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Tadhg Ó Rodaighe and his school: aspects of patronage and poetic practice at the close of the bardic era

Pádraig Ó Macháin

In Irish literary tradition, bardic poems could be used in a variety of situations. Apart from the primary functions of praise or lamentation, exhortation or advice, and the performance of such compositions for the patrons for whom they were composed, poems were employed in other areas, most obviously as items of study in bardic schools. This was one way in which lines, quatrains, and sections of poems could migrate beyond the bounds of their original compositions. It was also a means by which a pantheon of respected authors and a canon of exemplary poems came to be established over time, some of these poems eventually gaining the status of what Katharine Simms has referred to as 'golden oldies'.[1] The use of such compositions at some remove from the time and place of their original performance is illustrated by the recitation of a poem, which was composed in the fourteenth century by Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh, as an item of entertainment over two hundred years later for Aodh Mág Uidhir (d. 1600).[2]

Somewhat different from the case of Aodh Mág Uidhir is the oft-quoted story of Ó Conchubhair Sligigh and the Dublin merchant. With a reputation for generosity to maintain, Ó Conchubhair was willing to pay twice what the merchant had paid (£10) for a poem which was over a hundred years old, and which had no connection with either of them.[3] Ó Conchubhair's generosity and the merchant's cupidity form the theme of this anecdote, but underlying it is the poets' readiness to service or exploit both. This was the case particularly at a time when the market for bardic poetry was increasingly contracting. In the second half of the 17th century the point is underlined by the testimony – admittedly hostile – of Fr Thomas Carew, who recounts how a poet tried unsuccessfully to pass off as a praise-poem for the Duke of Ormond a poem which he had earlier composed in honour of Oliver Cromwell.[4]

Apart from the attitude of the poets, matters of comprehension and perhaps also of literacy are implicit in these examples. The well-known one-liner – 'Is maith in duan . . . gibe do tuicfedh hi' ('It is a good poem, whoever would understand it') – spoken by the king of Airghialla in *Tromdhámh Guaire* in response to a poem by Dallán Forguill, may have described the mind-set of many of the bardic patrons.[5] The commissioning by them of manuscripts, however, and, in particular, manuscript anthologies of bardic verse (*duanaireadha*) as early as the fourteenth century is suggestive of some degree of understanding of the written text among those for whom the manuscripts were made. Dr Simms has argued that there is a discernible increase in the spread of literacy among the Irish aristocracy from that time, culminating in the sponsorship by them of the new genre of letter-poems at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth.[6] It is one of the ironies of Irish literary history that praise of a patron's capacity for learning and literary comprehension enters the thematic range of

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[1] Katharine Simms, 'The selection of poems for inclusion in the Book of the O'Conor Don' in Pádraig Ó Macháin (ed.), *The Book of the O'Conor Don: essays on an Irish manuscript* (Dublin, 2010), pp 32–60 at 34–5.

[2] James Carney, *The Irish bardic poet* (Dublin, 1967), p. 15; Pádraig A. Breatnach, 'A covenant between Eochaidh Ó hEódhusa and Aodh Mág Uidhir', *Éigse* 27 (1993), 59–66.

[3] Seán Mac Airt (ed.), *Leabhar Branach: the Book of the O'Byrnes* (Dublin, 1944), pp 215–16; James Carney, *Studies in Irish literature and history* (Dublin, 1955), pp 265–6.

[4] *Responsio veridica ad illotum libellum, cui nomen Anatomicum Exemen . . . data a Reverendo Domino Thoma Carve* (Solisbaci, 1672), pp 17–18; Thomas Wall, 'Bards and Bruodins' in Franciscan Fathers (ed.), *Father Luke Wadding commemorative volume* (Dublin, 1957), pp 438–62 at 453.

[5] Maud Joynt (ed.), *Tromdhámh Guaire* (Dublin, 1941), p. 3 (lines 70–71); cf. Thomas F. O'Rahilly, *Irish dialects past and present* (Dublin, 1932), 252.

[6] Katharine Simms, 'Literacy and the Irish bards' in Huw Pryce (ed.), *Literacy in medieval Celtic societies* (Cambridge, 1998), pp 238–58 at 251–3.

bardic verse just when the entire aristocratic support-system for that poetry and its practitioners was about to crumble.[7] Furthermore, Dr Simms has also observed that this learning and literacy meant that the patrons became more dependent on legal grants and deeds than on bardic praise for confirming them in their noble status. As a result, she argues, bardic poetry in the seventeenth century began to drift towards less strict formats, and towards the composition of poems of a general type 'suitable for recitation on a number of occasions, to different auditors'.[8]

Learned men of status were still in a position to extend patronage to their fellow *aos ealadhna*, however, and it is not surprising therefore to find praise of learning among the themes in addresses or elegies for such figures in the seventeenth century. An example is the short letter-poem addressed by Seaán Ballach (mac Fróinsias mheic Sheaáin Bhallaigh) Ó Duibhgeannáin to Tadhg Ó Rodaighe, of the family of coarbs of Fenagh, Co. Leitrim, and a major figure in the continuation of traditional learning in North Connacht in the second half of the seventeenth century. In the poem, Tadhg is praised for his reading and writing, his knowledge of Greek and Latin, and his accomplishments as poet, historian, philosopher, and teacher of the poetic art.[9]

