghruidh dhearg do dhonnadh:
m’fhrearg go h-ullamh.

Prose 14  And it surprises myself all the praise and [good] repute I give to Uilliam Búrc, when I myself consider that I am dissatisfied with him; and he should beware lest, in the end, our relationship be as the toying of the cat with the mouse.

17 That will be our position in the end: to arrive at an accommodation; with the good will of each party, we should co-operate.

18 Battle-wood for spurning his enemies, whoever should come; it was not natural for him to earn my anger, [he of the] cheek that was not caused to redden.

19 O dragon of the fort of Teamhair, do not earn resentment from me: you are in danger of provoking the poets of Éirne and Oileach against you.

20 In the wake of my dissatisfaction it would be costly for you to obtain me as a guarantor; do not earn the reddening of your rosy cheek: my anger is primed.
21 Muna fhaghár tóch mo dhiomdha
ód dreichi shaídheoir,
gríosaídhe meisi an súil nglaís ngormghláin,
’s an mbáis mbairghil.

22 Íocfaídh béal na mbriathar gcumhra,
nó an cneas fallán,
dá raibh m’fhhála úr re hUílliam,
cúl na gcamán.

23 Gríosaídhe meisi, do mhuin fheirge—
ní hiúl meardhuiil—
an ihtroighidh réidh, snasda, sucighigh,
ngasda, ngreannmuir.

**Prose 15**

Et [is] greannmhur do fhiarfaigh an sagart ó Ghleann Chon Chaidhin do phríomhfháidh na hÉireann an don dá asbal déag Fionn mhac Cumhaill. Et is sultmhar do fhiarfaigh an sagart céadna, agus é ar gceannach leabhair aifrinn ó cheannmuigh sa Srábdhaile, ‘Fa do mhiomnuigh anois, a cheannmuigh, an é an leabhar aifrinn féin do cheannchas uaid?’ Et ní ar na neithibh saoibh sin do ba cóir damh féin aire do bheith

21 If I do not obtain recompense for my displeasure from your wealthy face, I will redden the bright, blue-grey eye and the white-topped hand.

22 If my new-found resentment be directed at Uilliam—hair of the curls—the sweet-worded mouth, or the healthy skin will pay [for it].

23 I will redden, out of anger—no false claim—the smooth, shining, pleasant, agile, gentle foot.

**Prose 15**

And amusingly did the priest from Gleann Chon Chaidhin enquire of the primate of Éire if Fionn mhac Cumhaill was one of the twelve apostles. And it is funny [how], having purchased a mass-book from a dealer in An Srádbhaile, the same priest asked, ‘On your oaths now, trader, is it really the mass-book that I have bought from you?’ And it is not on those foolish things that my attention should be

21 a om. D; A muna R; bhfaghár MLCO, abhfagham R; diomghuidh R; b d(h)eirc LCDO; c an tsúil LCDO; nglaís-om. CDO, ghlas ghormghlan L; d sa bhas bharrgheal L.

22 a om. L; Iocfa RCO; b om. L; chneas MDO; falláin M, fallan R, f(h)ulláin CDO; c rabh R; d cúil L; gcumann LD, ccomán CO.

23 a g(h)ríosfas LCDO; fheairghe M; b meardhuiull LR; c troigh LCDO; roiréidh R; s(h)uirghe LCDO; d an gnás dá L; ngreann(n)mhar LCDO.

**Prose 15**

24 acht ar mhac Máire, ó mhúr Chruachan, 
charas féile;
do-ghéan moladh do bharr Bhaoidhe 
nach cam cáille.

