

The Caldron of Poesy

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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.¹ 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.² 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.³ A single thrust of his fleshfork into the Caldron is sufficient for each guest; he is allotted a just and proper share.⁴ This characteristic is a great convenience for Cormac mac Airt who is concerned about the proper grading of society.⁵ Cormac had a caldron of this kind installed in the great banqueting hall at Tara (Tech Midchuarta) and it allotted to each guest a portion in keeping with his place in the hierarchy.⁶ 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 utensil⁷ and

¹ Cf. O. Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, 9–10 (ed. Greene-Kelly, Dublin, 1970), E. Knott, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn* i. xxxviii ff. (London, 1922), *Irish Classical Poetry*, 44 ff. (Dublin, 1957); J. Carney, *Early Irish Society*, 74 (ed. M. Dillon, Dublin, 1954), *The Irish Bardic Poet*, 7 ff. (Dublin, 1967). Cf. also J. E. Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Ireland*, *Proc. Brit. Academy* lvii (1971) 85–135.

² Cf. S. Piggott, *Ancient Europe*, 226 (Edinburgh, 1965), J. Filip, *Enzyklop. Handbuch zur Ur- u. Frühgeschichte Europas*, 442 (Kohlhammer, 1966). For a link between the cult of the sacred caldron and that of wells and water, cf. S. Piggott, *The Druids* (Penguin, 1974), pp. 67, 70.

³ Cf. RC xii. 58.

⁴ Cf. RC xxi. 314, 397.

⁵ Ir. Texte, iii. 187.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Cf. *Críth Gablach*, 174–5, 197, 549, etc.

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the hospitaller Buchet of Leinster is himself called a Caldron of Hospitality (*coire féile*).¹

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.²

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 ccualae 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 oimbreth,	nor raw judgement is borne;
In-oimbligh fíor,	Into which he milks truth,
I bfairben gaof,	In which he smites falsehood;
10 Gaibidh dhe triochtach	He takes from it thirty-fold
Go treisibh do nemthibh;	with powers for the privileged; ³
Naomhchaire	A holy caldron
Con-dáile osgura fri hégsi . . .	which the ignorant share with the learned . . .

Verse 2 above tallies with CP III. 27–8 (*infra*): *Saerbru(d) i mberbthar 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 24⁸ *coire a ro-íadha[d] rogoe* ‘the caldron in which great falsehood was confined’ and also in the etymological gloss 22² (= I² *infra*) cf. *goriath* . . . i. *ro iad rogoi* ‘. . . 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 *Preiddeu Annwn*⁴ there is an account of an expedition by Arthur to *Caer Siddi* (cf. Ir. *síd* ‘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,

¹ Cf. *Fingal Róndín*, 472 (ed. D. Greene, Dublin, 1955).

² Ir. Texte, iii. 192.

³ As legal terms *tríochtach* and *tresse* 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.

⁴ For *Preiddeu Annwn* cf. R. S. Loomis, *Wales & the Arthurian Legend*, 131 (Cardiff, 1956); for the *pair dadeni* cf. P. Mac Cana, *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr*, 50 (Cardiff, 1958); for Gwion Bach/Taliesin cf. I. Williams, *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry*, 61 (Dublin, 1954), *Chwedl Taliesin*, Caerdydd, 1957.

with its legend of Gwion Bach/Taliesin deriving his poetic powers in a manner reminiscent of the Irish Finn mac Cumhaill, which is particularly noteworthy for its different treatment of our theme: while the *Caldron of Poesy* is essentially allegorical, *Chwedl 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 boil 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 *ō*;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, *i sgaib* II. 21, *foghailter* II. 7. Cf. also *g-* beside *c-* in *cach*, passim; *-ea-* for *-e-* in *searnar* III. 29 (: *searnar* I. 23), *indeithear* I. 9, and in glosses 22^a *geal*, 26^{1b} *sofeasa* (: *deghfesa* 26^{2a}, *fesa* 26^{1b} etc).

² Cf. I. 8, III. 2–4, III. 22–5.

³ Cf. IV. 2–10.

⁴ e.g. *goriath* I. 1, II. 6, *erma* II. 6, etc., *mog mo coire* I. 21, *sruaim n-ordan* III. 7, *consrend*, *fosrend* IV. 9–10, *firrsi* IV. 14, *romna roiscne* III. 11.

⁵ *demrib* I. 2, *rōmna* III. 11. [Perhaps *dē-* from **de-a* . . ., cf. archaic *deamrem*. *Rōmna* has no etymology.]

⁶ vv. I. 12–14.

⁷ Cf. I. 15 *Denum do uath*.

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. ērma*), 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. ērma* is born to him in a tilted position (*de thoib*), 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' (caíngrian guires míli, *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 25⁷, 26²², 27¹: (Failte) fri tascur n-imhais iar mBoind no greithine .i. bolcc i mbafuilnge (*leg.* imme-folngi) grian for na luibip 7 cidbe caithes iat bid donaca (*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'; 26²² in bru(dh) i m-berbhtar bunad cacha deghfesa .i. imhas na Boindi 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'; 27¹ .i. nongluaisi imbas Bóindi no gréne .i. in coiri, 'poetic inspiration from the Boyne or the sun activates it, namely the Caldron'.

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 erma* 'Caldron of Motion' (IV. 1 etc.) the epithet is gen. of *érimm* (n. n-stem)

'course, progress'; or it represents the new gen. of *erma* when this form became nominative; cf. the variants *ermái*, *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' (*impúd*, 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-aí* '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 MÍr. confusion of vowels in unstressed endings⁴ may merely reflect a later scribal phase, as do *-nd* in words with old final *-nn*⁵ in Section I and *mbr-* for OÍr. *mr-* in *mbrogtair*, of IV. 3. Earlier forms are: *asberat* II. 2; *imidhsuí* II. 14: gl. *impos é*; in *tan dofoglen* II. 2: gl. in *tan toighlenus/foghlemus*; *condatrochratar* II. 21 (cf. MÍ. 48 C 28 *contorchratar*); the form *comsofis*, taken up in DÍL: C 413.61–2 on the basis of *Anecd.* vv. 25.2 and 25.10, and referred there to *sous*, is a *vox nihili*. 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*): OÍr. *inna* II. 25. Nasalization in acc. and neuter occurs in *fri tascor n-imaís* II. 20, *fri dliged n-ecse* II. 20, MS. *nige nanmain* II. 2. Relatively later forms are adversative *acht* II. 4, 26 (rather than *inge*); the numerals *da* (for *dí*) II. 17, *ceithre* (for *cethéoir*) II. 18; and relative *olso-dhain* 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 *immurgu*. Taken together, all the foregoing features suggest an OÍr. 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 OÍr. is apparent, e.g. from relative endings added to prototonic forms of compound verbs (as *impos* 24¹⁹, *iarimpos* 24¹⁰, 26³, 27⁷, *toighlenus*, *foghlemus* 23²⁸, *fuirghius* 27²⁰). That they are not earlier

¹ e.g. *genithir* II. 5: OÍr. *genitir*; *cethra* II. 15: OÍr. *cethir*; *occunda corpu* II. 2: OÍr. *-aib*.

² e.g. *araili* II. 2 by *alaile* II. 4; Orthographic *foghailter* II. 7 by *fodailter* II. 9; Morphology: *inoghoiti* II. 7 by its gloss *a n-oeitidh* (gen.).

³ e.g. *comidnimpai(th)* II. 12 by *sai*, *imsoe* III. 37, *imidhsuí* II. 14.

⁴ *-a* for *-ae*, *-ai* is found in OÍr.: cf. *deoda*, *doenda* II. 24, *dena* II. 1, 11. Cf. also *coire erma* II. 6, 8, 12, *ermái* III. 37, *ermoi* III. 36. MÍr. developments are *-a* for *-u* as in *fira* II. 3; *-e* for *-i*: *bairne* II. 19, *faide*, *trachtaire* II. 24; *-i* for *-e*: *coiri* II. 9; *-e* for *-iu*: *duine* II. 1, 4, 7.

⁵ e.g. *broind* I. 3, *inand* I. 10, *coitcend* I. 25.

than the eleventh century is indicated by four instances of the pres. ind. sg. ending *-enn* (*ngenenn* 24⁷, *ndenand* 25⁵, *dofaircenn* 26⁷, *conadlbdan* 27⁴). Five instances of analytic forms of the verb (with *sé*)¹, one of the infixed pronoun properly used (*nonghuaisi* 27¹), five of the independent pronoun,² and one of the prepositional pronoun *air* (*OIr. fair*) 25³, in the company of pretonic *for* (never *ar*) together point to the latter part of the twelfth century. Comparisons such as *imidhsuí* II. 14 and its gloss *impos é* (24¹⁹); *cachladuine niadtuithi ann* II. 4 and its gloss *cach dara duine nochon atdothid 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 Amarguin. It transpires, 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 (*comidnimpai(th) 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 (*bíthir oca forairi arnach 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 (*cuma*), wife (*ét*) and God (*ailithre ar Dia*).³ 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, *lúth éoit futhachta*, 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 *Morraidid se* 23²¹, *dobeir se* 23²² (24¹¹, 26¹⁹), *ellgid se* 26⁷.

² Cf. 24⁴, 24¹⁹, 26²² (*é*); 25⁷, 26¹⁹ (*iat*).

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;¹ 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 *Culhwch 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 Dé*) 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 Ferchertne.

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 Cf. *Immram Brain* (Meyer) I 52: *Is búan/huli hi fola luimne/condaróis iar téchtu/inna dréchtu imm druimne*, '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 glúine cach fogmair 7 imbas for Búais 7 Boind i medón in mís mithemon cacha bliadna* '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 kynt nor gwolithin kyntaf or konyn kyt y llawr pan uei uwyaf y gwolith mis meheuín*. '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.

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 Chrábaid*), 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. 800.¹ The *Irish Penitential* deals in a mechanical way with ‘worldly sadness’ (*doguilsí domanda*) and ‘godly sadness’ (*doguilsí 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. dæna*) 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 cromsesam 7 du gnúis fri talmain*) with thy two arms laid flat by thy sides (*7 do da laim foena latu da thoeb*). Or the whole body is stretched out along the ground face downwards (*ina roguth iarsin talam fora beolu*) and both arms laid flat by the sides (*7 in di laim ladi da thoeb*).’ 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 Loigse, whereby the penitent remains for three days and nights ‘in a dark house or other place where no distraction can penetrate’ (*hi tich dorchu no in nach maigi aili innach roich toirmesc*). This is reminiscent of the working poet’s darkened hut 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 aí*, 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

¹ Cf. *Ériu*, xix. 47 and refs. there.

dub i n-aerthar, brec i focarar, 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 *dúnad* (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 *dúnad* 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 (*echtraid fri borba*) may possibly suffice for *dúnad* 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, 23¹⁸–23²⁰). 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

¹ For a 'speckled' poem of warning cf. *Journal of Celtic Studies*, ii. (1953), 96–101.

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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) *dæn*, and glosses 22⁵, 23⁵⁻⁸. In the case of *Anecd.* 24.14 *coimrerma* the MS. has *coimrerma*, which permits a more ready emendation to *coire erma*. 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*, *siluither*, *somnit(h)er*, *særthar* show regular conj. forms. For *Anecd.* 27.9 *innsce read n-insce*; for 27.2 *faillsigther*, 27.6 *mogaither* we read *-ir*. For *Anecd.* 26.9 *modaib read modhaib*, for 27.1 *imbais read imbhas*. 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 *cōir* and the *-i* diphthongs (e.g. 23.2 *-thōib*).

I

Mo coire ¹ coir, goiriath ² gor, Ronfr Dfa dam a duilib dem- rib, ³ Dlicht ⁴ saer saerus broind Belra beil bruchtus uad. ⁵	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.
5 Os me Amargen Glungel, ⁶ Gairglas, ⁷ greliath, ⁸ Gnim mo goriath Crothaib condelib, ⁹ Indeithear dath;	I am Amargein Glúngel with livid shank and grey hair. My caldron of maintenance serves with appropriate forms (in which) colour is made known.
10 Nad inand ¹⁰ airlither Dia Do gach dæn, Dethoib, ¹¹ istoib, ¹² uastoib, ¹³ Nemtsos, ¹⁴ lethsos, ¹⁵ Lansos ¹⁶ do hEbir Dunz,	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
15 Denum ¹⁷ do uath, Aupsaib ¹⁸ ilib ollmarib, ¹⁹ Moth, i toth, i træth, I n-arniz, i forsail, I n-dinen disail;	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;
20 Slicht asinzither Alt mog mo coire. Aracain ²⁰ coire sofis Sernar dliged cacha dana ²¹ Dia moigit main ²²	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

- 25 *Morus cach ceird coitcend,* which magnifies every public craft.
Comutaing duine dán. One constructs a poem.

¹ .i. fil acum, 'i.e. which I have'. ² .i. goriath .i. gar damh in gach iath .i. ro iad rogóí, 'i.e. goriath, i.e. near to me in every land, i.e. it shut in great falsehood'. ³ .i. is maith donuc Dia damh a diamraib na ndule no omaicedh (*leg. im aiced*) ro érnestar damh in sloinded særus 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 .i. slicht .i. cendfochras. ('The glossator thinks that *dlicht* 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 sær .i. særaid co huais in belra aidhbind ina broind i mbíð, no is maith cach broinn i mbíð in belrad aidhbind .i. teibernighes aircetal uaithi 'What the word *sær* 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 icatá in colpa glas iarna crechadh 'cauterized shank or who has a green cauterized shank'. ⁸ liath a ulcha 'greybearded'. ⁹ iss *ed gnias* mo coire, aisneis na heisce for a n-aisnedhther na crotha ilardha .i. find 7 dub 7 brecc, 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 .i. nochon inann dobeir Dia do cach aisneis na héisce, 'i.e. God does not grant equally to everyone the declaration of poetry'. ¹¹ .i. lethclæn, 'i.e. half-inclined'. ¹² .i. for beolu, 'i.e. prone'. ¹³ fæn 'supine'. ¹⁴ .i. in tan is for beolu .i. i n-æs Dæ, 'i.e. when prone, i.e. in regard to the people of God'. ¹⁵ .i. lethclæn .i. i n-æs bair[d]ne 7 rand, 'i.e. half-inclined, i.e. in respect of bards and versifiers'. ¹⁶ in tan is fæn .i. i n-anrothuib sofis 7 aircetail 'When supine, i.e. in regard to the *dnshruith* of knowledge and poetry'. ¹⁷ .i. denum a aircetail do Ebir 7 do Dund co taibsenaið ilardhaib, 'i.e. while Eber and Donn were composing with various manifestations'. ¹⁸ .i. co taibsenaið ilarghuib, 'i.e. with various manifestations'. ¹⁹ .i. imat amar na ésce a hollmurb ilib na héicsi, 'i.e. the number of poetic lays from the diverse oceans of poetry'. ²⁰ .i. fircanim-se do caire in sofesa 'I truly sing to the caldron of knowledge'. ²¹ .i. srethnaithir dliged cachá dána as 'the law of every poem is laid down from it'. ²² dobeir mougud maine for cach 'It increases everyone's wealth.'

II

- Ceist*, ita bunadus in aircetail i n-duine ina curp fa menmain? . . .¹ Ar ni dena in corp (n)ige n-anmain. Asberat araili bid a curp, in tan dofoglen occun da corpu .i. o athair no senathair, olsodhain as fira, ar atha bunad in aircetail 7 int sois i cach duine corptha, acht cachla duine ni adtuithi ann, alaile atuidi(gh).
- 5 Caite didiu bunad in aircetail 7 gach sois olchena? Ni *ansa*. Genithir tri coire in cach duine .i. coire goriath 7 coire erma 7 coire sois. Coire goiriath, is e sidhe genither foen i n-duine fochetoir; is as foghailter soos do daimib i n-oghoiti[dh]. Coire erma, *immorro*, iarmobi moaighid; is e(i) side (is esi) genither do tæib i n-duine. Coiri sois, is e sidhe genither for beolu 7 is as fodailter soes gacha dana.²
- 10 Coire erma dono gachla duine is for beolu ata ann [i.i.]³ i n-æs doeis, lethclæn i n-æs bairdne 7 rann; is fæn ata a n-ansrothaib sofis 7 aire conaire, didiu. Ni dena cach oen ere⁴ di[t]had. Is for a beolu ata coi(m)re [e]rma and comidnimpai(th) bron no [f]ailte.

- Ceist*, cis lir fodhlai fil forsan mbron imidhsuf? Ni *ansa* .i. iiii. eolcaire, cumha,
- 15 7 broin eoit 7 ailithe ar dia, 7 is medhon aratairberat⁵ na cethra-so ciasa [a]nechtar fofertar.

Atat dono da fodail forfailte o n-iumpaither in coin (*leg. coire*) sofis .i. failte

¹ *asberat* added over the line with an apparent omission following it.

² *olcena cinmotha aircedal* 'besides, as well as poetry' added above the line.

³ Cf. O'Dav. 626.

⁴ *Leg. atre*, a by-form of *der* 'satire'.

⁵ Cf. O'Dav. 54.

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deodha 7 failte dæna. In failte dæna, atat ceithre fodlai for suide .i. luth eoit futhachta 7 failte slane 7 nemimniche imbet bruit 7 bidh co feca in duine for bair[d]ne; 7 failte fri dliged n-ecse iarna dagfrichgnam, 7 failte fri tascor n-imais 20 dofaircet næ cuill cainmesa for Segais i sígaib, condatrochratar meit moltcnai iar ndrúimned Boinde frithroisc, luaithe ech aighe nemmedon (*leg.* i n-inmedon) mis mífthime dia secht m-bliadnaib beos. Failte deoda, immorro, toruma in raith¹ docum in coin (*leg.* coiri) sofis comidnimpai(d) fæn, comid [d]e bid faide deoda 7 doenda 7 trachtair raith 7 frichnama imale, cona (*leg.* conid) iarum 25 labrait ina labartha ratha 7 dogniat ina firta, condaf asaige 7 bretha a m-briathar, conda[t] desmerecht do gach cobru. Acht is anechtair atatairberat ina-hi(e)-seo in coin (*leg.* coiri) ciasa medon forafertar, de s[h]en in (*leg.* a n-) asber Nede mac Adna.

TRANSLATION

Is the origin of poetry in a person's body or in his soul? . . .² 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 *anshrúith* 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 cuckolding (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

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;¹ 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 Néde mac Adna says:

III

Arcaín coire (n)erma
 Intlectaib raith,
 rethaib sofis,
 srethaib imbais,
 5 imber (n)ecna,
 ellach suithi,
 sruaim n-ordan,
 Indogbail doeir,
 Domnad insce,
 10 Intlect ruirthech,
 Romna roiscne,
 Sær-comgne,
 Cæmad felmac;
 Fegtar (n)dliged
 15 Delither cialla,
 Cengar sesi,
 Siluithær sofis,
 Somnit(h)er sæir,
 Særthar nach sær,
 20 Arautgatar anmanna,
 Atfiadatar molta
 Modhaib dligid,
 Deligchib gradh,
 Glæmresaib sæire,
 25 Soinscib suad,
 Sruaman da(i)l sæithe,
 Særbru(d) i m-berbthar
 Bunad cach sofis
 Searnar iar n-dliged,
 30 Drengar iar frichnum,
 Fongluasi imbhas,
 Imesai failte,
 Faillsigthær tria bron,
 Buan brigh
 35 Na dibdai didiu.
 Arcaín 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,
 reddening 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 25¹⁸ gives Cumain (al. Cuimmine) Fota, Colmán m. Lénín (al. Lénéni), and Colum Cille as examples.

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Cid in ermai? Ni *ansa*: erimpud sai, no iarimpud sai, 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	The caldron of motion
ernid, erenar,	gives, is given,
Mogaith ^{ir} , mbrogtair,	magnifies, is magnified,
Biat[h]aid, biadtair,	sustains, is sustained,
5 Maraid, martair,	exalts, is exalted,
Ailit[h], ailter,	fosters, is fostered,
Ar(a)cain, ar(a)cana(i)r,	sings, is sung,
Foraig, foragar,	binds, is bound,
Consrend, consrendar,	arranges, is arranged,
10 Fosrend, fosrendar,	distributes, is distributed,
Fo tob ^{ur} tomsi	Good is the well of measure,
Fo aitreib innsce,	Good is the habitation of speech,
Fo comar coimsi,	Good is the confluence of power:
Comutaing firrsi	it builds up strength
15 Is mo cach ferann,	greater than any domain,
Is ferr gach orbo,	better than any patrimony,
Berigh co h-ecna,	It brings (him) to (the grade of) a scholar,
Ech[t]raid fri borba.	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 *slicht* (proposed in gl. 4) as the meaning fits and it alliterates.

broind: English metaphorical usage with 'breast' is better kept apart.

8 *condelib*: cf. *cunnail*.

9 *Indeithear*: Prototonic pass. pres. sg. of *in-fét* 'makes known'.

16 Gloss 19 (= 23¹¹) reads *hollmurib*. The association of poetry with flowing waters is a constant feature of the early Gaelic and Rigvedic traditions.

Cf. also H. Wagner, *Ériu*, xxvi. 1-10.

17-19 The *n*-sign upon a consonant indicates that it is doubled (a geminate); *forsail*, a suprascript *s*, 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. *Auraicept 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. *comaircim cait i fuil* etc.

2 MS. *níge*, leg. *íge* for OIr. *aicde*. Otiose *n*- occurs also iii. 1, 5, 14.

4 *adtuithi*: This form appears to represent the prototonic 3 p. sg. of *as-toidi* (< *ad-toidi*) 'shines forth, appears' (cf. *Ériu*, ii. 126 § 90 *attoidi*).

7 MS. *inoghoiti*: Gl. 24^a shows dental inflection of *oitiu* in the gen. sg.

11 *Ni dena* . . . *dí[t]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. (*daⁿ*).

SECTION III, verse

11 *Romna roiscne*: Cf. DÍL sub *riamna*: *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 *Sær* 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 *Anmanna*: for OIr. n. pl. *anmain*.

26 The *Anecd.* 26. 10 reading *srúama ndáil* . . . (with late n. pl. form) is inferior.

SECTION IV, verse

1 *Coire erma* is in the *nominativus pendens* construction with the verbs in 2-10. The forms *biadtar*, *ailter*; *aracanair*; *mogaithir*, *mbrogtair*, *máirtair* 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. *sern(a)id*, *sreth*, *srethnaigid*, *comsreth* and DÍL sub *fo-sern*, *fosrethnaigid*.