This poem is preserved in a collection of Ó Rodaighe material, now TCD MS 1419 (H.6.15), which was transcribed in 1714–15 by Maurice Newby, probably in Dublin[10] and presumably from a manuscript previously in Tadhg Ó Rodaighe's possession. This book might be described as a *duanaire*, but it is much more informal and occasional than any other surviving poem-book. It contains an amount of poems associated with Ó Rodaighe and his circle; the poets named in the manuscript are Peadar Ó Maoil Chonaire, Pádraig Óg Mac an Bhaird, Seaán Ó Duinnín, Seaán Ballach Ó Duibhgeannáin, Diarmuid mac Laoisigh Mheic an Bhaird, Éamunn Ó Caiside, Fearghal Muimhneach Ó Duibhgeannáin, Cú Choigcríche Ó Duibhgeannáin,[11] An tAthair Pádraig Ó Coirnín, and Tadhg Ó Rodaighe himself. This appears to be a record of the proceedings of a school of poets gathered under the patronage of Ó Rodaighe. It is therefore valuable as evidence, not just of details of Tadhg Ó Rodaighe's biography,[12] but also of the modalities of poetic practice in one of the last pockets of bardic poetry and patronage – the Leitrim- Roscommon region – towards the end of the seventeenth century. One aspect in particular of this practice tends to lend weight to the observations of Fr Thomas Carew, mentioned above.

Among the poems in the manuscript are two versions of the same composition (pp 69–78) commiserating with Tadhg following his eviction from Carraig an tSleabhain (Carrickslavan, parish of Kiltoghert), Co. Leitrim in 1694. The poem is a late bardic composition. The author is not named but in a preamble to these items he is stated to be a learned young man unpractised in *dán*. The first draft of the poem is said to reflect this lack of learning, while the second draft is said to represent the same poem emended by the author when he had acquired the necessary knowledge through the inspiration of ancient poets.[13]

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[7] For example, Pádraig Ó Macháin, 'A *crosántacht* for Uilliam Búrc', *Celtica* 25 (2007), 175–94 at 178–9.
[8] Katharine Simms, 'The transition from medieval to modern in the poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn' in Pádraigín Riggs (ed.), *Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn: his historical and literary context* (London, 2010), pp 119–34 at 120.
[9] Tomás Ó Raghallaigh, *Filí agus filidheacht Connacht* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1938), pp xvi–xvii.
[10] Cf. RIA MS 1007 (23 L 34) by the same scribe in Dublin, 1711 and 1714–15.
[11] The compositions by Fearghal Muimhneach and Cú Choigcríche (one of the Four Masters) are addressed to an earlier Tadhg Ó Rodaighe, and date from the mid-seventeenth century.
[12] John Logan, 'Tadhg O Roddy and two surveys of Co. Leitrim', *Breifne* 4 (1970–75), 318–34; William O'Sullivan, 'The Book of Domhnall Ó Duibhdábhoireann, provenance and codicology', *Celtica* 23 (1999), 276–99 at 278–82.
[13] The first draft was published in Ó Raghallaigh, *Filí agus filidheacht Connacht*, pp 367–70.

The two drafts are instructive in showing, firstly, the practice of re-drafting that was indulged in under Ó Rodaighe's supervision; and, secondly, the state of what was regarded as bardic poetry at the time. On the latter point we can compare the first two quatrains of both versions.

Draft 1	*Draft 2*
1 Barr orchra ar phréimh Rossa	1 Barr orchra Aicme Rossa
ler milleadh méin a macnossa	dár chlaoí mein a maithiossa
aicme mhóirfhial na sleadh sen	cioniodh roichían na ngal nglan
a roiphían leam is dúrsan	a móirphian dhamh as dursan
2 Iomdha curaigh do shíol Róigh	2 Iomdha curadh do chrú Róigh
gasraidh na meirgeadh maothshróil	gasraigh na meirgeadh maothshroill
ro dhíosc do rannaibh lann	mo núar do ro dhiosc do gach dreim
ag díon measa na heireann	a Chriost as truagh a ttuitim

The metre is *deibhidhe*: seven syllables are required in each line, together with a pair of alliterating stressed words; correct end-rhymes (*rinn/airdrinn*) are required within both half-quatrains, as are internal rhymes in the second half-quatrain. The first draft is very deficient in these requirements: lines 1 and 7 are short a syllable, while line 2 is too long; alliteration is missing in lines 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8; and bad end-rhyme is in evidence in lines 3–4, 7–8; and there are loose internal rimes in lines 7 and 8. Most of these imperfections are addressed in the second draft though some new ones have been created: for example, there is bad end-rhyme between lines 1 and 2; and line 7 is now a syllable too long. We should note also that, in both drafts, vernacular influence is evident in the forms *roiphian* and *roichian* in the first quatrain, where the intensifier *ro-* is treated as *ró-*. Confirmation that such shortcomings were frequent in Ó Rodaighe's own poetry can be found in his autograph poem (mentioned below) to Cormac Ó Néill (d. 1706) of Broughshane, Co. Antrim, in which poor rhymes and syllabic faults are plentiful.[14]

The changes that were effected in the second draft of the poem were occasioned by some sense of metrical decorum, informed by what was becoming a hazy knowledge of strict bardic regulations. While the poem in question only concerned Ó Rodaighe himself, evidence for the reworking of poems addressed to different patrons is to hand among the work of his colleagues, the group of poets represented in TCD 1419 as being part of Tadhg Ó Rodaighe's circle and listed above, whom Brian Ó Cuív identified as 'some of the last of the professional Connacht poets'.[15]

One of these poets is Diarmuid mac Laoisigh Mheic an Bhaird, who composed an elegy (TCD 1419, pp 85–89) on Ó Rodaighe after hearing unfounded reports of his death.[16] This Diarmuid has been identified with the author of a series of poems in RIA MS 92 (24 P 4) addressed to members of the Mac Mathghamhna family of Farney, Co. Monaghan, one poem of which is deliberately modelled on Eochaidh Ó hEódhasa's famous poem addressed to Aodh Mág Uidhir during the winter campaign of 1599/1600.[17] It is presumed that this is a deliberate act of *homage* both to the earlier poet and to Brian mac Briain Mheic Mhathghamhna (*fl*. 1687) to whom Diarmuid's poem is addressed.

From modelling poems on the work of others to remodelling one's own work for presentation to different patrons is probably not a great step. In the work of another of Ó Rodaighe's circle, Pádraig Óg Mac an Bhaird, we find just such a phenomenon. A eulogy addressed by Pádraig Óg to Ó Rodaighe is preserved in TCD 1419.[18] Other surviving poems confirm this poet's

[14] Tadhg Ó Donnchadha (ed.), *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1931), Poem XLVI.
[15] Brian Ó Cuív, 'Irish language and literature, 1691–1845' in *NHI* IV, pp 374–423 at 398.
[16] Ó Raghallaigh, *Filí agus filidheacht Connacht*, pp 372–8.
[17] A. J. Hughes, 'Fuar liom longphort mo charad', *Celtica* 19 (1987), 61–74.
[18] *A fhir thaisdil Chríche Cuinn*, see Ó Raghallaigh, *Filí agus filidheacht Connacht*, pp 361–7.

floruit as the second half of the seventeenth century, one of those poems being an address to Ruaidhrí (mac Cormaic) Ó hEadhra (d. 1702) preserved among a handful of late poems inserted in vacant spaces in the Ó hEadhra family *duanaire*.[19] This *deibhidhe* poem, beginning *Clú gach fheadhma ar fhuil Chéin*, is notable for a number of metrical deficiencies, most obviously in the first line which is a syllable short. That fault passed un-noticed by the poem's editor, Fr McKenna, but he did mention others, particularly:

> (a) the first two lines of quatrain 10, both of which, having eight syllables, are a syllable too long.
>
> > Do fhaguibh éigsi innsi Fáil
> > a tteisd a maitheas re a mórdháil
>
> (b) the last two lines of quatrain 27, where the end-rhyme (*on*: *rochtain*) is imperfect.
>
> > fos flatha, féile gan on,
> > tréighe an ratha dá rochtain.

The editor suggested emendations that might restore these lines to metrical conformity, but a better understanding of how they came to appear as they do is provided by another poem ascribed to Pádraig Óg Mac an Bhaird, beginning *Clú gach f[h]eadhma ar fhuil Dálaigh*. This poem is found in the 400-page manuscript of Í Dhomhnaill poetry compiled in 1727 by Séamus Mág Uidhir. The scribe informs the reader in an introduction that he was retained by Aodh Ó Domhnaill (of Larkfield, Co. Leitrim)[20] to make the anthology. The manuscript exemplifies the value of the bardic *duanaire* as status-symbol, even at this late date, and it survives as NLI MS G 167.[21] About forty pages towards the end of the book are devoted to sixteen poems in bardic metres concerning members of Aodh's family, and part of the purpose of the anthology must have been to present these creations as natural successors, in artistic and cultural terms, to poems to the Í Dhomhnaill of earlier generations. One of these late poems is the item in question here, the heading to which (p. 360 (352)) informs us that Pádraig Óg made the poem for Conall Ó Domhnaill, 'mac Seaáin meic Aodh Buidhe meic Cuinn'. Conall was father of Aodh of Larkfield, the patron of the manuscript. He was created Lord Lieutenant of Donegal in 1689, and was considered by many to be the 'Ó Domhnaill'.[22]

An examination of this poem to Conall Ó Domhnaill shows that the poem to Ruaidhrí Ó hEadhra was not merely modelled on it, but that it is a replica of the Ó Domhnaill poem with changes effected to accommodate different genealogical affinities; hence, for example, *fhuil Dhálaigh* in the first line of the Ó Domhnaill poem becomes *fhuil Chéin* in the Ó hEadhra poem, losing a syllable in the process. This alteration to the first line serves as an index to what happens in the rest of the poem. In the case of the two instances noted by Fr McKenna and quoted above, the original lines in the Ó Domhnaill poem are metrically correct, and they read:

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[19] NLI MS G 1303, p. 40. Lambert McKenna (ed.), *The Book of O'Hara: Leabhar Í Eadhra* (Dublin, 1951), Poem XXVI.
[20] Éamonn Ó Tuathail, 'On Hugh O'Donnell of Larkfield', *Éigse* 3 (1941–2), 21–4. Rupert S. O Cochlain, 'Hugh O'Donnell of Larkfield', *Donegal Annual* 37 (1985), 46–50. Proinnsíos Ó Duigneáin, 'Hugh O Donnell of Larkfield – patron of Gaelic literature (1691–1754)', *Breifne* 6 (1982–6), 390–94.
[21] Tomás Ó Cléirigh, 'A poem book of the O Donnells', *Éigse* 1 (1939), 51–61, 130–42. Nessa Ní Shéaghdha, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland* V (Dublin, 1979), pp 8–15.
[22] *AFM* VI, p. 2398.

(a)

Do fhág Coluim an chrádhbhuidh [*recte* chrábhuidh]
ar aicme réidh rioghDhálaigh

and (b)

draig mhearchuartach s glas ar ghoid
leathRuarcach bras on mBuannoid

The first couplet refers to Colum Cille and the second to Conall's mother, who was of the Í Ruairc, and neither allusion would have any relevance in a poem to an Ó hEadhra.

One benefit of the identification of the origin of the Ó hEadhra poem is that an error made by Fr McKenna in editing the manuscript may now be corrected. The item immediately following the poem to Ruaidhrí is presented in the edition as Poem XXVII, a seven-quatrain piece beginning *Inghean tSearluis nach claon cuing* and ascribed to Maol Muire Ó hUiginn. Comparison with the Ó Domhnaill poem, however, shows that these quatrains, rather than representing a new poem, are in fact versions (with one quatrain omitted and two new ones added) of the additional quatrains to Ó Domhnaill's wife Gráinne ('inghean Rughraidhe' [Uí Dhomhnaill]), here modified to suit Ruaidhrí Ó hEadhra's wife, Brighid ('inghean tSearluis' [Búrc]). The ascription to Ó hUiginn, as McKenna admits, occurs after these verses: it belongs properly to a poem that was intended to follow them but that was never entered in the manuscript.

As with the main section of the poem, these additional quatrains display some of the same features caused by an imperfect adaptation, thus:

Original	*Replica*
31 Inghean Rughraidhe an ruisg ghlais deaghua míndealbhach Maghnais	1. Inghean tSearluis nach claon cuing Brighid iathghlan inghill
32 Dealradh seirce a ngruaidh Ghrainne inghean fhialghlan Siubháine	2. Deallramh seirce 'n-a haghaidh óig, gnúis áluinn nar thuill conspóid

Here, in the modified verses, the first couplet lacks correct rhyme, line 1b wants a syllable, 2a is a syllable too long, and 2b lacks alliteration.

This is not to say that the change from one version to the other was everywhere accompanied by metrical failure. In fact, most of the changes thus effected are sound in their results. For example:

Original	*Replica*
13. O Eamhain abhloigh tar tuinn mar tháinig Conall chuguinn	14. Ruaidhrí laoch an aignidh fhéil i n-aonchúis nar thuill toibhéim
19. Nós a chinidh leis leanta[i]r clann Dálaigh meic Muircheartaigh	20. Nós a chinidh leis leantair le deighgníomh 's le deighbheartoibh
27. Mac cródha Chaitreach Fhíona do thír as dlaoi deighdhiona	28. Mac Máire nach cleasach cuing dá dháimh as díon ar dhoghruing

Nor was every change occasioned by genealogical considerations. While two new genealogical quatrains occur in the additional verses at the end of the Ó hEadhra poem, an extra quatrain, with no genealogical content, was also added after q. 10, and this must have

been done for aesthetic reasons or reasons of emphasis. There were also areas in the original version which were imperfect to begin with and which were transmitted unchanged. Thus the bad rhyme *beóbhras* : *heólus* noted by McKenna in q. 30 is identical in the original. So too the hypermetric line *'s a saoilfidhe iadsan d'imtheacht* (q. 8/9), which may be due to vernacular pronunciation of *saoilfidhe*, is identical in both versions. Vernacular trends are also in evidence in the rhyme *mórdhálach* : *comhdhálach* in q. 5 of both poems, and in *oil*: *Seaáin* in q. 26 of Conall's poem, which shows the name *Seaán* still treated as disyllabic but with the length considered to be on the first rather than the second syllable. In the change necessitated by the transfer of the lines to Ruaidhrí's poem, this latter detail disappears.

Original	*Replica*
26. Fear chosnus a chlú gan oil	27. Fear cosnumha clú gach uair
Conall seasmhach mac Seaáin	an t-Iollánach re hiolbhuaigh

To the late bardic era belongs the increased interaction with scribes and poets by diocesan priests, which was to become an important feature of Irish literary tradition in the eighteenth century. In this regard it is of interest that the relationship between the two poems analyzed above is paralleled by two further poems, both beginning *Cá bhfuair an tineach iostadh*: one addressed to Conall Ó Domhnaill's son, Aodh of Larkfield – another unique survival in Aodh's manuscript, G 167[23] – and the other addressed to Fr Aodh Ó Raghallaigh, Vicar Capitular (1689) of the diocese of Kilmore.[24] Both poems present a situation mirroring that of *Clú gach fheadhma* discussed above, in that the Ó Raghallaigh poem was re-modelled as a composition for Aodh Ó Domhnaill. The Ó Raghallaigh poem is anonymous, while the Ó Domhnaill poem bears an ascription to Fr Pádraig Dubh Ó Coirnín.[25] Professor Breatnach's suggestion that they are by the same author is surely correct.[26] It is clear that Aodh, who would later pay Séamus Mág Uidhir for 'his work and his trouble'[27] in compiling his *duanaire* G 167, was an important source of patronage in Leitrim. Taken together, these poems by Pádraig Óg Mac an Bhaird and Fr Ó Coirnín are evidence of two poets of the Ó Rodaighe circle functioning in similar ways by recycling their own compositions to suit different patrons.

In the light of the evidence of *Barr orchra aicme Rossa* – the redrafted poem addressed to Ó Rodaighe – one wonders if this practice of redrafting and recycling was something that was indulged in as a practical exercise by Tadhg Ó Rodaighe and his colleagues, who seem to have conducted an establishment transitional between the bardic school of old and the eighteenth-century *cúirt fhilíochta*.[28] As a token of this latter point one may observe that the similarity in the first lines of two poems addressed to Ó Rodaighe (and preserved in the transcript of his manuscript) by Peadar Ó Maoil Chonaire and Fr Pádraig Ó Coirnín – *Niamhadh na huaisle an eagna* and *Deirbhshiúr don uaisle an eagna* respectively – may be indicative of their origins as an exercise, or a challenge, to create a poem based on the first line of an older poem beginning *Deirbhshiúr don eagna an éigse*.[29]

School exercise or not, these recycled poems show that opportunism, which was always a factor in a bardic poet's way of life, may now have become important to his survival. With the contraction of patronage, and the reduction in prospects for poets, many of whom appear to have been drawing on the same sources of patronage, the remoulding of prefabricated

[23] NLI MS G 167, pp 374 (362)–375 (363).
[24] James Carney (ed.), *Poems on the O'Reillys* (Dublin, 1950), Poem XXVII. Francis J. MacKiernan, *Diocese of Kilmore*: *bishops and priests 1136–1988* (Cavan, 1989), p. 155.
[25] For Ó Coirnín see Cuthbert Mhág Craith, *Dán na mBráthar Mionúr* 2 vols (Baile Átha Cliath, 1967, 1980), ii, pp 215–17.
[26] Pádraig A. Breatnach, *Téamaí taighde Nua-Ghaeilge* (Maigh Nuad, 1997), pp 60–62.
[27] 'tug lúach a sháothair et a thrioblóide don sgribhneóir', G 167, p. 1.
[28] Pádhraic P. Ó Ciardha, 'Tadhg Ó Rodaighe', *Breifne* 5 (1976–81), 266–77.
[29] Cf. Breatnach, *Téamaí taighde*, p. 62.

compositions may, in some situations, have been a way of earning a quick reward. It is possible that the practice may also reflect a reduction in the size of such rewards, relative to the halcyon days of the late sixteenth century.

The case should not be overstated, however, and on the basis of surviving evidence it could not be claimed that recycled poems form a significant proportion of poems from this period. Rather, their principal value is that they provide us with a glimpse of an interesting aspect of poetic composition that took place in the context of productive scholarly enterprise in the Leitrim-Roscommon area at the close of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth. One work in particular may be taken as indicative of this endeavour: the composite manuscript now known as RIA MS 540 (C iv 1). This manuscript comprises four distinct yet inter-related parts. The first part contains an acephalous copy of Keating's *Forus Feasa* belonging to the Ó Maoil Chonaire family of Rathmore, Co. Roscommon and dating to *c*. 1692. The second part was made in 1713 for Séamus Mág Uidhir – scribe of G 167 – and consists mainly of a selection of poems transcribed from the *duanaire* of Cú Chonnacht Mág Uidhir, a vellum manuscript dating to the late sixteenth century.[30] These transcripts were made in Dublin by the Clare poet and scholar Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín and an unidentified collaborator. Typical of the time, this section contains an explanatory address to the reader, in the course of which Aodh Buidhe makes it clear that not only is he transcribing the poems, but that he is also adjusting some of the language, in order to make the poems more intelligible to his reader.[31]