25 Ar Uilliam ní iarrann deóradh 
duais dá ndáileann;
mo líog lóghmhar, mo dhéar dhileann,
tréan nach tráigeanna.

26 Mo ghéag chumhra, mo chloch bhuaide, 
gan bhéim mbloidhe;
saoiltear leis a chlú fán gcrúinne,
mo chnú chróidhe.

27 Ar n-éasga lán, ar lá samhraidh,
ar són thuraidh,
arthail fa bhláth, ar dtrágh thoraidh,
lámh mar Lughaidh.

28 Mh’Éóghan Mór mac Oiliill Óluim, 
m’Fhionn mac Cumhuill, 
mh’ubhall óir, mo chnú ós chrobothu, 
mo Chú Chaluinn.

24 but on Máire’s son, from the fort of Cruacha, who loves generosity; I will fashion praise for the chief of the Baoill which will not be perverse in meaning. 
25 Uilliam bestows unsolicited gifts on a visiting poet; my precious stone, my flood-tear, warrior who does not fade. 
26 My fragrant branch, my precious stone, with no reproach in the matter of renown; he spreads his fame around the world, the kernel of my heart. 
27 Our full moon, our summer’s day, our dry weather, our blossoming wood, our productive shore, hand like Lughaidh. 
28 My Eoghan Mór son of Oiliill Óluim, my Fionn son of Cumhall, my golden apple, my topmost nut, my Cú Chaluinn. 
24 a mhúir L; charua(í)chna LRCDO; c buille R. 
25 a deóruigh LCDO; b dá[ ] ná L, nach R; c mo líog lóghmhar] om. LCDO, mo bhile cnuais R; 
d tráigeanna M. 
26 a Mo ghéag chumhra] om. LCDO, mo chu chumhduigh R; buaidh L, bhuadha DR, 
bhuadhaigh CO; c bhan cuirme R; d repeated LCDO. 
27 om. R; b tuirigh L; c bhlaithe CDO; tráigh MLDCO. 
28 a Mh’Éóghan] Éóghain R, meogain L; mac] mhac M, om. C; oilioll LC; b mhac M; cuibhaill L; 
c criobhing L; d chuluinn] RCD, choluin(n) ML, chuluin O.
29 Ar gelár óir tar éis a thilte,
  tí dár dtúthibh;
ar n-eagna lán ar gach láthair,
ar ndán díchil.

**Prose 16** Et is díthchíollach do mholfuinnsí Uilliam Búrc muna bheith mar tá: agus ní beag nod don eolach.

**Prose 17** Agus ní ó eolas adubhairt comharba do chomharbhaibh Choluiomh Chille i.e. Mág Niallasaigh agus é ar dtímhgháil ar cuairt agus ar céilidhe i dtigh Í Chonchobhair Shligigh. An uair do iarr Ó Conchobhair aírsioimh an t-altughadh do ráidha, adubhairt seision, mar nach raibhe oiread an altuighthe do léigeann nó do Laidin aige: ‘Bheirim a bhuidhe re Dia már fhágaibh Colum Cille an oiread sin d’ainghráithighadh oruinn!’

30 Oruinn féin is fiacha dlighid
dol dá mholadh:
mo chrann seóil, mo bhárc nár blaghadh,
trácht fa thoradh.

29 Our golden gaming-board after being occupied, one of our targets; our supreme wisdom in every situation, our highest art.

**Prose 16** And I would diligently praise Uilliam Búrc were he not as he is: and a hint is sufficient for one in the know.

**Prose 17** And it was not knowledgeably that one of the coarbs of Colum Cille, i.e. Mág Niallasaigh, spoke after coming on a visit to the house of Ó Conchubhair of Sligeach. When Ó Conchobhair asked him to say the thanksgiving, he said, because he did not have even enough learning or Latin to say the thanksgiving: ‘I thank God that Colum Cille did not bequeath that much bad custom to us!’

30 It is incumbent on us to proceed to praise him: my sailing-mast, my unsinkable ship, produce-laden shore.
31 Dédh mar gheilghéis, gruaidh mar dhoighir,
dearc mar bhuigha;
sé do gach draoidh róm is rogha
m’ór gan umha.

32 Peadar, doirseóir dhúin na n-aingeal,
urra ar gcabhra,
an bile réidh, craobhlán, cumhra,
aonghrádh mh’anma.

33 Truagh gan Chonn do bheith ’na bheathaídh,
bile Teamhra,
fear ó bhfuighinn ól is umhla,
fa mór meanma. MAIRG

31 Tooth like a white swan, cheek like a flame, eye like a bluebell; he is the choice of
every poet before me, my pure gold.
32 Peter, door-keeper of the angels’ fortress, the one who is sure to help us, the smooth,
fully-branched, fragrant tree, the only love of my soul.
33 Alas that Conn is not alive, tree of Teamhair, a man from whom I used to obtain
hospitality and respect, who was large of spirit.

Prose 1
The felling of a cross horse in order to shoe her is a common practice. The
humour lies in her inability to rise again due to the weight of her shoes.

Prose 2
The Í Fhialáin were one of the families of professional poets associated with
Fermanagh and elsewhere in the late medieval period; see Pádraig A. Breatnach,

Prose 3
For neamhchaint cf. the single example cited in DIL N, 29.20–21, that occurring in the
context of the praise of silence and discretion (nemhlabhuint and nemhchaint) in
Ériu 5 (1911) 130.

Prose 4
Baile Locha Luatha is the parish of Ballyloughloe, barony of Clonlonan,
Co. Westmeath, patrimony of Clann Amhalghaidh and site of their castle; see
O’Donovan’s letter in Paul Walsh, The placenames of Westmeath (Dublin 1957)
5–7. Ó Dubhda was lord of Tir Fhiachrach in Co. Sligo.

Prose 5
O’Grady (BMusCat. i, 113), referring to the present text, notes an apparently
idiomatic use of ‘an mhaghragall a richt na cloichi fuail’ in a scribal comment in

Notes
Egerton 88, f. 16v; cf. also, from the same manuscript page, noted by O’Grady: ‘gerrfa duine éigin in bod i richt na potóigi’.

