The Caldron of Poesy

P. L. HENRY

University College, Galway

The composition which bears this rather apt editorial title survives in a single heavily-glossed copy in the great legal codex H. 3. 18 (c. 1500) from which it was edited (without translation) in Anecd. v. 22–8. The Caldron of Poesy [CP] is one of the rare pieces of literature from which we might expect enlightenment about the origins of the Celtic or, at least, the Gaelic muse. What we do know of the ancient poetic process is based on modern accounts and on the evidence of modern Bardic poems buttressed by a few hints from the early literature. Our hopes of enlightenment from archaic sources will be tempered by the knowledge that the terms in which archaic Irish poetry is communicated are relatively inaccessible to us, as indeed they must be, if they represent the technical and professional output of a learned and exclusive craft for their members in, say, the sixth and seventh centuries of our era.

The celebrated Gundestrup Caldron (c. 1 c. B.C.) which figures divinities presiding over ceremonial scenes, illustrates the ritual character of the Caldron in Celtic tradition. It is a symbol of Otherworld plenty; not material plenty only, although this looms large in the tradition. The Otherworld Caldron of plenty is associated with the head of the Gaelic pantheon, the Dagda lit. Good-god. It is said that no company ever went dissatisfied from it. A single thrust of his fleshfork into the Caldron is sufficient for each guest; he is allotted a just and proper share. This characteristic is a great convenience for Cormac mac Airt who is concerned about the proper grading of society. Cormac had a caldron of this kind installed in the great banqueting hall at Tara (Tech Midchunta) and it allotted to each guest a portion in keeping with his place in the hierarchy. The five great Bruidne or 'Hostels' of Ireland, each with its Caldron of Plenty, appear to be mythical representations of the Otherworld Banqueting Hall. Underlying this whole development of caldron symbolism is its material function as a significant domestic utensil and

3 Cf. RC xii. 58.
4 Cf. RC xxi. 314, 397.
5 Ir. Texte, iii. 187.
6 Ibid.
7 Cf. Crith Gablach, 174–5, 197, 549, etc.
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the hospitaller Buchet of Leinster is himself called a Caldron of Hospitality (coire féile).\footnote{Cf. Fingal Róndin, 472 (ed. D. Greene, Dublin, 1953).}

The supernatural character of the Caldron is manifest too in its use as an ordeal. An accused person who dips his hand into its boiling water remains unscathed if innocent.\footnote{Ir. Texte, iii. 192.}

Two other varieties of caldron have special reference to the poetic order. We hear of a caldron of greed (coire sainte), a collecting pot which was obviously felt to be over-plied. Then there is the caldron of judgement which is described in the following terms in the Bretha Nemed text in Ériu, xiii. 26-9 ff.

An ecaula coire breth? Did he hear the judgement of the caldron?
Bru con-berbha búas, The womb that boils up knowledge;
Con-berbha bretha The womb-caldron of judges
Brúchaire breithemhan; boils judgements;
5 Buanchaire A lasting caldron
As ná berar úidhbhreth, from which udder (i.e. worthless) judgement
Na oimbrath, nor raw judgement is borne;
In-oimblígh flor, Into which he milks truth,
I bfairben gaol, In which he smites falsehood;
10 Gaibidh dhe triochtach He takes it from it thirty-fold
Go treisibh do nemthibh; with powers for the privileged;\footnote{As legal terms trichtach and frese denote periods of 30 and 3 days respectively. In view of the allusive manner of archaic Irish verse this legal connotation cannot be excluded here.}
Naomhchaire A holy caldron
Con-dáile oisgura fri hégsi... which the ignorant share with the learned...

Verse 2 above tallies with CP III. 27-8 (infra): Suarbru(d) i mberbhach bunad cach sofis 'the noble womb in which is boiled the basis of all poetic knowledge'. The content of v. 9 above reappears in CP gloss 24\footnote{For Preiddu Amnon cf. R. S. Loomis, Wales & the Arthurian Legend, 121 (Cardiff, 1956); for the pair dadeni cf. P. Mac Cana, Branwen Daughter of Llyr, 50 (Cardiff, 1958); for Gwion Bach/Taliesin cf. I. Williams, Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry, 61 (Dublin, 1954), Chwedl Taliesin, Caerdydd, 1957.} coire a ro-iadha[d] rogoe 'the caldron in which great falsehood was confined' and also in the etymological gloss 22\footnote{Cf. goriath . . . . i. ro iad rogái . . . . it (viz. the caldron) shut in great falsehood'. In its subject matter, treatment and general tone the Caldron of Poesy appears to belong to the same school as the Bretha Nemed tract.}