The third part of RIA MS 540 consists of 106 pages containing late bardic poetry, mainly material from the *duanaireadha* of the Roscommon families of Ó Conchubhair of Ballintober, Ó Maoil Mhuaidh of Hughestown, and Mac Dubhghaill of Mantua. These locations were little more than a day's journey at most from Ó Rodaighe's house at Carrickslavan or, after 1694, at Crossfield near Fenagh. The same could be said of Aodh Ó Domhnaill's house at Larkfield to the north, near Manorhamilton, of the house of Ó hEadhra at Templehouse, Co. Sligo, or of the Dillon estate at Loughglynn, Co. Roscommon, with which family another late *duanaire* is associated, RIA MS 744 (A v 2). These six family collections – seven if we include the Ó Rodaighe manuscript – of varying quantities of late bardic verse, accounting for at least thirty named poets, represent a high level of bardic patronage and productivity in a relatively small area of the country. Poets connected with Tadhg Ó Rodaighe – particularly Peadar Ó Maoil Chonaire[32] – are to be found in many of these collections, and the work of other poets such as Maol Muire Ó hUiginn,[33] not represented in the Ó Rodaighe manuscript, also illustrate the boon that the proliferation of sources of patronage in Roscommon and Leitrim was to bardic poets in the second half of the seventeenth century. It is clear, moreover, that at least two of these poets enjoyed the repeated patronage of certain families: Gofraidh Mac an Bhaird in the case of the family of Ó Maoil Mhuaidh and Diarmuid Mac an Bhaird in that of Mac Mathghamhna. This may be a hint that the position of family *ollamh*, in some form, was not yet entirely obsolete.

Using the material considered here, and including the evidence of literary activity in the areas of poetry and manuscript production among the Í Raghallaigh in Co. Cavan at the time,[34] a case could be made for mapping late bardic activity as a belt extending from south Monaghan, westwards through Cavan, Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo. It may be added here

[30] Royal Library Copenhagen, Ny kgl. Samling 268b; David Greene (ed.). *Duanaire Mhéig Uidhir: the poembook of Cú Chonnacht Mág Uidhir, Lord of Fermanagh 1566–1589* (Dublin, 1972).
[31] Pádraig Ó Macháin, *Téacs agus údar i bhFilíocht na Scol* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1998), pp 18–23.
[32] See H.R. McAdoo, 'Three poems by Peadar Ó Maolchonaire', *Éigse* 1 (1939), 160–66.
[33] Eoin Mac Cárthaigh, 'Three poems by Maol Muire Ó hUiginn to An Calbhach Ruadh Ó Domhnaill', *Ériu* 48 (1997), 59–82 at 61–2.
[34] Manuscripts from this period with Ó Raghallaigh associations include British Library MS Add. 40766, and TCD MSS 1381 (H.5.9) and 1383 (H.5.11).

that the connection of poets of the Ó Rodaighe school with most surviving collections of late bardic poetry is practically complete if we take into account the *duanaire* assembled for Cormac Ó Néill of Co. Antrim in 1680, a section – known as Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe – of a composite manuscript, RIA MS 1076 (24 P 33). Possibly on account of Cormac's maternal connections with the Í Eadhra of the Route, Co. Antrim,[35] a cadet branch of the Í Eadhra of Co. Sligo, the Ó Néill poembook has strong North Connacht connections. This is especially true of its scribe, Ruaidhrí Ua hUiginn, for example, and of the presence in the anthology of Tadhg Ó Rodaighe's autograph poem (mentioned above), and of poems by his colleagues Diarmuid Mac an Bhaird and Peadar Ó Maoil Chonaire.[36]

The fourth part of RIA MS 540 is a mainly genealogical collection, centering in particular on the Í Ruairc of Co. Leitrim, a collection that was one time in the possession of that family. Among the sources cited in the compilation are manuscripts associated with Ó Rodaighe, including Leabhar Caillín (RIA MS 479 (23 P 26)). These genealogies are also distinguished by the compiler's addresses to the reader at a number of points, during the course of one of which (f. 211va) he refers to information he received from Tadhg Ó Rodaighe before his death regarding the surnames Ó Rodaighe and Ó Rodacháin.[37]

This manuscript, therefore, provides a microcosmic view of aspects of literary activity in North Connacht of the period. The re-interpretation of old poems, the creation of new poems, the compilation of manuscripts where the material was introduced or interpreted in formal addresses to the reader: all of this bespeaks both continuity and change in traditional learning, and in bardic practice particularly, in a form reflective of the fluidity and brittleness of both creativity and patronage. The diagnostic elements detected in the activities of Ó Rodaighe's school are also to be found elsewhere, for example in the work of Séamus Mág Uidhir, or in that of the poet Seaán Ó Gadhra in Sligo, who composed an address to the reader for both the Book of O'Gara and Éinrí Ó Carraic's anthology of poetry and genealogy (Maynooth MS B 8) and who, in his own poetry, acknowledged Ó Rodaighe as one of the masters of his era.[38]

This scholarly activity in Leitrim-Roscommon appears to us today like the last curtain-call of bardic scholarship; but to the poets at the time it must have seemed like a renaissance in native learning. What Tadhg Ó Rodaighe himself thought of it is probably more complex. His complaint about the inability of contemporary scholars to read the old manuscripts is well known,[39] and perhaps it was for such scholars that he provided glosses to poems by Seaán Ó Maoil Chonaire,[40] just as Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín felt obliged to modernize – 'do réir na nuadhaimsire' – some of the poems in the Mág Uidhir *duanaire*. It may be that Tadhg's encouragement of bardic poetry, and of bardic traditions such as the *eirreadh nuachair*,[41] was indulged in as much as a stay against the decline of an ancient art-form, as it was to assist his followers to exploit the patronage available from the local Irish gentry.

Like poets such as Mathghamhain Ó hIfearnáin and Dáibhidh Ó Bruadair, Tadhg Ó Rodaighe was a witness to the changing times, and was aware that the status of the learned man could

[35] See Cormac's notes recorded in *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, p. 3007.
[36] Ó Donnchadha, *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe*, Poems XV, XLV, XLVI; note also Poem XXXII by Domhnull Ó hEachuighéin, referring (lines 25–32) to that poet's presence in Sligo.
[37] James Carney, 'A tract on the O'Rourkes', *Celtica* 1 (1946–50), 238–79 at 239.
[38] Pádraig Ó Macháin, ' "One glimpse of Ireland": the manuscript of Fr Nicolás (Fearghal Dubh) Ó Gadhra OSA' in Raymond Gillespie and Ruairí Ó hUiginn (eds), *Irish Europe*: *language, learning and texts, 1600–1660* (forthcoming).
[39] Pádraig Ó Macháin, ' ''A llebraib imdaib'': cleachtadh agus pátrúnacht an léinn, agus déanamh na lámhscríbhinní' in Ruairí Ó hUiginn (ed.), *Oidhreacht na lámhscríbhinní* (Maigh Nuad, 2004), pp 148–78 at 157.
[40] Brian Ó Cuív, 'A poem by Seaán mac Torna Uí Mhaoil Chonaire', *Éigse* 11 (1964–6), 288–90; TCD MS 1391, part III, p. 79.
[41] Proinsias Mac Cana, 'An archaism in Irish poetic tradition', *Celtica* 8 (1968), 174–81 at 175.

no longer be guaranteed. North Connacht had been at the centre of learning and manuscript production since the very beginning of the bardic era, a position reflected by some of the material included in a manuscript compiled at the eastern limits of the late-medieval Gaelic world, the Book of the Dean of Lismore. Now, in the wake of the Williamite wars, and with the introduction of the Penal Laws, that pre-eminence was gradually coming to an end. In future, one of the few productive areas of the *seanchas* so beloved of Tadhg and his colleagues would be in providing evidence of noble lineage for Wild Geese seeking commissions in foreign armies, scions of families who had once been strongholds of bardic patronage.

Tadhg's most caustic comments on the new order are to be read in lines inscribed by him in 1697 in a space in yet another *duanaire*, that of the family of Mac Suibhne Fánad, which was one of the many manuscripts in his library, and which may have come into his possession via the Ó Domhnaill family of Larkfield who had a marriage connection with Clann Suibhne Fánad.[42] Lamenting the fact that, following the obliteration by foreigners of native families such as Clann Suibhne, the *anuasal* ('ignoble') were now regarded as *uasal* ('noble'), Ó Rodaighe says:

> acht, ata seanchus na mbachlach anois na ccinnlitribh, agus na cceapuibh, ria seanchus sleachta Eimhir, Ir et Eireamhoin, agus Iotha mhic Breogain fós. acht biodh oramsa nach bfuil i nEirinn aonchairt ag cothughadh sheancuis na ndaor nuaibhrioch ndobheusach úd, óir atáid na cartacha agumsa agus ag morán eile ar ndoigh, agus gabhuim orum nach bfuil an bachlachsheanchus úd ionnta.[43]
>
> *But, the history of the fools is now in capital letters and block* [*letters*] *as opposed to the history of the seed of Éimhear, Íor and Éireamhón, and of Íoth son of Breóghan moreover. But I hold that there is no written source in Ireland that supports the history of those haughty, ill-mannered low-lives, since I have the sources, as many others do indeed, and I swear that such fools' history is not to be found in them.*

Had he been able to see the future, Tadhg might have drawn consolation from the fact that the gap between the last of the bardic schools at the end of the seventeenth century and the formation of the new learned societies of the Irish enlightenment 100 years later would be bridged by the figure of Charles O'Conor of Belanagare, Co. Roscommon. Intimate in his youth with members of the families of Ó Maoil Chonaire, Ó Duibhgeannáin and Ó Coirnín – all names associated with the Ó Rodaighe circle – O'Conor was thoroughly conversant with the older genealogies and with bardic literature. His traditional education in Roscommon took place in the milieu of bardic learning that was still current during his formative years. His further education in Dublin brought him into contact with the newly-established circle of learning with which Newby and Mac Cruitín, mentioned above, were associated. Another influence was that of Toirdhealbhach Ó Cearbhalláin, who belongs chiefly to the *amhrán* tradition, but whose compositions are an indication of the diffuse variety of Gaelic and Ascendancy patronage available in North Connacht and beyond in the early eighteenth century. Charles also numbered among his acquaintances Aodh Ó Domhnaill of Larkfield, and the poet and harper Cathaoir Mac Cába, one of whose poems was included in Aodh's manuscript, G 167.[44] Such influences laid the basis for much of the activity of O'Conor's adult life. In particular it informed his collection of important Irish manuscripts, which he

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[42] Paul Walsh, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill* 2 vols (Dublin, 1958, 1957), ii, p. 149.
[43] RIA MS 475 (24 P 25), p. 140b30–39; cf. Paul Walsh, *Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne: an account of the Mac Sweeney families in Ireland, with pedigrees* (Dublin, 1920), p. lxiii.
[44] Tomás Ó Cléirigh, 'A poem by Cathaoir Mac Cába' in John Ryan (ed.), *Féil-sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill . . . Essays and studies presented to Professor Eoin MacNeill* (Dublin, 1940), pp 89–92. Donal O'Sullivan, *Carolan*: *the life times and music of an Irish harper* 2 vols (London, 1958), i, pp 59–72.

read and annotated throughout his lifetime in much the same way that Tadhg Ó Rodaighe had done a generation or two before him.[45]

Bardic poetry continued to be composed in the eighteenth century, albeit sporadically, in attenuated forms, and divorced from any sense of a bardic class-system. The recycling of poems is likewise to be found occasionally during that time: for instance, in the case of the fragment of a lament for one Piaras de Léis, which is thought to be a recycled elegy for a member of the same family, Seaán de Léis.[46] A poem in loose *deibhidhe* metre, beginning *Dlighthior d'fhile ann gach tráith*, was composed by Aindrias Mac Cruitín for Domhnall Ó Súilleabháin of Co. Kerry and later recycled by Mac Cruitín for an Ó Briain of Corbally, Co. Clare.[47] Another example presents in the case of Cathal Ó Luinín, *alias* Charles Lynegar, where recycling, together with borrowing from a third poem, is evident in two short eulogies of John Hall (*c*. 1709) and George St George (*c*. 1727–35) respectively.[48] Dr Simms refers to this case as Ó Luinín's 'scissors-and-paste method', while citing David Greene's observation that 'Lynegar felt that his patrons' taste in Irish verse was unlikely to be discriminating'.[49] Greene's judgement may be somewhat harsh, as Ó Luinín's pieces appear harmless and light compared with the Mac an Bhaird poems mentioned earlier. As strict bardic verse became more and more a thing of the past, however, perhaps discrimination and taste – on all sides – were indeed casualties of the disappearing art.

It is possible that an insight into the phenomenon of recycling can be provided by an unlikely source from the end of a much later tradition. In 1912 the musicologist and collector of folksongs, Charlotte Milligan Fox, on a field trip to Co. Waterford, sought out the poet Robert Weldon of Kilrossanty. Commonly regarded as the last of the traditional poets of the area, Weldon was taken by surprise, but promised to have material ready for recording if she returned a few days hence. On her return, she was rewarded with some traditional songs which the poet performed for her in front of his assembled neighbours. Mrs Milligan Fox, in her record of this meeting, adds the following:

> Finally the old man said, smiling, 'I've got something for you that you'll never find anywhere else, travel where you may, and that's a ''Welcome'' for you, composed by myself. He then asked to have a fresh roll put on the phonograph, and recited a charming welcome, in which he greeted me as 'the lady of the bright face'; and after other compliments, bade me welcome to his house. Needless to say, this met with great applause from the other listeners and expressions of gratitude from me.[50]

It is a moot point whether Mrs Milligan Fox's gratitude would have been any the less had she known that to make her poem of welcome the poet had remodelled another poem that had been composed by him six years earlier in honour of Fr Patrick Dinneen, with only the minimum alterations to take account of the change in gender.[51] It may not be too far-fetched to surmise that, more than 200 years earlier, the gratitude of Ruaidhrí Ó hEadhra would have

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[45] Nollaig Ó Muraíle, 'The role of Charles O'Conor of Belanagare in the Irish manuscript tradition' in Ó Macháin, *Book of the O'Conor Don*, pp 226–44.
[46] Brian Ó Cuív, 'A recycled elegy?', *Celtica* 18 (1986), 117–23.
[47] Ó Súilleabháin poem in RIA MS 249 (23 N 13), pp 130–33 (and elsewhere); recycled copy in author's hand in NLI Inchiquin Estate Record Book (accession 5819), pp 247–8.
[48] Cosslett Quin, 'A manuscript written in 1709 by Charles Lynegar for John Hall, vice-provost of Trinity College, Dublin', *Hermathena* 53 (1939), 127–37. David Greene, 'A dedication and poem by Charles Lynegar', *Éigse* 5 (1945–7), 4–7.
[49] Katharine Simms, 'Charles Lynegar, the Ó Luinín family and the study of Seanchas' in T. Bernard, D. Ó Cróinín and K. Simms (eds), '*A miracle of learning': studies in manuscripts and Irish learning. Essays in honour of William O'Sullivan* (Aldershot etc., 1998), pp 266–83 at 276.
[50] C. Milligan Fox, 'Folk song collecting in Co. Waterford', *Journal of the Irish Folk Song Society* 12 (1912), 9–30 at 11.
[51] Pádraig Ó Macháin, *Riobard Bheldon*: *amhráin agus dánta* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1995), pp 29–31.

been just as readily extended to Pádraig Óg Mac an Bhaird, and perhaps with equally blissful ignorance.