Prose 7 Corr Boiginnsi is unidentified but must be in Muintear Chionaoith (barony of Drumhahaire, Co. Leitrim), the territory of Clann Chon Snámha (cf. Top. Poems, line 646). In 1530, Ó Domhnaill is said to have burned the house of Mac Con Snámha—the best wooden house in Ireland—which was located on Loch Allen (A.F.M v. 1398–1400; A.Conn., 672; ALC ii, 272). Corry Island (parish of Inishmagrath, barony of Drumhahaire), near the western shore of Loch Allen, might be the place in question. Clann Chon Snámha were an offshoot of the Í Raghallaigh (Anal. Hib. 18 (1951) 110).

9b Máire, Úilliam’s mother (cf. q. 24a), was daughter of Mac Diarmada, Ruaidhrí mac Taidhg: Nollaig Ó Muraíle, Leabhar mór na ngenealach i–v (Dublin 2003) iii, 122 (§ 806.1). Ruaidhrí, mentioned in q. 10a, died in 1568 (ALC ii, 394–404).

10a For Ruaidhrí see note to q. 9b.

Prose 8 The catalogue of futilities is a well-established feature in Irish literature. See, for example, those in Douglas Hyde, Giolla an fhiugha . . . Eachtra Cloinne Rígh na h-Ioruaidhe ITS I (London 1899) 86, and note in Kenneth H. Jackson, Aislinge Meic Con Glinne (Dublin 1990) 62 § 53.

12b Note the extra alliteration in this line, and in q. 13b, together with the conchlann linking the two quatrains. Such alliteration is also present in qq. 25, 26 and 29, while brecadh is in evidence in qq. 27 and 29.

16a In common with other borrowed names, Oil(i)bhéarus can be divided into separately stressed components, and its genitive form can alternate between inflection (TD 20.6) and non-inflection (TD 17.50).

Prose 12 Fiodhnach is Fenagh, Co. Leitrim, associated with Leabhar Chaillín (RIA ms 479 (23 P 26)). Manuscripts LCDO add that the kern was ‘do mhuinntir Í Mhaoil Ghuthairne’; the surname O Mulgohery is recorded in the mid seventeenth century in the barony of Rosclogher, Co. Leitrim (Seamus Pender, A census of Ireland circa 1659 (Dublin 1939) 569).

18ab ‘F(h)eadh’ M and R is a late representation of fiodh (cf. ‘Feadh ós feadhbaibh’, Butlers 1865). Line b could also be taken as being in apposition to cd: ‘whatever might happen’.

20b The restoration of an t-urradh from mss ‘an tor(r)adh’ is predicated on the rudhrach uatine of toradh - donadh - ollamh (IGT v.100–105; cf. q. 30c below). To avoid this, ollamh (IGT ii.118) has to be read in d, which in turn suggests that ‘toradh’ in b represents orradh, one of the variants of which is urradh (IGT ii.11), a reading supported by the syntax of ab.

21cd These two lines are quoted from L and C in Harrison, Crosántacht, 53.


Prose 15 Gleann Chon Chaidhin is Glenconkeyne, a district comprising the parishes of Ballynascreen, Desertmartin and Kilcronaghan, barony of Loughinsholin, Co. Derry; see Gregory Toner, County Derry I: the Moyola Valley Place-names of Northern Ireland V (Belfast 1996) 2. Srádbhaile is Dundalk (Srádbhaile Dúna Dealgan).

27d A reference to Lugh Lámhfhada.

29ab The imagery is that of a board-game, for some discussion of which see TD ii, 198–9, Eóin MacWhite, ‘Early Irish board games’, Éigse 5 (1945–7) 25–35, H. J. R. Murray, A history of board-games other than chesss (Oxford 1952) 34–5, 56, 63. For the use of tilidh in this context see TD ii, 236, and Aith.D. ii, 231. Perhaps we should read, against all witnesses, tí tar títhibh. For the notion of a
central, superlative position on the gaming-board cf. ‘tú, a rígh Bhredh, ar an tí thall / as fer ar gach tí ad thiomchall’ (TD ii, 198); ‘Téid síos go grinniol san ghliaidh / léim ré ttiltior an tí láir’ (L.Branach 2165–6).

d ‘dán dichil(l)’ is found elsewhere in Fearghal Óg’s work with the meaning ‘sincere poem’ (DiD 38.16). In a poem by Eochaidh Ó hEódhusa duan dichill (DMeigUidhir 23.13) appears synonymous with dán díreach.


31–3 There is dúnadh in these three quatrains.
32–3 Dedications to St Peter and to Conn Ó Ruairc bring the poem to a conclusion: see Ó Macháin, ‘Poems by Fearghal Óg’, 253.
32b Cf. q. 7b above.

PÁDRAIG Ó MACHÁIN

Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies