

# *Donn na Duimhche*: ‘Hail, Donn of the Sandhills!’ Aindrias Mac Cruitín’s Celebrated Poem: Background, Context, and Literal Translation

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## Abstract

This essay presents a literal translation of the poem, *Donn na Duimhche* by Clare *seanchaidhe* and poet, Aindrias Mac Cruitín. The text presented here is intended primarily to focus on the life and activity of Mac Cruitín and his historical and literary milieu in mid-eighteenth-century Clare. The discussion is not intended to provide a detailed linguistic analysis or editorial treatment of the original text in Irish. Rather, by focusing on the poet and his world, as well as some of the themes addressed in his poem, new light is cast on the classical Gaelic tradition of north Munster at a time when that scholarly tradition was becoming obsolete.

This supplicatory poem, written in the mid-1730s, stands out as a remarkable piece of eighteenth-century Irish-language verse. The intended recipient was Donn, no earthly patron, but rather an eponymous fairy-monarch who was supposed to have dwelt in the sandhills of west Clare. Its author was Aindrias Mac Cruitín (c. 1670–1738) who was a *seanchaidhe* and poet of considerable repute. Soon after his death versions of *Donn na Duimhche* were in circulation, with the first manuscript witness (Royal Irish Academy [RIA] Ms 23 L 24) appearing in c. 1766.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps indicating the strength of local interest in the poem, many of its early versions claim a Clare provenance. We find a number of Clare scribes involved in copying the poem, most notably Diarmuid Ó Mulchaoinne in 1766–68,<sup>2</sup> Peadar Ó Conaill in 1782,<sup>3</sup> the Rev. Connor McGorman

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1 RIA Ms 23 L 24, pp. 182–85.

2 RIA Ms 23 L 24, pp. 182–85; and RIA Ms 23 C 16, pp. 84–87.

3 RIA Ms 23 L 35, pp. 61–63.

in 1800,<sup>4</sup> Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh in the 1820s,<sup>5</sup> and Brian O'Looney in the 1860s.<sup>6</sup>

It is unsurprising that traditional stories conferred a sense of otherness to Donn whose appellation *na Duimhche* refers to his dwelling-place in the sandhills of west Clare. Traditionally he was said to have presided over a fairy-palace on the western coast in a liminal location between shore and surf. This peripheral location was regarded as distinct to the human realm, existing as a sort of *terra incognita*. This place, imbued with myth and legend, was the chain of sandhills stretching along Doughmore Bay near Doonbeg. The anglicized placename Doughmore is a rendering of the Irish form, *Dúmhach Mór*, connoting a large sandhill or dune.<sup>7</sup> It is a toponym of considerable interest and forms the focus of Aindrias Mac Cruitín's poem in which he beseeches Donn to give him succour and invite him into his fairy-palace on the westerly strand of Clare's Atlantic coast.

Aindrias Mac Cruitín's poem is a supplicatory ode which on one level is a demonstration of mastery of his native tongue; at another it tells of a frustration born of penury and the decline of patronage for the poetic art. This theme was not new in eighteenth-century Ireland and a genre of lamentation for lost patronage is well attested from the sixteenth century and came to animate much poetry over the ensuing centuries.<sup>8</sup> Its circumstance owed much to the Tudor and Stuart policy of anglicization which saw the destruction of Gaelic lordships and the dispossession of the native literary and cultural classes in the seventeenth century.

### **Aindrias Mac Cruitín: *seanchaidhe agus file***

Aindrias Mac Cruitín was from a long line of *seanchaidhthe* (traditional historians) who served as *ollamhain*, or professional masters of learning, to the

4 RIA Ms 12 0 7, pp. 231–36.

5 RIA Ms 24 M 40 pp. 1–4. On this scribe see Luke McInerney, 'Conchubhar Mac an Oirchinnigh and the Gaelic Scribal Tradition of County Clare', *The Other Clare*, 41 (2017), pp. 60–67.

6 RIA Ms 24 B 11, pp. 106–25.

7 The sandhills at Doughmore were of great interest locally and one of its earliest accounts is found in a description of Clare written by poet, John Lloyd, in 1780. About Doughmore he wrote: 'midway on this Northern Course, lies Dough-more or the Sand Hills of Clohanes, they are of great height, and a Mile long'. John Lloyd, *A Short Tour; or, an Impartial and Accurate Description of the County of Clare with Some Particular and Historical Observations* (Ennis, 1780), p. 15.

8 One example of a contemporary poet complaining about his reduced circumstances is Dáibhí Ó Bruadair (1625–98) who says that he was like 'a sexton without salary, in the corner of a churchyard'. See John C. Mac Erlean, *Duanaire Dháibhidh Uí Bhruadair*, 1 (London, 1910), pp. xxxiii–v.

Uí Bhriain kings of Thomond.<sup>9</sup> He belonged to a family who held the office (*ollamh le seanchas*) of chief chronicler to Ó Briain and thus enjoyed an ancient antecedence which is evidenced as early as the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>10</sup> By the later medieval period their patrons became more localized and learned members of the family were attached to the Ó Lochlainn of the Burren while another branch was settled near Kilrush where they were employed as notaries to the Clann Mhathghamhna of Corkavaskin.<sup>11</sup>

After the Clann Chraith, who trace their origin as royal poets of Munster in the eleventh century,<sup>12</sup> two other learned *seanchaidhe* families rose to prominence in Thomond: the Clann Chruitín and Clann Bhruaideadha. Like other learned families they enjoyed hereditary privileges such as rent-free lands.<sup>13</sup> As a professional literary family with a pedagogical specialization in historical lore (*seanchas*) and music (*seinnm*),<sup>14</sup> the Clann Chruitín are recorded in the annals

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9 Luke McInerney, 'The Origins of Clann Chruitín: chronicler-poets of the Learned Gaelic Tradition', *The Other Clare*, 38 (2014), pp. 19–30.

10 The first reference to a Mac Cruitín occurs in a set of annals whose provenance was possibly the Augustinian house of Kilshanny in Corcomroe. These annals contain the obituary notice of 'Eagd Mac Crutyn' (Aodh Mac Cruitín) for 1354. The evidence suggests that the Clann Chruitín were established as a literary family in the mid-fourteenth century, if not generations before. See E. J. Gwynn, (ed.), 'Fragmentary Annals from the West of Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 37C (1924–1927), pp. 149–57, p. 153.

11 In 1602 'Connor O'Crottine' (*recte* McCrottine) was listed in the fiant as dwelling at 'Moyadda' in Kilrush parish. Critten McCrutin was appointed bailiff for Toirdhealbhach Ruadh Mhic Mhathghamhna in 1611. See *The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns During the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Philip & Mary, and Elizabeth I*, (Dublin, 1994), no. 6615; and John O'Donovan and Eugene Curry, *Ordinance Survey Letters: The Antiquities of County Clare* (Ennis, 2003) pp. 127–9. A Conchubhar Óg Mac Cruitín witnessed the division of lands of the Clann Mhathghamhna of Clonderalaw in an Irish deed of 1576. See Gearóid Mac Niocaill, 'Seven Irish Documents from the Inchiquin Archives', *Analecta Hibernica*, 26 (Dublin, 1970), p. 51. For a different deed by the same (?) individual see James Hardiman (ed.), 'Ancient Irish Deeds and Writings Chiefly relating to Landed Property from the Twelfth to Seventeenth Century: With Translation, Notes and a Preliminary Essay', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 15 (1826) pp. 1–95, pp. 15–16.

12 *Annals of the Four Masters [AFM]*, *sub anno*, 1098.

13 The Clann Cruitín are recorded among the learned families of Ireland in a tract written by Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh in 1656 wherein they are counted among the *ollamhuin seanchais* ('learned masters of historical lore'). The Clare Franciscan, Antonius Bruodin (c. 1618–80), counts them among 'ancient noble families that continued down until the Cromwellian tyranny'. They are also referenced, along with the Clann Bhruaideadha, as historians of Thomond in Séathrún Céitinn's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* of the 1630s. See James Carney, 'De scriptoribus Hibernicis', *Celtica*, 1 (1946–50), pp. 86–110, p. 91; Antonius Bruodinus, *Propugnaculum Catholicae Veritatis Libris x Constructum, in Duaeque Partes Divisum* (Prague, 1669), p. 971; David Comyn and Patrick S. Dinneen (ed. and tr.), *Foras feasa ar Éirinn: The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating DD*, 3 (London, 1908), pp. 12–14.

14 *AFM*, *sub anno* 1404.

of the fifteenth century.<sup>15</sup> The link between practitioners of *seanchas* and the cultivation of music can be traced to the early medieval period and it may not be a coincidence that the primary element in the surname Mac Cruitín is *cruit* which denotes a small harp.<sup>16</sup>

Records of the early seventeenth century indicate that the Clann Chruitín were established in the parishes of Kilmacrehy and Killaspuglonane near Liscannor, the former of which appears to have been the location of their *fearnan ollamhnachta*, or professional lands.<sup>17</sup> While no direct references survive for their school of *seanchas*, unlike other schools of the Gaelic learned class, it may be surmised that the Clann Chruitín school at Kilmacrehy had ceased to function by the 1640s. Around this time Dingle poet, Piaras Feiritéar, described a visitation by a Scottish poet to the schools of Gaelic scholarship in Thomond, but no reference was made to the Clann Chruitín or their school.<sup>18</sup>

This can be taken as evidence that from around the mid-seventeenth century, if not decades earlier, the Clann Chruitín no longer presided over a professional school of *seanchas*. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that they remained active as local *seanchaidhthe*, undertaking duties expected of a learned family throughout the seventeenth century, as the activity of Hugh Mc Crutten at the siege of Tromra castle near Quilty in 1642 suggests.<sup>19</sup> Whatever the status of the family in the seventeenth century, it is clear that they suffered significantly in the reduction in Gaelic culture and its traditional linchpin of aristocratic patronage.

15 *AFM, sub annis*, 1376, 1404, 1434, 1436.

16 On the origin of the surname Mac Cruitín see Eugene O'Curry, *On the Customs and Manners of the Ancient Irish*, 3 (Dublin, 1878), p. 237; see also an essay on the Gaelic learned class in Owen Connellan, 'Imtheacht na Tromdhaimhe: The Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution', *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the Year 1857*, 5 (1860), pp. 1–132, p. xxiv. Alternatively, *cruit* may denote a hunchbacked person, though given that Clann Chruitín attained the *ollamhnacht in seinm* (music) it is at least plausible that their cultivation of music may be traced to a progenitor who specialised in harp playing.

17 The 1618 Great Office of Corcomroe records them holding 'Laghtvally' in Kilmacrehy parish and 'Carrowduff' in Killaspuglonane parish. See Petworth House Archive, Ms 16 B D 2 [Great Office of Corcomroe Barony, 5 September 1618], Chichester, UK. They remained settled in those places until the Cromwellian confiscations. See R. C. Simington, *Books of Survey and Distribution, Being Abstracts of Various Surveys and Instruments of Title, 1636–1703*, [Co. Clare], pp. 236–39.

18 No direct reference was made to a visit to the Clann Chruitín by the Scottish poet Maol Domhnaigh Ó Muirgheasáin, but a reference to a place of scholarship that existed at 'above the lower Shannon' (*an der[?]locha ós Linn Luimnigh*) could be – as the poem's editor suggests – a reference to *Magh Locha* (Molough) near Kilrush, an area associated with Clann Chruitín in the early seventeenth century. See T. F. O'Rahilly, 'A Poem by Piaras Feiritéar', *Ériu*, 13 (1942), pp. 113–18, pp. 114, 116.

19 TCD Ms 829, fols 80r–85v, 'Deposition of John Ward, 25/4/1643', [1641 Depositions, Trinity College Dublin]. Mc Crutten apparently took a 'note in writing of as many of the besieged as were either hurte or killed', in a manner of a recorder or historian.

### Aindrias Mac Cruitín: An 'Ollamh-in-waiting'

Despite the upheavals of the seventeenth century, it is apparent from the careers of Aindrias and his scholarly kinsman Aodh Buidhe (c. 1680–1755) that continuity existed between the earlier Clann Chruitín school of *seanchas* and these later representatives of the family. Later generations of Mac Cruitín scholars maintained some of the curriculum and pedagogical ethos of their earlier school despite the loss of material support from the Gaelic ruling class in the course of the seventeenth century.

Judging by the array of poetry produced by Aindrias and Aodh Buidhe it is evident that they drew from a collective store of manuscripts and annalistic material preserved by the Clann Chruitín. For example, in Aodh Buidhe's publication, *A Brief Discourse in Vindication of the Antiquity of Ireland* (1717), his detailing of the origins of Dál gCais families indicates a familiarity with genealogy that could only have been achieved through access to genealogical materials. This is borne out by the substantial collection of manuscripts collected by the Chevalier O'Gorman in the 1760s whose origins were claimed to have been the Clann Chruitín.<sup>20</sup>

Aindrias and Aodh Buidhe belonged to a family of the learned class whose professional duties included the curation of such material. This is perhaps best exemplified by Aindrias who was careful to refer to himself as a *seanchaidhe* – a keeper of traditional history and lore – rather than a poet. This claim he repeats a number of times, stating in one poem that its composition was akin to an 'awkward rough spun lay',<sup>21</sup> which testifies to his own self-conscious view that his main profession was that of a *seanchaidhe*. What is clear from a study of their writings is that both men had access to a miscellany of tales, verse, histories, and aphorisms which served as a framework that supported their cultivation of traditional Gaelic scholarship.

By the time of Aindrias Mac Cruitín the material supports of the professional poets and historians had been long removed. Despite this, Mac Cruitín exhibited a sense of personal mission in that he was an 'ollamh-in-waiting'. This view is shown in the activity of his kinsman, Aodh Buidhe, who returned from France to potentially take up the *ollamhnacht* (professorship) in Aindrias's stead and who operated a hedge-school. Following the deaths of the two men no other Clare poet

20 This claim is found in William Shaw Mason's *Statistical Account, or Parochial Survey of Ireland* (1814–19) which is printed in James Kenny, 'Description of Ennistymon', in *Mount Saint Joseph, Ennistymon, 1824–1974, Ennistymon, Co. Clare*, ed. by Martin McNamara (Naas, 1974), pp. 111–26, p. 121.

21 Brian O'Looney (ed.), *A Collection of Poems Written on Different Occasions by the Clare Bards in Honor of the MacDonnells of Kilkee and Killone in the County of Clare* (Dublin, 1863), pp. 4–5.

demonstrated the formulaic style in composition or the conscious duty of holding an *ollamhnacht* in the manner they had done. County Clare continued to maintain an active scribal tradition well into the nineteenth century which centred on literary performances at *cúirteanna éigse* and *cúirteanna filidheachta*. Alongside this poetic activity were the so-called ‘manuscript men’ who did much to transmit the *seanchas* and *filidheacht* from the medieval period to modern times.<sup>22</sup>

Aindrias and Aodh Buidhe were embodiments of the older native literary tradition in that they operated in a hereditary and aristocratic milieu that valued classical Gaelic scholarship, not simply for its artistry, but also for its legitimisation of historic claims. Aindrias and Aodh Buidhe regarded their literary pursuits as an occupation of lasting value, a finely wrought product to be enjoyed by aristocratic patrons who were looked upon as protectors of native scholarship. The same patrons were expected to be generous benefactors of the learned class whose time-honoured duty was to cultivate the literary tradition in Irish.