Welsh tradition, though less accessible in its details, is hardly less significant than Irish for the investigation of our subject. In the poem Preiddu Amnon\footnote{Welsh tradition, though less accessible in its details, is hardly less significant than Irish for the investigation of our subject. In the poem Preiddu Amnon there is an account of an expedition by Arthur to Caer Siddi (cf. Ir. sid 'fairyland') and reference is made to the wonderful caldron of the lord of the Otherworld. A feature of Branwen is the peir dadeni or caldron of resuscitation which like the charmed well of Cath Maige Tuired serves to revive warriors for the morrow's battles. But it is the caldron of Cyrridwen,} there is an account of an expedition by Arthur to Caer Siddi (cf. Ir. sid 'fairyland') and reference is made to the wonderful caldron of the lord of the Otherworld. A feature of Branwen is the peir dadeni or caldron of resuscitation which like the charmed well of Cath Maige Tuired serves to revive warriors for the morrow's battles. But it is the caldron of Cyrridwen,
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with its legend of Gwion Bach/Taliesin deriving his poetic powers in a manner reminiscent of the Irish Finn mac Cuailg, which is particularly noteworthy for its different treatment of our theme: while the *Caldron of Poesy* is essentially allegorical, *Chwedd Taliesin* is nothing if not realistic. The sorceress Cyrridwen seeks to counterbalance the exceeding and repellent ugliness of her son Morfran so that he may have some chance of getting on in the world, and she decides to foy a caldron of inspiration and knowledge for him. The chosen herbs are boiled for a year and a day with Gwion Bach attending them and the blind man Morda stoking the fire. As the fateful moment arrives the fatigued Cyrridwen sleeps and the three drops spring out on Gwion Bach’s finger. He thrusts his finger in his mouth and immediately becomes aware of all that has been, that is and that will befall. Whereupon he flees, with the sorceress in hot pursuit. They change shape several times until finally he becomes a grain of wheat and she a hen which swallows it. When nine months later he is born of her she cannot find it in her heart to kill him, on account of his beauty; so she exposes him on the sea and he is found and becomes Taliesin the prince of bards.

This brings us to our text, the *Caldron of Poesy*. It appears possible to distinguish four chronological strata in it:

(a) The ‘rhetorics’ of Sections I, III and IV.
(b) The prose commentary of Section II and the ‘etymological’ gloss between III and IV.
(c) The glosses, which can neither be ignored nor blindly accepted. We refer to these by page and number in *Anecd*. v. 22 ff.
(d) The chiefly orthographic traces of later scribes.¹

Strata (a) and (b) are glossed equally and it could be contended that they represent one stratum only. In answering such questions one is handicapped by the absence of variant forms from other recensions and by the lack of rhyming words and syllabic metres.

The ‘rhetorics’ are marked by parallelism allied to the absence of link-words and definite article; prepositionless datives;² morphologic alternants in series;³ archaic and specialized forms;⁴ one possible example of undiphthongized ē and ò;⁵ also by unique technical terms for caldron indices while in communication with the muse.⁶ Unusual word order⁷ is not a pronounced feature; the pointed inventories of III–IV do not pro-

¹ e.g. dh, gh for the voiced fricatives; in the glosses mh, bh also occur; g(h) is written for dh in *berigh* IV. 17, *sigiaib* II. 21, *foghalter* II. 7. Cf. also g- beside c- in *cach*, passim; -ea- for -e- in *searnar* III. 29 (.: *searnar* I. 23), *indeitear* I. 9, and in glosses *g*2 *geal*, 2613 *safsasa* (.: *deighfesa* 2613, *fesa* 2613 etc).
² Cf. I. 8, III. 2–4, III. 22–5.
³ Cf. IV. 2–10.
⁷ Cf. I. 15 *Demum do uath*.
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mote it nor do they lend themselves to tmesis. The sum of these features points to a seventh-century date of composition.

From the prose account of Section II. we learn that poetic inspiration appears in three forms symbolized by the caldrons of Maintenance or Sustenance (coire goiriath), Motion (c. érma), and Knowledge (c. sois), representing three successive stages of the votary’s progress. The c. goiriath is said to be born in youth to a person in the position facing upwards (fáen), marking the beginning of service. Later, the c. érma is born to him in a tilted position (de theóib), marking a phase of development. Finally, the c. sois is born to him in the inverted position (for béolu), denoting a phase of full development. The caldron positions are clearly symbolic and they seem to reflect a druidic terminology for bodily postures during ritual and poetic practices. The position facing upwards (fáen) is the posture approved for students of the late Bardic schools during the process of composition; the ‘Stone upon their Belly’ ensured that the posture would be maintained. In Cormac’s account (Y 756) of the poet seeking enlightenment through Imbas forosnai, ‘Knowledge which illumines’, care is taken that the posture of the medium is not disturbed. It seems virtually certain that the physical posture in question here is prostration (for béolu), which he shares with the votary of the caldron of Knowledge (coire sois) and later with the cleric in the characteristically Irish devotional posture known as sléchtan.

Goiriath of v. 1 we take as v.n. of guirid, goirid ‘warms’; compare the OIr. form gorad. The ‘warming’ metaphor is prominent in the language of law and religion, so for instance mac gor, ‘dutiful son’, and goire, like Skt. tápas ‘heat’ → ‘religious observance, piety’. Linked to this is the epithet ‘sun’ applied to religious luminaries, e.g. Stephen is called ‘a fair sun that warms thousands’ (caingriann guíres milí, Fél. Dec. 26); and Mael Ruain is the great sun on Meath’s south plain’ who can assuage the heart of his pilgrims (Ibid. Prol. 225–8). It is not surprising, then, that the sun is seen as the source of poetic inspiration in CP, glosses 25, 26, 27: (Fáilte) fri tascuir n-imhais iar mBoind no greitheine .i. boilec i mbaullinge (leg. imme, folngi) grian for na lúibip 7 cide caithes iat bid donac (leg. dán aca: O’ Davoren, Glossary, § 1569), ‘Joy at the assembly of poetic knowledge along the Boyne, or greithine, i.e. a protuberance on herbs due to the sun, and whoever consumes them receives the poetic gift’; 26 in bru(dh) i m-berbhthar bunad cacha deghfesa .i. imhas na Boindí sretnaighther iaram co dligthech ‘the womb in which the basis of all good knowledge is boiled, i.e. poetic inspiration of the Boyne which is distributed according to rule thereafter’; 27 i. nongluaisi imbas Bóindi no gréne .i. in coiri, ‘poetic inspiration from the Boyne or the sun activates it, namely the Caldrón’.

Of the other two caldrons, the coire so(f)is ‘Caldron of Knowledge’ (I. 22 etc.) is transparent, the epithet being compounded of so– ‘good’ and fis ‘knowledge’, also written sous, soas ‘poetic knowledge’. In coire érma ‘Caldron of Motion’ (IV. 1 etc.) the epithet is gen. of érimm (n. n-stem)
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‘course, progress’; or it represents the new gen. of erma when this form became nominative; cf. the variants ermai, ermoi, III. 36–7. The ‘etymological’ explanation of erma here between Sections III and IV appears to bring the idea of ‘motion’ into relief, particularly ‘turning’ (impud, v.n. of im-soi ‘turns’). This is a technical term denoting the onset of creative activity as an adjustment of the caldron. The passage in question, with the glosses, shows how such successful activity can result in a higher status for the poet. To what extent, it may be asked, does the association of like-sounding words such as soi = so-at ‘according to poetic art’ and -soi ‘turns’, sous ‘poetic lore’ and soud ‘turning’ influence the course of the explanation in glosses and prose?

The language of this prose section does not contain any ancient forms. Its later forms1 can be remedied at times by comparison with earlier variants2 and by palaeographically minor adjustments.3 Mr. confusion of vowels in unstressed endings4 may merely reflect a later scribal phase, as do -nd in words with old final -mn5 in Section I and mbr- for OIr. mr- in mbrgtaíar, of IV. 3. Earlier forms are: asherat II. 2; imidhuit II. 14; gl. impos e; in tan dogfoll II. 2: gl. in tan toighlenus faghlenus; condatrocrharar II. 21 (cf. Ml. 48 C 28 contorcrhata); the form consofis, taken up in DIL: C 413.61–2 on the basis of Anec. vv. 25.2 and 25.10, and referred there to souis, is a sao iho. The MS reads coinsofis, which, like coin in Anecd. v. 26.1, is to be read coire|coiri (sofis); caite ‘in what consists’? II. 5; ina (labartha, firta): OIr. inna II. 25. Nasalization in acc. and neuter occurs in fri tascor n-imais II. 20, fri diged n-ece II. 20, MS. nige nansmain II. 2. Relatively later forms are adverisative acht II. 4, 26 (rather than inge); the numerals da (for dl) II. 17, ceithre (for cethóir) II. 18; and relative olsodhar II. 3, a glossator’s word reminiscent of the St. Gall glosses. The form immorro [sic. Anecd. v. 24.8, 25.9] is inconclusive since the suspension could have been expanded to immurgi. Taken together, all the foregoing features suggest an OIr. base upon which later scribes have modernized.

This impression is reinforced by the relation of the Section in question to the glosses. Although the glossator may be influenced at times by the forms of his text, his aim is to modernize, and the forms he uses—unlike those of the poetry very often—can be taken at face value. That the glosses in general are not OIr. is apparent, e.g. from relative endings added to prototonic forms of compound verbs (as impos 2419, iarimpos 2410, 269, 277, toighlenus, faghlenus 2328, fuirghius 2729). That they are not earlier...

1 e.g. genithir II. 5: OIr. genitir; cethir II. 15: OIr. cethir; occunda corpu II. 2: OIr. -aib.
2 e.g. araill II. 2 by alaile II. 4; Orthographic foghalter II. 7 by fodaliler II. 9;
Morphology: imogholtii II. 7 by its gloss a n-seitoird (gen.).
3 e.g. condirnimpait II. 12 by sa, imsoe III. 37, imidhui II. 14.
4 -a for -ae, -ai is found in OIr.: cf. deoda, deoda II. 24, dena II. 1, 1f. Cf. also coire erma II. 6, 8, 12, erma III. 37, ermoi III. 36. Mr. developments are -a for -a as in fira II. 3; -e for -ei: bairne II. 19, faide, traichteare II. 24; -i for -e: coiri II. 9; -e for -ius: daine II. 1, 4, 7.
5 e.g. broind I. 3, inand I. 10, coitiend I. 25.
than the eleventh century is indicated by four instances of the pres. ind.
sg. ending -enn (ngenenn 24, ndenand 25, dofaircenn 26, conadibdan 27). Five instances of analytic forms of the verb (with sé), one of the infixed
pronoun properly used (nonghaisi 27), five of the independent pronoun, and one of the prepositional pronoun air (OIr. fair) 25, in the company of
pretonic for (never ar) together point to the latter part of the twelfth
century. Comparisons such as imidhsu II. 14 and its gloss impos é (2419);
cachlauduir niadtuilthi an II. 4 and its gloss cach dara duine nochon adtothid
ann é (244) reflect two rather distinct phases of the language. For all these
reasons the prose Section in general may be assigned to the later part of
the OIr. period. (See further below.)

What we have in the prose Section is obviously a cleric’s comment upon
the oral tradition of the Gaelic muse as given here by Amargein. It trans-
spires, however, that the cleric is familiar with both traditions, religious
and lay. He insinuates himself into his subject by way of the body/soul
distinction and relates the gift of poetry to physical heredity, in keeping
with the aphorism which describes the poet as mac filed ocus ua araili ‘the
son of a poet and grandson of another’. Then comes his exegesis of the
three Caldrons, a technical aspect to which we refer above. This portion
he concludes by remarking that the votary receives his inspiration in its
prone position from the Caldron of Motion until sadness or gladness turn
it (comidnimpeith) brón nó (f)áilte). The suggestion appears to be that
an event of personal significance which brings about a change of mood is
what chiefly marks the progress of the practitioner from stage to stage.
Opposed to this is the adventitious disturbance of the poet when seeking
enlightenment. According to the ritual outlined by Cormac in the article
Imbas forosnai, ‘Knowledge, which illuminates’, the poet prays to his gods
that his sleep of enlightenment may not be disturbed, and persons are
appointed to ensure this (bítheair oc forairiarn n-imparra 7 arnach
tairmesca nech).

The clerical commentator of the Caldron of Poesy then proceeds to a
characteristic sub-division of sorrow and joy under the general rubric
human/divine. Sadness (brón) can be on account of home (eolchaire),
people (cumu), wife (é) and God (ailthre ar Dia). And though these four
aspects of sorrow have their external manifestation, he adds, their effects
are internal. This remark helps us in a general way to appreciate the
relation between caldron positions and types of inspiration (poetry) which
the tract proposes to us.

The first of the joyful human states which follow, lùth éoit futhachtâ,
refers presumably to the satisfaction experienced by the husband at the
jealousy of his wife’s lover and is accordingly a foil to the jealousy mentioned
in the previous section as a sorrow. The other three items have to do with

1 Morroidid sé 23, dobeir sé 23 (2411; 2619), elligid sé 26.
2 Cf. 244, 2419, 2618 (é); 257, 2619 (iut).
3 Cf. Archiv für celt. Lexikogr., III 139. 35.
the professional life of the poet; the satisfaction of surmounting sickness and hardship during his course and of qualifying successfully as a poet; the feeling of pleasure deriving from the proper application of the rules of poetry; and delight at the inspiration conveyed by the fair fruit of the nine hazels of Segais in fairyland. The description of this classic source of poetic inspiration is reminiscent of a passage in Togail Bruidne Da Derga and Cúilthch ac Olwen.²

On the whole the onset of divine grace in the next paragraph is seen from the perspective of poetic inspiration. It turns caldron (and devotee?) face upwards as a prelude to progress. Profane prophets and miracle workers are included as recipients of the divine gift beside clerics (faide deoda 7 doenda) which reveals a significantly liberal attitude. In point of fact while the pilgrim (deorad De) was expected to perform miracles as a matter of course (cf. A.L., v. 16.11), poets were also known to perform them (cf. AU 1024, FM iv. 818.8). This supernatural sanction behind the two orders is ultimately what explains the recourse to Church and poets as guarantors of a treaty between O'Donnell and O'Connor-Sligo as late as 1547. The present paragraph of the Caldron of Poesy tends to suggest that clerics and poets made common cause from an early stage. The final sentence of the paragraph re-echoes the previous remark on varieties of sadness in 15–16 and is obviously a structural marker. It then attributes the 'rhetoric' upon the Caldron of Motion following to Néde mac Adnai, who, incidentally, had only reached the grade of ánshruth at the time of his contention with the poet Fírcherine.

It cannot be denied that the text of Caldron of Poesy as we have it appears to represent a collaboration between native poet and Christian cleric such as could arise in the context of the clerical mediation of native oral literature. To go further and suggest that the cleric was the poet is hardly warranted; it is on the whole unlikely. On the other hand the cleric's attitude to poetry was clearly positive, and this can help us to get over certain difficulties: the categorizing of sadness and gladness in II. 14–20 with its religious ingredient is followed by a vibrant passage on poetry in II. 20–3. It might be objected that the two do not join smoothly, that they are not in harmony, nor of a comparable tone; that they represent fused contributions from different sources. Passage II. 20–3 has the same kind of immediacy in regard to its arcane subject matter as the 'rhetorical' ¹

¹ Cf. Immram Brain (Meyes) I 52: Is bhióan|hulí hí folá luímne|condaróis iar tóchtu|inna dréchtu imm druimnne, 'All is unending in a (student) cloak of rough cloth; in due course you (too) will reach the final part of your studies'.

² Cf. one of the bounties of Conaire's reign in TBDD 184–6: mes co gláins cach fognair 7 imbas for Bliain 7 Boind i medón in mí mithmon cacha bládna 'mast to the knees every autumn and poetic inspiration upon the rivers Bush and Boyne every year'. In the White Book Mabinogion (ed. J. G. Evans) the passage describing Culhwch riding to Arthur's court figures the speed of his thrusting sword: bydei kyns nor galtshin kynsaf or konyn kyt y llawr pan uis unoaf 3 gwlyth mór maeuain. 'It would be swifter than the swiftest dewdrop from the stalk to the ground when the dew would be heaviest in the month of June.' Here the relation is stylistic rather than thematic. Cf. Studia Celtica, iii. 32.
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Sections I, III–IV, and also something of their manner. Its forms too suggest that it may be the earliest segment of the prose Section. The segment following, II. 23–6, on ‘divine joy’ (fáilte deoda) could be a clerical foil or counterpoise to it.

There is a further consideration which suggests an eighth-century date for Section II, namely the attitude it reveals in lines 14–27 towards life, religious and lay, and specifically towards Sadness (brón). The general attitude may be described as relatively relaxed and humane, inclusive rather than exclusive, wise and cultured rather than morbidly or overly ascetic. In these respects it shows an affinity with the early Alphabet of Piety (Apgitir Chríobaid), which includes a gnomic ingredient in its make-up. In sharp contrast is the rigorous, codified stance of the Irish Penitential (Ériu, vii. 121 ff.) and other tracts of the Tallaght school, composed c. 800. The Irish Penitential deals in a mechanical way with ‘worldly sadness’ (doguilsi domanda) and ‘godly sadness’ (doguils deoda) under the heading Tristitia (Cap. vi), applying an unspecified ‘spiritual joy’ as antidote. The inspired and extensive account of human and divine Joy (fáilte deoda 7 f. dàna) in CP belongs to a different—and no doubt earlier—world.

On the other hand the curious and interesting sensitiveness to physical postures during performance of the particular exercises is a feature which CP and the Penitential Tracts have in common: so, for example, § 23 of the Old Irish De Arreis (Ériu, xix. 62) enjoins ‘365 Paters standing with both arms extended towards heaven and without the elbows ever touching the sides, together with fervent concentration on God. And voice does not come into sound. And to recite the Beati in a stooping position facing the ground (i cromsaim 7 du gnais fri talmain) with thy two arms laid flat by thy sides (7 do da laim foena latu da theob). Or the whole body is stretched out along the ground face downwards (ina roguth iarain talam fora beolu) and both arms laid flat by the sides (7 in dilaim ladi da theob).’ This particular vigil is said to be recommended by Patrick, Colum Cille and ten other named saints and chief sages of Ireland—so highlighting its native and traditional affinities. Furthermore, § 25 of this Tract proposes a commutation said to have been enjoined by Ciarán of Clonmacnoise on his successor Oenu moccu Loígse, whereby the penitent remains for three days and nights ‘in a dark house or other place where no distraction can penetrate’ (hi tich dorches no in nach maigí aili innach roich toirmec). This is reminiscent of the working poet’s darkened but familiar to us from the Clanricarde Memoirs and the Bardic poems.

A final point of general significance with which we may bring this introduction to a close is the ‘colour of poetry’, dath an ai, as it is called in the Bretha Nemed tract in Ériu, xiii. 38.4–5. It is mentioned in I. 9 below in connection with the Caldron of Maintenance. The ‘colour’ is that of the metaphorical ‘garment’ (tlachtga) of poems, particularly in the context

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1 Cf. Ériu, xix. 47 and refs. there.
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*dub i n-aethar, brec i focrar, find i mmoltar*, lit. 'black, in which (one) is satirized, speckled, in which (one) is warned, white, in which (one) is praised.' The warning is for failure to pay the lawful fee for a poem rendered.1

STRUCTURE AND TEXT

The text has certain structural markers in general conformity with the chronological divisions we have suggested above. Section I appears properly to end at v. 21 *alt mog mo coire* which forms a *dünad* (i.e. a structural closure by repetition of an opening word or words) with v. 1. The next five verses on the Caldron of Knowledge may be an addition modelled on the opening of Section III; they lack *dünad* and so appear formally incomplete. Verse-linking alliteration is regular in them though not in what precedes. It may be observed that *Ceist* in the beginning of Section II would link up with *coire* in v. 21.

The prose of Section II shows structural joints at lines 15 and 27; inverse statements being made by minimal modification of the same sentence.

Section III begins and ends with *Arcaín coire erma(i)*. The gloss on *ermai* following may owe its inclusion in the text to the fact that it links alliteratively with the end of Section III—as the opening of IV does, incidentally. The opening *e- of the final line of Section IV (echtraíd fri borba)* may possibly suffice for *dünad* with *erma* in the first line of this Section. Verse-linking alliteration is almost unwavering in Section III (exceptions: vv. 12, 20, 35).

Section IV has a few cases of verse-linking alliteration but two-thirds of it depend on parallelism between 2-member verses which alliterate internally, the members being mostly morphologic alternants of the one verb, in pres. ind. 3 sg. active/passive.

The units of Sections III–IV are what we call elsewhere *basic verses* (i.e. with two stresses each); the only exceptions are III. 1, 36, 26.

Fundamentally, Section I is built upon the verse of two or three stresses, e.g. verses 6–9 (2 stresses), verses 5, 16–17, 21 (3 stresses). The two kinds are combined in verse 2 and the *basic verse* is doubled in verses 1, 3–4; semantically, syntactically and otherwise our presentation of verses 1–2 (as long lines) may appear preferable, but it would also seem possible to present the short verses uncombined, in these cases.

We have compromised on the glosses by including and translating a selection from Section I (only): Glosses 1–19, 26–8 (= *Anecd.* v. 221–2311, 2310–2330). Hence, and for convenience of reference, we refer to the glosses in general by page and number of *Anecd.* v. 22–8.

Modifications of the *Anecd.* transcript introduced below are: a fuller

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signalling of expansions; the ligature æ (rather than ae) for the MS. ligature in several places, e.g. Anecd. 23.2 (read) ðæm, and glosses 22.8, 23.5-8. In the case of Anecd. 24.14 coimrerma the MS. has coimrerma, which permits a more ready emendation to coire rerna. As pointed out in Note 1 to Section IV (infra) the Absolute and Conjunct endings are not kept apart; however, in Section III. 14, 16-19, as interpreted, the verbs fegtar, cengar, siluithir, somnîth(ær), særthar show regular conj. forms. For Anecd. 27.9 innsce read n-insce; for 27.2 faillsigther, 27.6 moaithir we read -iër. For Anecd. 26.9 modaib read modhaib, for 27.1 imbas read imbas.

We have also found some extra instances of vowel length marked in the MS.

As the text has not previously been brought to the level of comprehension, it has seemed to us best to treat it conservatively. We tamper as little as possible with the MS. readings, indicating as necessary how forms are interpreted for the purpose of translation. The only modifications undertaken are capitalization, punctuation and word division (excluding the analysis of verbal forms). Lenition is left unmarked unless marked in the MS., as also vowel length: the use of the macron in Anecd. is not altogether felicitous, cf. 22.16 eòr and the -i diphthongs (e.g. 23.2 -thöib).

Mo coire¹ coir, goiriath² gor,
Ronfr Dia dam a duilib dem-
rib,³
Dlicht⁴ saer saerus broind
Belra beil bruchtus uad.⁴

5 Os me Amargen Glungel,⁶
Gairglas,⁷ gretiath,⁸
Gnîm mo goriath
Crothaib condelib,⁹
Indeithear dath;
10 Nad inand¹⁰ airlither Dia
Do gach ðæm,
Dethoiib,¹¹ istoiib,¹² uastoiib,¹³
Nemtso,¹⁴ lethso,¹⁵
Lanso,¹⁶ do hÉbir Dunson,
15 Denum¹⁷ do uath,
Aupsaib,¹⁸ ibli ollmarib,¹⁹
Moth, i toth, i treth,
I n-arinn, i forsail,
I n-dinen disail;
20 Slicht asinnither
Alt mog mo coire.
Aracain²⁰ coire sofis
Sernar dilged cacha dana²¹
Dia moigít main²²

My fine caldron (of) dutiful maintenance
which God has given me from out the
mysterious elements,
noble decision that magnifies the womb
which pours forth the oral language of
poetry.

I am Amargein Glúngel
with livid shank and grey hair.
My caldron of maintenance serves
with appropriate forms
(in which) colour is made known.
God does not ordain equally
for everyone:
laterally, face down, face up,
no poetic lore, a half measure,
a full measure for Éber and Donn
to make poetry
with many mighty spells,
(in) masculine, in feminine, in neuter,
in the n-sign, in the s-sign,
in the d-sign;
the passage is declared
in metre by the devotee of my caldron.
What the caldron of poetic science chants
is ordained as the law of every poem
by which they amass treasure
THE CALDRON OF POESY

25 Morus cach ceird coiteend,
which magnifies every public craft.
One constructs a poem.

1 ò. fil acum, 'i.e. which I have'. 3 ò. goriath ò. gar damh in gach iath ò. ro iad rogarí, 'i.e. goriath, i.e. near to me in every land, i.e. it shut in great falsehood'. 3 ò. is maith donuc Dia damh a diamraib na ndule no omaicedd (leg. im aiced) ro érnestad damh in sloindoed saeris sin a diamraib na ndul, 'i.e. It is well that God has provided me from the mysteries of the elements or in respect of the materials. From the mysterious regions of the elements he has granted me the utterance which ennobles it'. 4 ò. aicthe ò. cendfochras. (The glossator thinks that dlacht stands for slicht by a licence known as cendfochras whereby the initial or final consonant of a word may be altered for arcane or etymological purposes.) 5 is ed sloinnes in saer ò. saaraid co hussis in belra aiddhdis isa breid i mbid, so is maith cach broins i mbidh in belrad aiddhsaid ò. teibernighs aircetal uaithe 'What the word saer means is i.e. it ennobles the very sweet language in whomsoever's womb/breast it is; or good is every womb/breast in which is the very sweet language, i.e. that poetry gushes from.' 6 acata in glun geal 'Who has the bright knee'. 7 colpa iarna creched no ictá in colpa gis iarna creghadh 'cauterized shank or who has a green cauterized shank'. 8 liath a ulcha 'greybearded'. 9 is ed gnas mo coire, aineis na heisce for a-naisnedhther na crotha iarldha ò. fud 7 dib 7 brece, no dath molta for molad 'What my caldron does is to declare the poetry on (i.e. in) which the different colours (of poetry) are expressed, i.e. white and black and speckled, or the colour of praise on praise (poetry).'
10 ò. nochon inann doibh Dia do cach aineis na heisce, 'i.e. God does not grant equally to everyone the declaration of poetry'. 11 ò. lethclien, 'i.e. half-inclined'. 12 ò. for beolu, 'i.e. prone'. 13 fém 'supine'. 14 ò. in tan is for beolu ò. in n-és Dá, 'i.e. when prone, i.e. in regard to the people of God'. 15 ò. lethclien ò. i n-és bair[d]he 7 rand, 'i.e. half-inclined, i.e. in respect of bards and versifiers'. 16 in tan is fém ò. i n-ansrothaib sofis 7 aircetal 'When supine, i.e. in regard to the dasnraith of knowledge and poetry.' 17 ò. jenmn a aircetal do Ebr 7 do Dund co taisneabhairdairdh, 'i.e. while Eber and Donn were composing with various manifestations.' 18 ò. co taisneabhairdairdh, 'i.e. with various manifestations.' 19 ò. imat mar na ésce a bhallmarb illib na héaisi, 'i.e. the number of poetic lays from the diverse oceans of poetry'. 20 ò. frcanam-se do caire in sofess 7 I truly sing to the caldron of knowledge'. 21 ò. sreithneaitheir aliged cachal dana as 'the law of every poem is laid down from it.' 22 doibh mougad maine for cach 'It increases everyone's wealth.'

II

Ceist, ita bunadus in aircetal i n-duine ina curp fa menmain? . . . 1 Ar ni dena in corp (n)ige a-n-main. Asberat araili bid a curp, in tan dofglen occain da corp . . . o athair no senathair, oslochdain as fira, ar atha bunad in aircetal 7 int sois i cach duine corphtha, achc cachal duine ni adtuithi ann, alaile struid(gh).

5 Caite didiú bunad in aircetal 7 gach sois olchena? Ni ansa. Genithir tri coire in cach duine . . . coire goiriath 7 cur érna 7 coire sois. Coire goiriath, is e sidhe genithir foen i n-duine focchetoir; is as foghailear soos do daimh i n-ghoithoi[dh]. Coire érna, immorro, iarmob moaighd; is c[i] side (is es) genithir do teib i n-duine. Coiri sois, is e sidhe genithir for beolu 7 is as fodaiteir soes gacha dana.

10 Coire érna dono gachal duine is for beolu ata ann [i.j]. i n-és doise, lethclien i n-és bairdne 7 ranas; is fein ata a n-ansrothaib sofis 7 aire conaire, didiú. Ni dena cach oen ere4 dif[t]had. Is for a beolu ata coi[m]re [e]rm a and conidnimpai(th) bron no [f]ailte.

Ceist, cis ìr foidhrai fil forsan mbron imidhsat? Ni ansa . . . iii. colcaire, cumhha, broin eit 7 allithre ar dia, 7 is medhon aratairberat5 na cethra-so-si sasa [a] neacht forerter.

Atat dono da fodail forfaillte o n-iumpaither in coi (leg. coire) sofis . . . failte

1 asberat added over the line with an apparent omission following it.
2 olcena cinnotha airceal 'besides, as well as poetry' added above the line.
3 Cf. O'Dav. 625a. 4 Leg. eire, a by-form of der 'satire'. 5 Cf. O'Dav. 54.
THE CALDRON OF POESY

Is the origin of poetry in a person's body or in his soul? . . . For the body does not compose poetry for the soul. Others say it is in the body when it adheres to the two bodies, i.e. from father or grandfather; which is truer, for the origin of poetry and knowledge is in everyone physically, but in every second one it does not shine forth. In another it does.

What then is the origin of poetry and every other knowledge? Not difficult: three caldrons are born in everyone, a caldron of Maintenance, a caldron of Motion and a caldron of Knowledge. The caldron of Maintenance is the one that is born face up in a person at first (and) from it is learning imparted in early youth. The caldron of Motion, then, which is after it, magnifies. It is what is born on the side in a person. The caldron of Knowledge is what is born (to a person) in the prone position and from it is imparted the Learning of every poem. The caldron of Motion, then, is face downwards in every second person, i.e. in the ignorant; on its side in bards and versifiers; it is face upwards in the ansbruith of learning and legal satire. (Every single satire does not cause destruction.) Face downwards the caldron of Motion is in him until sadness or joy turn it.

How many divisions are there of the sadness which turns it? Not difficult, four: longing (for home), grief (for friends) and the pangs of jealousy and of pilgrimage for God's sake, and it is (from) within that these four bear upon him although it is brought about from outside.

There are then two divisions of joy by which the caldron of Knowledge is turned, divine and human. Of human joy there are four divisions: pleasure at the jealousy of cuckoldry (i.e. of the lover) and joy at (the restoration of) health, and at freedom from anxiety at all the goading which there is until one turns to poetry; and joy over the law of poetry after diligently applying it, and joy at the assembly of poetic knowledge offered by the nine hazels of fair fruit on Segais in fairyland, and they fell the size of a ram's head upstream along the height of the Boyne, with the speed of a racehorse (to the assembly), in the middle of the month of June once every seven years.

Divine joy, however (is) a visitation of grace to the caldron of Knowledge which turns it upwards, and from this there are divine and human prophets and

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1 deodha added above the line.
2 Words apparently omitted here should probably convey: 'Some say that the source of poetry is in the soul.'
commentators of grace and service together; and then they speak the words of grace and perform the miracles so that their words are precedents and judgements and they are the pattern of all speech. But it is from outside the caldron that they bear these to them, although it is inside that it has been brought to pass, according to what Nède mac Adna says:

III

Arcaim coire (n)erma
Intectaib raiith,
rethaib sofis,
rethaib imbais,
5 imber (n)ecna,
ellach suithi,
sruaim n-oridan,
Indogbail doer,
Domna incr,
10 Intlect ruirtheck,
Romna roiscne,
Sær-comgne,
Cæmad felmac;
Fegtar (n)dliged
15 Delither cialla,
Cengar seci,
Siluither sofis,
Sornit(h)er særir,
Særthar nach sær,
20 Arautgatar anmania,
Atfiadatar molta
Modhaib dliged,
Delichib gradh,
Glammesail saère,
25 Soiniscib suad,
Sruaun da(i)l sathe,
Særbriu(d) i m-berbthar
Bunad cach sofis
Searnr iar n-dliged,
30 Drengeir iar frichnum,
Fonluais imbach,
Imesai failte,
Faillsigthir tria bron,
Buan brigh
35 Na dibdai didiu.
Arcaim coire ermoi.

The caldron of motion sings
with insights of grace,
with currents of poetic knowledge,
with strata of poetic lore,
it brings enlightenment,
composition of learning,
a stream of honour,
elevation of the serf,
management of speech,
rapid discernment,
reddenning the eye,
noble historical lore,
cherishing students;
where laws are examined
and meanings distinguished,
one advances in musical art,
knowledge is disseminated,
nobles are exhorted,
one not noble is ennobled,
souls are refreshed,
songs of praise are told
in ways laid down,
with differences of grades,
in the pure measures of nobility,
with the fine utterances of the learned:
streams of learned laws;
the noble womb in which is boiled
the basis of all poetic knowledge
which is disposed according to rule,
and advanced to by application;
poetic inspiration activates it,
joy turns it,
it is manifested through sadness,
constant (its) power
which therefore perishes not.
The caldron of motion sings.

1 They are prophets of both divine and mundane matters, whose concern is with both divine grace and poetry (cf. Thurneysen, ZCP 19: 195, n. 2). Gloss 25th gives Cumain (al. Cuimmine) Fota, Colmán m. Lénín (al. Lénéni), and Colum Cille as examples.
THE CALDRON OF POESY

Cid in ermai? Ni ansa: erimpuð saí, no iarimpuð saí, no erna[d] imsoe .i. ernæ fo fris 7 sæire 7 airmitin iarna impu[d]. 'What is the motion? Not difficult: a fore-turning or an after-turning that it turns, or a giving that it brings about i.e. a good contribution to him and privilege and reverence after turning.'

IV

Coire erma
ernid, erenar,
Mogaithr, mbrogtair,
Biat[h]aid, biadtar,
5 Maraid, martair,
Ailit[h], ailer,
Ar[a]cain, ar[a]cana(i),
Foraig, foragar,
Consrend, consrendar,
10 Forsrend, forsendar,
Fo tòbur tomsi
Fo airteib innsece,
Fo comar coimsi,
Conuaiting firsí
15 Is mo cach ferann,
Is ferr gach orbo,
Berigh co h-ecná,
Ech[t]raid fri bòrba.
The caldron of motion
gives, is given,
magnifies, is magnified,
sustains, is sustained,
exalts, is exalted,
fosters, is fostered,
sings, is sung,
binds, is bound,
arranges, is arranged,
distributes, is distributed,
Good is the well of measure,
Good is the habitation of speech,
Good is the confluence of power:
it builds up strength
greater than any domain,
better than any patrimony,
It brings (him) to (the grade of) a scholar,
He departs from the unlearned.

NOTES

Section I, verse

3 Dlicht: Cf. O'Dav. 638. The word, although thinly recorded, is to be preferred to slight (proposed in gl. 4) as the meaning fits and it alliterates.
4 brand: English metaphorical usage with 'breast' is better kept apart.
8 condelib: cf. cannail.
9 Indeithearr: Prototonic pass. pres. sg. of in-fét 'makes known'.
16 Gloss 19 (= 221) reads hollmairb. The association of poetry with flowing waters is a constant feature of the early Gaelic and Rigvedic traditions.

Cf. also H. Wagner, Ériu, xxvi. r–10.

17–19 The n-sign upon a consonant indicates that it is doubled (a geminate); fortail, a suprascript 2, indicates vowel length; dinin disail (lit. neither n nor s) a suprascript d, marks a short vowel. Before these elements became objects of grammatical and metrical study (cf. Auriacept na nÉces, passim; ZCP 17: 298) they mediated and could symbolize the written tradition of sacral utterance.

Section II, line

1 Ceist ... ita is elliptical. The gloss expands: i. comairicim cait i fuil etc.
2 MS. mige, leg. ige for Olr. aice. Otiose n- occurs also iii. 7, 5, 14.
4 adiuithi: This form appears to represent the prototonic 3 p. sg. of as-toldi (< ad-toldi) 'shines forth, appears' (cf. Ériu, ii. 126 § 90 attoldi).
THE CALDRON OF POESY

7 MS. ino goi: Gl. 24 shows dental inflection of ai in the gen. sg.
11 Ni den: dit?had appears to be a gloss which has crept into the text.
14 Cf. Arch. iii. 139. 35.
15 MS. aratairberat: cf. ii. 27 atatairberat for ad-da-t ... ? In ii. 15, so read, the inf. pron. can be 3. sg. m. (da?).

SECTION III, verse

11 Romna rosce: Cf. DIL sub riannon: romna rossa 'reddening a countenance by satire' RC 26: 22.
12 This is one of the few verses not alliteratively linked to what precedes (cf. verses 20, 35–6). We assume it may be sound and take Ser as first element of a compound.
14–20 To justify the dependent forms of these verbs we take the propositions which they represent as subordinated to what precedes, as in I. 9 and III. 27 ff. Delither in v. 15 may be an old impersonal sg. with acc. pl. object.
20 Amman: for OIr. n. pl. ammain.
26 The Anecd. 26. 10 reading srúama ndl ... (with late n. pl. form) is inferior.

SECTION IV, verse

1 Cuir ierma is in the nominative pendens construction with the verbs in 2–10. The forms biodtar, ailtar; aracair; megothair, mebogair, mártair show an uncertainty characteristic of Mid. Ir. in the final of the endings.
8 Foraig, foragar: OIr. fo-rig, fo-regar.
9–10 Consrend/fosrend: cf. ser(a)id, sreth, srethnaigid, consreth and DIL sub fo-ser, forserthnaigid.