### The Poet, Patrons, and His World

The writings of Aindrias and Aodh Buidhe leave us in no doubt that the context to which they belonged – despite its material supports having largely been dismantled – exhibited a potency alongside their own sense of duty as scions of an antique tradition. Their poetry shows that they were driven by conviction and a world view rooted in their family’s hereditary claim to the *ollamhnacht*. Aindrias refers to himself as an *ollamh* in his poem to Donn, describing his own predicament thus: *Is aíochta an t-ollamh, ó locadar Gaoil a riar* (‘And render hospitality to the *ollamh* since the Gaels have refused him victuals’).<sup>23</sup>

Mac Cruitín was cognisant of his standing as a *litteratus* and this in turn meant that he was instilled with a sense of obligation. Aware of the position of the master poet in one poem, Mac Cruitín draws a parallel with himself when he refers to the great poet and *ollamh*, Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh (d. 1387), as his equal.<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere he states that he is an ‘antiquarian and a true poet’ and that it was his duty to compose poetry and proffer advice to his noble patrons whom he calls *craobh clú* (‘supports of renown’), who provide safety and shelter.<sup>25</sup>

22 See Eilís Ní Dheá, ‘Lucht Scríofa Lámhscríbhinní i gContae an Chláir san 18ú haois’, *Dal gCais*, 10 (1991), pp. 51–57; Eilís Ní Dheá, ‘Manuscript Men’, in *Explorations: Centenary Essays*, ed. by Liam Irwin (Limerick, 1998), pp. 284–300; and Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, ‘The Irish Tradition of Clare’, in *Mount Saint Joseph*, ed. by McNamara, pp. 49–60.

23 On Aindrias’s death his relative and notable poet, Aodh Buidhe, referred to him as an *ollamh* in his elegy entitled ‘Ní buan brón go bás ollaimh’. See Vincent Morley (ed.), *Aodh Bui Mac Cruitín* (Baile Átha Cliath, 2012), pp. 53–54.

24 O’Looney (ed.), *A Collection of Poems*, p. 11.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5, 18–19, 20–21.

It is clear from Mac Cruitín's writings that he saw himself as one of the last true receptacles of Gaelic culture as his learning drew from that of the professional bardic schools. The array of themes in his writings shows that he represented Gaelic aristocratic culture with its concerns of history, poetry, and genealogy. His conservative outlook is demonstrated by his displeasure, which he professed on a number of occasions, with the popular forms of poetry. By his time these were not actually new forms but in earlier centuries were the handiwork of lesser-ranked poets or bards whose audiences were popular gatherings rather than the Gaelic nobility to whom Mac Cruitín's learned forebears were attached.

Mac Cruitín's self-conscious position also made him preach a message of pragmatism to his patrons. Glimpses of this throw light on his own ability to navigate the political issues of his day. In an elegy on Uilliam Ó Briain, Mac Cruitín expresses approval that he attended the Catholic Mass and only seldom went to the Established Church: *Is dob annamh leatsa, a chara dhil, / dul ó Aifreann go teampall prayers*.<sup>26</sup> Unlike his contemporary poet and neighbour Micheál Coimín, Mac Cruitín was not a member of the Established Church. There is evidence that he was well regarded by the Catholic clergy during his lifetime. That Mac Cruitín received approval from Irish-speaking clergy is evident by his many poems copied by Fr Séamus Ó Muraidheagh at Louvain in a manuscript prepared for the exiled bishop of Kilfenora, James Augustine O'Daly, in 1721.<sup>27</sup>

Gaelic scholar, Patrick Dinneen, wrote about Mac Cruitín's background and his poem *Donn Duimhche* in terms that still have resonance more than a century after he published his views:

Andrew MacCurtain, in moody melancholy, complains to Donn that the noblemen of his time show him the door almost as soon as he has entered their houses, that they care nothing for his verses or genealogies. In the many laments for dead Irish chieftains produced during this period, none of their virtues is so much insisted on as their hospitality, especially to the bardic tribe. The professional *ollamh* was practically a thing of the past in the opening years of the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

In the medieval to early modern period the learned class (*an t-aos dána*) enjoyed material and social privileges. The vernacular classical Gaelic

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26 Liam Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta Aindréis Mhic Cruitín* (Ennis, 1935), p. 57.

27 Pádraig Ó Macháin, 'Fr. Séamus Ó Muraidheagh OP (c. 1703–1767): an Irish scribe and poet at Louvain', *Seanchas Ardmhacha* 24:1 (2012), pp. 104–13, pp. 111–12.

28 Patrick S. Dinneen and Tadhg O'Donoghue (eds), *Dánta Aodhagáin Uí Rathaille: The poems of Egan O'Rahilly* (London, 1911), p. xiv.

tradition was taught in the schools of these professional learned families up to the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>29</sup> From the time of the Cromwellian confiscations these schools were discontinued and the patronage that learned families such as the Clann Chruitín received also ended, making the *ollamh*, in the words of Dinneen, practically obsolete by the time Aindrias Mac Cruitín began his literary career.

### Life and Works

Of Mac Cruitín's life only dim contours can now be traced. According to a biographical sketch of the poet's life authored by James McCurtin (Séamus Mac Cruitín, 1815–70), himself a hedge-schoolmaster and poet,<sup>30</sup> Aindrias was associated with Moyglass, a townland near Mullagh in the parish of Kilmurry-Ibrickan. It is believed that he was born at a place called 'Cloch a Teine' (Cloghaunnatinny) in or adjacent to Moyglass, but the exact year of his birth is unknown.<sup>31</sup> In McCurtin's biographical sketch he provides a description about Aindrias who he claimed was a distant relative:

He was born at Moyglass in the parish of Kilmurry-Ibricane where his parents enjoyed a considerable private patrimony which enabled them to give him a tolerable education tintured with the country classics of the day [...] after the demise of his parents, having sold the chief part of his property to enable him to prosecute his studies [...] the narrow limits of his fortune

29 Thomas O'Sullevane, *Dissertation, Memoirs of the Right Honourable The Marquis of Clanricarde, Lord Deputy General of Ireland [...]* (London, 1722), pp. cxviii–cxix.

30 On Séamus Mac Cruitín who claimed to be sixth-in-line of descent from Aindrias's brother Seán, see Brian Ó Dálaigh, "'The Last of the Hereditary Bards of Thomond': Séamus Mac Cruitín, 1815–70", *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 47 (2007), pp. 77–90; Joseph F. Reynolds, 'Séamus Mac Cruitín, The last Hedge-Schoolmaster of Thomond', *Ennistymon Parish Magazine* (1994), pp. 53–54; and Muiris Ó Rocháin, 'James McCurtin, The Last of the Bards', *Dal gCais* 2 (1976), pp. 13–15.

31 See Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, introduction. The placename 'Cloch a Teine' is probably a corruption of Cloghaunnatinny (*Clochán na Tine*) which is the name of the adjacent townland to Moyglass Beg. The original name of Cloghaunnatinny was 'Cloghanweeliteny' (*Clochán Mhaoil na Tine*) according to the earl of Thomond's 1615 survey of Ibrickan, and it was held by a member of the Clann Bhruaideadha. Modern-day Moyglass presumably encompasses part of Cloghaunnatinny for we read in a colophon in RIA Ms 23 0 10, by Aindrias Mac Cruitín (dated 1703), that he was living at *Clochán Mhaoil na Tine a n-Aoibh Breacain a cContae an Chláir*. See Ní Dheá, 'Manuscript Men', p. 287. His residence was probably situated either within the modern boundaries of Moyglass Beg or Cloghaunnatinny. A remark in the 1615 survey suggests that Moyglass Beg was marginal land. It was recorded as 'one quarter' and 'uninhabited always', although sometimes used for cattle of the Comyn family. See Luke McInerney, 'The Earl of Thomond's 1615 Survey of Ibrickan, Co. Clare', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 53 (2013), pp. 173–91, p. 187.

compelled him afterwards to become a regular teacher in his native locality where he continued till death.<sup>32</sup>

Mac Cruitín's earlier career indicates that he received patronage from a number of leading gentry in Clare<sup>33</sup> and James McCurtin's description of him as 'a first-rate poet, antiquarian and genealogist'<sup>34</sup> is evidence that Mac Cruitín was accomplished in the classical Gaelic tradition of *seanchas* and *filidheacht*. During his lifetime Mac Cruitín was recognized as a scholar of distinction who had cultivated a network of patrons from among the Clare gentry who afforded him patronage by sponsoring his literary activities.

His surviving literary output shows him to have been a prolific scribe and poet. Apart from authoring at least forty-three poems,<sup>35</sup> many running over 200 lines, he acted as a scribe of lengthy prose-tracts such as the medieval saganarrative *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh* ('Triumphs of Turlough') which he copied for a McNamara patron in 1721.<sup>36</sup> Some sources credit him with political poems such as *Go cúig roimh luis dá dtugadh grásaibh Dé* ('To five before fifty if God gives us grace'), which is believed to be a prophecy about the 1745 Jacobite uprising.<sup>37</sup> Mac Cruitín was also involved in a literary circle with local poets such as Mícheál Coimín (1676–1760). Mac Cruitín is credited with having copied *An Leabhar Muimhneach* ('The Book of Munster') for Mícheál Coimín who was

32 UCD School of History and Archives. UCD Archives: *Papers of Eugene O'Curry (1796–1862)*: LA38/43 ['Letter from James McCurtin (Moy, Lahinch, County Clare) to James McGlashan], (6 June, 1846).

33 On patrons and poets in eighteenth-century Clare see Eilís Ní Dheá, 'Pátrúin agus pátrúnacht i gContae an Chláir san 18ú haois', in *Léachtaí Cholm Cille*, ed. by Ruairí Ó hUiginn, 34 (Maigh Nuad, 2004), pp. 236–56.

34 UCD School of History and Archives. UCD Archives: *Papers of Eugene O'Curry (1796–1862)*: LA38/43.

35 Diarmuid Breathnach and Máire Ní Mhurchú, *Beathaisnéis a seacht, 1560–1781* (Baile Átha Cliath, 2001), pp. 70–71; and Seosamh Mac Mathúna, *Kilfarboy: A History of a West Clare Parish* (Lucan, 1970), p. 111. The estimate of forty-three poems was made by Pádraig Ó Fiannachta. See Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, *Léas Eile ar ár Litriocht* (Má Nuad, 1982), p. 239. While only twenty-two pieces were included in Liam Ó Luaighnigh's *Dánta Aindréis Mhic Cruitín* (1935), this was an incomplete list. Other poems attributed to Mac Cruitín include two sexually explicit poems titled *Cumha an bhoid mhairbh* (attribution uncertain), and *Moladh na pite*. The latter, which praises female genitalia, has been translated. See Angela Bourke et al. (eds), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, vol. 4: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions* (Cork, 2002), pp. 241–42.

36 Standish Hayes O'Grady (ed. and tr.), *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh: The Triumphs of Turlough*, 2 vols (London, 1929).

37 Aindrias is believed to have composed that poem in year 1735. This composition is significant for its prophecy that an invasion of Britain would occur by a foreign power and that the Irish would be liberated. It has been regarded as an allusion to the Jacobite rising which took place ten years later in 1745 in Scotland. See Breandán Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar: na Stíobhartaigh agus an tAos léinn 1603–1788* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1966), p. 574.

a poet and scholar of some repute in Clare.<sup>38</sup> This would have been a substantial undertaking as *An Leabhar Muimhneach* comprises genealogical and historical tracts of several hundred pages.<sup>39</sup>

Much of his literary work has not survived and the manuscripts that we have from his pen represent only a fragment of his copious oeuvre. Remarkably, one manuscript of his was discovered in 1892 at Inch near Ballyea in county Clare in waterlogged conditions.<sup>40</sup> The manuscript contained 267 written folio pages and its contents, according to the colophon, were penned by Aindrias in c. 1709 and gave his place of writing as ‘de Dunogane’ (Doonogan) near Mullagh in west Clare. The contents of this manuscript demonstrate that he was familiar with the religious writings of Séathrún Céitinn and the poetry of Tadhg mac Dáire Mhic Bhruaideadha and Donnchadh Mór Ó Dálaigh.

In 1727 he compiled the 280 page *Leabhar Uí Lochlainn* (‘Book of O’Loughlen’) which was among the last *duanairí* of its kind produced.<sup>41</sup> To list his aristocratic patrons who were recipients of his poetry reads like an almanac of the Gaelic nobility of Thomond: Sorley MacDonnell (Somhairle Mac Domhnaill) of Kilkee and his wife Isabel (Sibéal Ní Bhriain),<sup>42</sup> Sir Edward O’Brien in Ennistymon, Sir Donough O’Brien of Dromoland,<sup>43</sup> Tadhg Mac Conmara of Ranna,<sup>44</sup> and Nioclás Mac Gormáin of Dromeliyh in Ibrickan.<sup>45</sup> Other poems were addressed to members of local Gaelic families and contain a strong *seanchas* element,<sup>46</sup> while others contain humorous themes such as a complaint about a snoring bed-fellow, or a poem of dispraise addressed to a priest and his ‘stupid housekeeper’.<sup>47</sup> He

38 Brian Ó Dálaigh, ‘Micheál Coimín: Jacobite, Protestant and Gaelic Poet 1676–1760’, *Studia Hibernica*, 34 (2006–2007), pp. 123–50, p. 137.

39 Tadhg Ó Donnchadha (ed.), *An Leabhar Muimhneach maraon le suim aguisíní* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1940).

40 Brian O’Looney, ‘On an Old Irish Ms. Found in Co. Clare’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 3 (1893–96), pp. 218–22.

41 Bernadette Cunningham, ‘The Book of O’Loughlen: An Unwanted Wedding Gift?’ in *Irish provincial cultures in the long eighteenth century: Essays for Toby Barnard*, ed. by R. Gillespie and R. F. Foster (Dublin, 2012), pp. 181–97.

42 O’Looney (ed.), *A Collection of Poems*, pp. 4–25.

43 He composed two elegies on the death of Sir Donough O’Brien in 1717. See Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, pp. 1–6.

44 According to its colophon Aindrias Mac Cruitín transcribed the saga-text *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh* (‘Wars of Turlough’) in 1721 for Teige McNamara, from an earlier medieval copy. See TCD Ms H 1 18 (no. 1292).

45 Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, pp. 19–21. On another poem for the Meic Gormáin that is sometimes attributed to Mac Cruitín see *ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

46 Take, for example, a genealogical poem of seventy-five quatrains on the Siol Cais (i.e. the Dalcassian families). See Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, pp. 10–14. He also composed poems on the following Clare families: Uí Eidhín (O’Heynes), Uí Lochlainn (O’Loughlens), and Uí Ghráda (O’Gradys). *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16, 48–49, 50–52, 54–55.

47 Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, p. 58.

also received patronage from gentry in neighbouring counties such as Thomas Fitzgerald (d. 1732), son of the knight of Glin.

Mac Cruitín's poems express disdain for contemporaries who eschewed the age-old tradition of patronage and hospitality for literary men. He disapproved of those 'herd-owners and rich people' who enjoyed only debased, simple poetry, which he regarded as neither enduring nor worth remembering.<sup>48</sup> We get a glimpse into the nature of his life and circumstances in his poem addressed to Sorley MacDonnell and his wife Isabel on occasion of their marriage in 1718. At the time of the poem Mac Cruitín's life was marred with hardship. In the poem he declares that he dwelt on the 'bleak hills of Ibrickan'<sup>49</sup> often scarce of food and drink and without raiment, and that he sometimes 'slept on a mountain field'.<sup>50</sup> Naturally, one of the key themes pervading his poetry was the lack of patronage from the gentry. This echoed the complaints of contemporary poet, Aodhagán Ó Rathaille (c. 1670–1726) whose poetry lamented the ruin of Gaelic families who once supported the learned class.<sup>51</sup>

Ó Rathaille and Mac Cruitín were acutely aware that as more of the great families ran foul of the land settlements and penal laws, native scholars and poets suffered a reduction in income and status. Nor were they slow to equate their predicament with the changing social and cultural landscape of their times. The loss of patrons and inroads that the English language was making among the middle and upper classes were decried by the native scholars. In one apostrophizing line Ó Rathaille exclaimed: *Créad an síobhra nimhe seo ar Fódhla?* (What is this venomous fairy cloak on Ireland?), responding to the loss of a patron.<sup>52</sup> His exclamatory verse encapsulates the dejection and loss which infused much of the poetry of the time as the number of suitable patrons shrank and poets had to find alternative ways to support themselves.

The year of Mac Cruitín's death is generally ascribed to 1738 and he was buried in the churchyard of Kilfarboy.<sup>53</sup> Poet Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín

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48 O'Looney (ed.), *A Collection of Poems*, pp. 15–17.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

51 Dinneen and O'Donoghue (eds), *Dánta Aodhagáin Uí Rathaille*, pp. 6–11, 114–17, 136–37.

52 *Ibid.*, pp. 118–19.

53 Morley, *Aodh Bui Mac Cruitín*, p. 11. An alternative year of his death is given by the Clare poet Mícheál Ó Raghallaigh who suggested 1749, though he confirms that Mac Cruitín was buried at Kilfarboy in Ibrickan (*'Cill na bhFear Bui in Uibh Breacain'*). See Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, 'The Poem Book of Clare', *Dal gCais*, 7 (1984), pp. 41–45, p. 42. Among the manuscripts collected by Brian O'Looney appears the date of Mac Cruitín's death as 1740. This seems to be derived from his 'Biographical Sketches of Modern Irish Bards'. See RIA Ms 24 B 11, pp. 2–17, pp. 106–25. A death date of 1743 is given by Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin, reprint: 1986), p. 107. On balance, it seems that a pre-1740 date of Mac Cruitín's death is probable.

composed an elegy to him titled *Ní Buan Brón go Bás Ollaimh* ('There's no permanent sorrow until an *Ollamh* dies').<sup>54</sup> Revealingly, Aodh Buidhe expresses in the poem why Aindrias was valued – as a master of authentic tradition – and he links this to the profession of the Clann Chruitín: *Do lean riaghail Mhic Cruitín; / Níor cham an seanchas saor*, ('He followed the rule of Mac Cruitín; he did not distort the noble seanchas').<sup>55</sup>

Mac Cruitín lived at a time when the classical tradition Gaelic was in terminal decline and in its stead a new milieu of scholar-poets and ballad singers, less educated and in-tune with popular poetry and literary expressions, were common. Folklorist Séamus Delargy described the decline of the tradition and its transition to the folk-tradition of the hedge-school master and scholar-scribe. His description captures the diminution and change of the tradition as the accomplished poet, the inheritor of the old bardic schools had become, by the eighteenth century, a peripatetic scholar who relied on the farming folk of a district for support.<sup>56</sup> This picture would have been a depressingly familiar one to Mac Cruitín. But it is important to recognize that Aindrias was no rustic or wandering scholar.<sup>57</sup> While a handful of his poems were addressed to patrons outside of his native district this fact does not constitute him a footloose scholar as his verses to the MacDonnells and other local nobility attest.

His own remarks show that he railed against the fashion of his day for simpler poetic metres. He was conscious that he had a duty as an authentic bearer of the cultivated Gaelic literary tradition to produce poetry of the kind that had its roots in the *dán díreach* poetry of the bardic schools. The best evidence of this self-conscious duty is expressed in *Donn na Duimhche* where he writes with pathos, tinged with nostalgia, about whether his supernatural patron can heed his abject appeal:

54 Morley, *Aodh Bui*, pp. 53–54.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

56 J. H. Delargy, 'The Gaelic Story-Teller', *The Sir John Rhys Memorial Lecture* [British Academy] (1945), p. 3.

57 The view of Aindrias Mac Cruitín as a 'wandering bard' was promulgated by Crofton Crocker in 1825. There is no evidence to regard Mac Cruitín as any more peripatetic than other professional scholars who visited patrons in different districts. This view was refuted by Liam Ó Luaighnigh who wrote that Mac Cruitín made excursions through the country in search of scholarly materials but 'was not a wandering bard, like so many of his profession at the time'. Mac Cruitín's employment as a schoolmaster would have constrained his ability to indulge in the type of wandering lifestyle envisaged by Crocker. Manuscript evidence suggests that Mac Cruitín was associated with two places, both of which were adjacent. In 1703 he was dwelling at *Clochán Mhaoil na Tine* and in 1709 he wrote that he was at Doonogan, adjacent to Moyglass (viz: *scriptus Andreas McCurtin de Dunogane in Comitatu Clare*). See O'Looney, 'On an old Irish Ms.', pp. 218–22. See Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, introduction, and Thomas Crofton Crocker, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland: Part III* (London, 1828), pp. xxiv–v.

*Ach marar bodhar tusa ó thromghuth na taoide,  
Nó marar balbh do theanga agus th'insgne,  
Nó mara bhfuairais bás mar chách, a Dhuinn ghil  
Do bhéarfair cabhair is freagra fuinn dam*

[But if you're not deaf from the heavy voice of the tide,  
Or if your tongue and intellect aren't dumbled,  
Or if you haven't died like all (others), oh bright Donn  
You will give aid to me and a solacing reply]

Writing in 1929, scholar Aodh de Blácam remarked whether there could be a 'more plaintive memory of the old dreams than these lines'.<sup>58</sup> He suggests the same sentiment can be found in Wordsworth's poem *The World is Too Much With Us* in which the poet yearns to hear Triton blow his wreathed horn as that poet sought glimpses of a nostalgic world that would make him feel less pitiful.<sup>59</sup> That sentiment is expressed elsewhere in *Donn na Duimhche* when Aindrias brusquely addresses his grievances to Donn and names the source of his woes:

*Ach ó léirsgriosadh gléirchleatha Gaoil Ghluis,  
Ní fhéadar cad dhéanfad, a Dhuinn ghil;  
Ó nár éagas i n-éinfheacht rem shinsear  
Do b'fhearr liom gur báite fé'n tuinn me.  
Mara bhfaghad fos is fosga id bhruín-se*

[But since the destruction of the noble race of Gael Glas,  
I don't know what to do, oh bright Donn;  
Since I have not died together with my ancestors  
It were better for me if I sank in the waves.  
If I do not find rest and shelter in your fairy-palace]

Aindrias lived at the *terminus ad quem* of the classical Gaelic literary tradition of Clare. While hedge-school masters and manuscript copyists continued to transmit the learned tradition, theirs was a scholarly pursuit which focused on preserving what literary remains survived. For his part, Aindrias was immersed in the literary world of the old bardic schools and it was their literary models which influenced his writings and poetry. This can be seen in *Donn na Duimhche* which was an erudite undertaking, displaying the marks of poetic training but through utilizing popular metre. Stylistically it draws from older forms which Aindrias undoubtedly used as exemplars and is replete with motifs from Irish history and mythology.

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58 Aodh de Blácam, *Gaelic Literature Surveyed* (Dublin, 1929), p. 321.

59 *Ibid.*

Despite living in reduced circumstances in his later life at Moyglass, Aindrias's rich literary produce has been preserved in numerous manuscripts by Clare scribes. *Donn na Duimhche* ought to be regarded as one of his greatest legacies, standing as a testament to poetic artistry as much as to the poet himself. But perhaps the ultimate testimonial of his ode to Donn is its persistence in the mouths of the people of Clare down to the twentieth century.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Donn na Duimhche: Fairy-monarch of West Clare***

Donn, who is the subject of Mac Cruitín's supplicatory poem, is usually identified with a mythological deity who features in medieval sources. Most prominently he is met in the eleventh-century *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ('Book of Invasions of Ireland') wherein the text assigns his floruit to the first wave of Milesian invaders who arrived in Ireland and subdued the *Tuatha Dé Danann*.<sup>61</sup>

Donn has a curious ontological status among the pre-Christian deities in that he appears to be a personification of death. This association is given because he is often regarded as presiding over the souls of men.<sup>62</sup> According to the Irish pre-Christian pantheon, Donn was associated with the realm of the dead and it is under this guise that he is found in the death-tale of Conaire which appears in the eighth-century story *Togail Bruidne Dá Derga* ('The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel') where he is encountered as 'king of the dead at the red tower of the dead'.<sup>63</sup> He can be equated with the ancient Greek deity of Thanatos. This view was taken by Celticist Kuno Meyer in his exploration of Irish literary texts from eighth to tenth centuries which reveal remnants of an archaic tradition – a substratum of belief – that Donn signified an old Irish god of death. Meyer concluded that in pre-Christian times a belief prevailed that there existed a god of death and that this was ascribed to Donn who appears to have also been called *Donn-Ainech* ('Dark-Face'). This belief was linked to the transmigration of souls to a place presided over by a death-god. This is partly revealed in a motif that occurs in an old text about Mongán

60 Robert Herbert, *Worthies of Thomond* (Limerick, third series, 1946), pp. 19–20.

61 On references to Donn and his drowning in the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* see R. A. Stewart MacAlister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, part v (Dublin, 1956), pp. 20–21, 24–25, 30–31, 34–37, 38–39, 42–43, 44–45, 46–47, 54–55, 56–57, 58–59, 60–61, 62–63, 64–65, 68–69, 70–71, 72–73, 78–79, 80–81, 82–83, 90–91, 92–93, 94–95, 98–99, 100–01, 102–03, 104–05, 106–07, 124–25, 178–79, 180–81.

62 Thomas F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946 reprint 2010) pp. 483–84.

63 Käte Müller-Lisowski, 'Contributions to a Study in Irish Folklore: Traditions about Donn', *Béaloideas*, 18 (Meitheamh-Nodlaig, 1948), pp. 142–99, p. 189.

mac Fiachnai, who features in the eighth-century tale, *Voyage of Bran*, where it is said that the ghost of a dead hero transmigrated from the south-westerly part of Ireland to the north-east.<sup>64</sup>

The question as to whether scattered references to Donn in literary sources signify an ancient tradition that became ossified and persisted into modern times is a difficult proposition to establish. The fact that folklore became attached to places revered as liminal locations such as *Teach Duinn*, Knockfeerina, and Doughmore, all of which are either aquatic or subterranean environments, lends credence to the idea of a dim reminiscence of a death-god called Donn. From all this it is clear that Donn was not a *genius loci* associated with one place; instead his cult enjoyed wide appeal along the coastal fringe of western Ireland suggesting either a general veneration of this deity or cults related to different deities who shared similar characteristics.

A rich variety of modern folk traditions exist about Donn. Often he is attributed an active presence in the terrestrial realm as the creator of storms and shipwrecks, as well as the protector of cattle and crops.<sup>65</sup> How much of this reflects a primeval belief is uncertain as the early literary references to Donn are somewhat obscure but the common theme of his presiding over a house of the dead alludes to his role as a deified ancestor-being. In this vein it is plausible that his otherworld existence was memorialized and became attached to physical places whose geographies reflect their liminality and other features later befitting Donn's supernatural being.

By the time of Mac Cruitín's poem the memory of Donn had not completely vanished, although he appears to have metamorphosed into a benign 'quasi-deity' holding court in the Clare sandhills. Mac Cruitín's invocation to him probably reflected a vague folk-belief in the presence of this fairy-monarch rather than echoing an ancient ritualized veneration.

### **The *Aes Sídhe* and Origins of Donn**

The origins of the so-called 'fairy folk' (*Aes Sídhe*) are generally regarded as having roots in the narrative-tales about the peopling of Ireland. These tales, embodied in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, present a mythological framework which purported to explain the successive waves of peoples who populated Ireland. One ruling group to whom magical powers and divinity were ascribed was the *Tuatha Dé Danann*. This magical race was said to inhabit the *sidhe*, or fairy-dwellings, of invisible chiefs. These dwellings were believed to be the palaces of

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64 Kuno Meyer, 'Der irische Totengott und die Toteninsel', *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 23 (1919), pp. 537–46.

65 Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (London, 1970), pp. 42–43.

the princes who had once reigned but were driven into the underworld following the defeat of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* by the Milesians, whence they retired to the valleys and hills and established subterranean kingdoms.<sup>66</sup> But the world of this underground fairy-host was not altogether sequestered from that of humans and was believed to have been accessible, especially at liminal places and at particular times of the year (e.g. *Oíche Shamhna*).

Those liminal places associated with supernatural beings were on the one hand separate from the human world and yet coexisted with it in 'hidden view'.<sup>67</sup> According to tales, the fairy-hosts sometimes appeared in cavalcades of fantastical beings of striking beauty who, from time to time, interfered in the affairs of men. They emerged from their supernatural portals and wielded powers which granted access to not just individual *sidhe* dwellings but the whole Otherworld. For it was believed that while there existed different portals and a variety of deities presiding over them there was only one Otherworld. Donn might appear under different guises and his cult came to be attached to various *sidhe* in different districts of Ireland but they were related to a single supernatural being.<sup>68</sup>

There remains uncertainty as to the origins of Donn, with two competing identifications of him occurring in literary tradition. In some accounts he transforms into anthropomorphic form and becomes one of the leaders of the Milesian invasion of Ireland, he being a son of Míl Espáine who was drowned at Inbhear Scéine (Kenmare Bay in Kerry) after the *Tuatha Dé Danann* magically raised storms against him. As a consequence of this, his cult was transferred to Bull Rock off Dursey Island.<sup>69</sup> Bull Rock is an extraordinary islet to the west of the Beara Peninsular in the open Atlantic and known as *Teach Duinn* ('Donn's house'). It resembles a portal tomb with its natural tunnel that allows the sea to pass under it and possibly for this reason it was believed that Donn was buried at the marine rock, on the westerly limits of the known world.<sup>70</sup>

An alternative view is that Donn of Mac Cruitín's poem was not a Milesian but a deity of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* who yielded to the Milesian invaders of Ireland. There is evidence in the poem itself that Mac Cruitín saw him as

66 Eleanor Hull, *A Text Book of Irish Literature: Part I* (Dublin, 1906), p. 23.

67 John Carey, 'Time, Space, and the Otherworld', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* (1987), 7 (1987), pp. 1–27, p. 2.

68 O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, p. 290.

69 In the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, Donn is recorded as having drowned 'at the sandhills at Tech Duinn' (*na Dumachaib oc Taig Duind*). It further relates that there is a grave-mound at *Teach Duinn* – which takes its name from Donn – and is where Donn and his comrades who drowned are commemorated. See MacAlister, *Lebor*, pp. 38–39, pp. 56–57.

70 On *Teach Duinn* and the mythology attached to it see Käte Müller-Lisowski, 'Donn Firinne, Tech Duin, an Tarbh', *Études Celtiques* 6:1 (1952–54), pp. 21–29.

one of the defenders against the Milesians and a son of Dagda who fought at *Cath Finntrágha* ('Battle of Ventry').<sup>71</sup> His mystical other worldly presence is suggestive of a *Tuatha Dé Danann* origin as this race took refuge in the *sídh*e where they were believed to have continued to exercise magical powers. This finds support in Kuno Meyer's view that the monastic scholars who compiled the Middle Irish treatise, *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, substituted the ancient pagan god of death, Donn, for a son of Míl Espáine. In doing so they redacted the most egregious non-Christian element of the story. Meyer deduces this because in the original version of Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*, Donn son of Míl Espáine was not mentioned, but he appears in its Irish translation which belongs to the period 650–800.<sup>72</sup>

The figure of Donn is long known in Irish literary history, first appearing in the eighth-century cryptic text, 'The Caldron of Poesy', where he is associated with knowledge that is received by the gods and the making of poetry'.<sup>73</sup> A ninth-century poem found in the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* describes that Donn's dying wish was that his descendants would gather at *Teach Duinn* after death: 'to me, to my house, ye shall all come after your death!'.<sup>74</sup> Other references to him are scattered but their frequency suggests that he was of interest to the redactors of these early texts. In the tenth-century tale, *Airne Fíngéin* ('Fíngéin's Vigil')<sup>75</sup> it states that *Teach Duinn* was where the souls of all the dead gather. Belief in transmigration was strong among the pre-Christian Irish and its reoccurring theme indicates, at least on some level, the persistence of the motif and its attachment to certain places.<sup>76</sup>

This is confirmed in the twelfth-century recension of the metrical *Dindshenchas* in the *Book of Leinster*. In that text, *Teach Duinn* is identified as the sepulchre of Donn and it goes on to state, no doubt reflecting its writer's Christian milieu, that 'according to the heathen, the souls of sinners visit *Teach Duinn* before they go to hell, and give their blessing, ere, they go to the soul of Donn'.<sup>77</sup> This reference suggests the belief that Donn was associated with death and the passage of souls to the afterlife. The reference to hell shows how the text was provided a Christian interpretation by its twelfth-century redactor.

71 Cecile O'Rahilly (ed.), *Cath Finntrágha* (Dublin, 1962).

72 Kuno Meyer, cited in Müller-Lisowski, 'Contributions to a Study in Irish Folklore', p. 151.

73 Liam Breatnach, 'The Caldron of Poesy', *Ériu*, 32 (1981), pp. 45–93, p. 62.

74 Müller-Lisowski, 'Contributions to a Study in Irish Folklore', p. 152.

75 Joseph Vendryes (ed.), *Airne Fíngéin* (Dublin, 1953). A similar claim is made in the *Acallam na Senórach*. See Ann Dooley and Harry Roe (eds), *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 22, 231.

76 Hull, 'Text Book of Irish Literature', pp. 119–23.

77 Edward Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, 4 (Dublin, reprint: 1991), pp. 310–11.

The story of Donn was still recited and known among Irish antiquaries more than a century before Mac Cruitín's poem. It was esteemed and considered an historical truth, bound up with the Milesian colonization of Ireland and the central idea found in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, that the sons of Míl Espáine (Donn, Amairgen, and their kinsman Íth) came to Ireland intent on possessing it. The main aspects of this story feature in a letter written by Florence McCarthy during his incarceration in the Tower of London, to Donough O'Brien, fourth earl of Thomond (d. 1624). McCarthy, who was well-versed in Irish antiquities, clearly drew on the Irish origin myth when he wrote that Donn was drowned, along with other Milesian invaders, 'upon the rock beyond Dorsies called also Tech Duinn'.<sup>78</sup>

The story is found in the Irish version of the *Historia Britonum of Nennius* whose recension is dated to the fifteenth century although earlier, fragmentary versions, are found in the twelfth-century compilation known as the *Lebor na hUidre*.<sup>79</sup> The story was repeated elsewhere, most notably in the seventeenth-century *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*.<sup>80</sup> It also featured in Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín's vindication of the history of Ireland which was published in English in 1717.<sup>81</sup> This latter reference is sure evidence that Aindrias was aware of the two competing identifications of Donn – that is, Donn of the Milesian invasion and Donn of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*. We can be confident that not only was Aindrias acquainted with this work of his kinsman but also that it drew from the historical materials of the Clann Chruitín of which Aindrias would have been very familiar.

Relevant to our discussion about Donn is the folklore tradition that links him with other locations in Munster. He is believed to have dwelt at Knockfeerina (*Cnoc Fírinne*) near Ballingarry in Limerick. Knockfeerina is a prominent location and its link to Donn is intimated in the toponym given to it by Mac

78 John O'Donovan, 'Letter of Florence Mac Carthy to the Earl of Thomond, on the Ancient History of Ireland', *Journal of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society* 1 (1856, 1858), pp. 203–29, p. 216.

79 The reference to Donn in the *Historia Britonum of Nennius* provides an explanation as to why his memory is attached to Bull Rock as his sepulchral monument. Following Donn's drowning by shipwreck it states in (translated) verse: 'There was raised for him a cairn with the stone of his race / Over the broad sea / An ancient stormy dwelling; and Tech Duinn / it is called. / This was his great testament. / To his numerous children. / To me, to my house, come ye all / After your deaths'. See James Henthorn Todd (ed.), *Leabhar Breathnach annsois: The Irish Version of the Historia Britonum of Nennius* (Dublin, 1848), pp. 248–49.

80 Patrick S. Dinneen (ed.), *The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, DD*, 2 (London, 1908), p. 87.

81 Hugh MacCurtin, *A brief discourse in vindication of the antiquity of Ireland; collected out of many authentick Irish histories and chronicles, and out of foreign learned authors* (Dublin, 1717), p. 43.

Cruitín in his poem: *Duinn Chnuic-firinn*, and how it was once called by the local people: *Cnoc Dhoinn Fírinne* ('the hill of Donn of truth').<sup>82</sup> Local belief regarded Donn as having his subterranean dwelling at *Poll na Bruidne* near the summit of the hill where the entrance to the fairy-monarch's palace was located.<sup>83</sup> To Donn is attributed the government of the fairies of Munster, presiding as a kind of fairy-monarch.<sup>84</sup> It is argued that certain motifs grew up around his cult in Limerick, some of which might even echo a medieval Norse provenance.<sup>85</sup>

Early etymologies of Knockfeerina suggest that its original name was *Cnoc Fí(dh)ghrinne* and was phonetically rendered to *Cnoc Fírinne*. In the twelfth-century tale *Cath Finntrágha* ('the battle of Ventry'), Donn *Fritgrini* is named in a list of princes of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*.<sup>86</sup> The placename *Fritgrini* (recte *Fridgrinne*) is taken to be the original form of *Cnoc Fírinne* and thus links Donn to that hill in Limerick and to the *Tuatha Dé Danann*.<sup>87</sup> Such was Donn's attachment to Knockfeerina that he appeared as the subject of a poem, its author being the celebrated Sliabh Luachra poet Aodhagán Ó Rathaille. This poem, a *tairngreacht* or prediction, envisages Donn foretelling the restoration of the exiled Stuarts and the ushering in of a new political order.<sup>88</sup> In putting the language of prophecy in Donn's mouth the poet harks back to the popular etymology of *Cnoc Dhoinn Fírinne* as denoting 'the hill of Donn of truth'. This alludes to beliefs about Knockfeerina as a place of prediction where such things as weather events could be foretold by gazing upon its summit.<sup>89</sup>

Probably the most enduring mythology surrounding Donn is that associated with the sandhills of west Clare. Tales about Donn of *Teach Duinn* suggest it might have more resonance with Donn of the sandhills in west Clare on account of the maritime parallels than with Knockfeerina in Limerick. There is some evidence for this, albeit late, contained in a precursory note to a version of the

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82 On the placename Knockfeerina and its meaning and origin see Müller-Lisowski, 'Donn Fírinne, Tech Duin, an Tarbh', pp. 21–29. Also see Thomas Crofton Croker, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland: Part III* (London, 1828), p. xxvi.

83 Müller-Lisowski, 'Contributions to a Study in Irish Folklore', p. 154. In the 1930s it was recorded that, 'Knockfierna (*Cnoc Fírinne*) or 'Truthful Hill' served as a weather guide to the people within view of it, who 'can predict with certainty whether the day will be wet or dry by the appearance of the summit in the morning'. It was also recorded that the summit contained Donn's cave and cairn. See National Folklore Collection, UCD, *The Schools' Collection*, vol. 525, p. 83.

84 Edward Walsh, *Irish Popular Songs; with English Metrical Translations, and Introductory Remarks and Notes* (Dublin, 1847), p. 160.

85 Dáithí Ó hOgáin, *The Lore of Ireland: An Encyclopaedia of Myth, Legend and Romance* (Cork, 2006), p. 180.

86 Kuno Meyer (ed.), *The Cath Finntrágha or Battle of Ventry* (Oxford, 1885), p. 15.

87 T. F. O'Rahilly, 'Notes on Irish Place-names', *Hermathena* 23 (1933), pp. 196–220, pp. 203–04.

88 Dinneen and O'Donoghue, *Dánta Aodhagáin Uí Rathaille*, p. 167.

89 Müller-Lisowski, 'Contributions to a Study in Irish Folklore', pp. 159–60.

poem *Donn na Duimhche*. This note states: *Caithréim do rinne Aindrias Mac Cuirtín do Donn Dhadhbhach mac Mileadh Easbáin do báthadh a n-iarthar Tuadhmmhumhann an tan mheathadar na huaisle air* ('A tribute by Aindrias Mac Cuirtín for Donn [na] Dadhbhach,<sup>90</sup> son of Mileadh Easbáin, who was drowned in the west of Thomond, on the occasion when the nobles deserted him').<sup>91</sup> This note, which is affixed to the second oldest version of the poem, was written by a scribe in 1767–68. It suggests that a tradition existed which linked Donn's drowning to the sandhills of Doughmore on the Clare coast and was somehow conflated with the legend about the Milesian invasion.

The earliest reference to Donn being associated with any sandhills appears in a tenth-century poem by Eochaid Úa Flainn in which he referred to Donn's drowning at the *Damhachaibh* (sandhills).<sup>92</sup> However, there are no sandhills near *Teach Duinn*. According to O'Rahilly, this confusion came about because there was a conflation of two accounts, one which put Donn's drowning near *Teach Duinn* and another which put it near some unidentified sandhills called (*na*) *Dumhacha Duinn*.<sup>93</sup> There are other early traditions that Donn's drowning occurred at a location with sandhills but without any mention of *Teach Duinn*.<sup>94</sup> The implication here is that the early medieval literature is not clear presumably because its redactors were trying to reconcile a number of disparate traditions about Donn.

One explanation for Doughmore's association with Donn is that it represents a localization of the tale. This explanation points to an early deification of Donn in which he came to signify a single supernatural being whose cult blended earlier

90 An interesting feature of the Clare dialect of Irish is that the forms *dabhach* and *dumhach* are used interchangeably. Both have the meaning of sandhill but *dabhach* can also have the meaning of a 'vat' or 'tub'. However, both have similar vocalization patterns and in the Irish of Clare they were pronounced similarly, where the respective *bh* and *mh* are palatal, giving rise to the common anglicized form of 'Dough'. This form reflected the early anglicized versions of 'Dowgh' and 'Dowagh' of the late sixteenth century. There is some ambiguity in the use of *dabhach* and *dumhach* in Clare and they are generally treated as the same word owing to their phonetic similarity. This is also the case with *Donn na Duimhche*, whereby the form *Duimhche* is genitive singular and is sometimes interchanged with *Donn na Duibhche*, as we find in one nineteenth-century version (RIA Ms 24 B 11 p. 106). On *dabhach* versus *dumhach* see T. L. F. Fransen, *Dialectal Features in Co. Clare Place-names: The Vocalization of the Fricatives -bh- and -mh: Including a Discussion on Lexical Items in Irish Place-names* MA thesis, Celtic Languages and Culture (Utrecht University, 2010), pp. 30–39.

91 RIA Ms 23 C 16, p. 84. Also see Thomas O'Rahilly, Kathleen Mulchrone, Mary E. Byrne, and D. H. Delargy, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, fasc. i–v (Dublin, 1943), p. 613.

92 James Clarence Mangan, *The Poets and Poetry of Munster: A Selection of Irish Songs by the Poets of the Last Century* (Dublin, 1850), p. 20.

93 O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, p. 493.

94 *Ibid.*

beliefs about his identity as Donn son of Míl Espáine and as Donn, an ancient god of death and a member of the *Tuatha Dé Danan*.<sup>95</sup> The opaque and ambiguous nature of these traditions makes any identification problematic if not impossible.

### Folklore Traditions About Donn

In county Clare traditions about Donn are rooted in the sandhills of its Atlantic coast. According to the Clare antiquary, Eugene O'Curry, Donn was revered by the local peasantry in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>96</sup> During the collection of folklore in the 1930s Donn was remembered around the Lahinch area where his memory was attached to the nearby sandhills.<sup>97</sup> A sandhill near the bridge on the Inagh river, known as Crughaneer, was believed to be where Donn dwelt.<sup>98</sup> Local people spoke of a 'fairy-king' who protected money and valuables underneath the ruined castle of Dough near Lahinch.<sup>99</sup> This appears to be a genuine tradition which was recognized in the mid-nineteenth century. According to a manuscript written by Professor Brian O'Looney in the mid-nineteenth century, Donn's residence was believed to be *Cnoc na Sioguidh* ('fairy hill') near Lahinch.<sup>100</sup> The identification of Donn's residence at Lahinch can be explained by the transference of the memory of Donn from the more extensive sandhills further south at Doughmore. Any maritime environment adorned with sandhills on the west Clare coast was liable to be the subject of Donn and his memorialization. Mac Cruitín's poem makes it clear that he was addressing Donn of Doughmore on the stretch of coast west of Moyglass where the ageing poet dwelt.<sup>101</sup>

95 One eminent folklorist concluded her study of Donn thus: 'From this survey of the traditions we may infer that there was a god, called Donn, with perhaps many other names and epithets, with various functions besides and, with many local cult centres all over Ireland'. See Müller-Lisowski, 'Contributions to a Study in Irish Folklore', p. 195.

96 Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, p. 9.

97 National Folklore Collection, UCD, *The Schools' Collection*, vol. 0621, p. 246.

98 T. J. Westropp, 'Excursions of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, Summer Meeting, 1900', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 10 (1900), pp. 273–306, p. 293.

99 *Ibid.*

100 RIA Ms 24 B 11. O'Looney further writes: 'It is a curious fact that the name of this prince after the lapse of long forgotten ages, is as familiar as a household word among the peasantry of the south and west of Munster. Donn Firineach or Donn the Truth-teller, to whom is attributed, in Irish mythology, the government of the fairies of Munster. He is said to have various places of abode throughout Munster but it is acknowledged that his chief residence was on *Cnoc Firine*, a romantic hill in the county Limerick'.

101 Mac Cruitín tells us this explicitly in the poem's final stanza before the *ceangal*. In the *ceangal* a line of verse reiterates this point, calling Donn the king of the western sandhills: *A ri an chnuic shoineanta shocair na Duiche thiar* ('O king of the tranquil hill of the western sandhills'). This could be interpreted as a metaphorical allusion to the western coast but in the context of the preceding verse which states that the poet dwelt at Moyglass, it would appear that the two lines ought to be read with this context in mind.

Brian O’Looney was acquainted with the poetry and writings of Aindrias and Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín. On account of his wife Siobhán Nic Chruitín belonging to the Clann Chruitín, he must have been exposed to his wife’s family traditions. According to O’Looney, Aindrias Mac Cruitín wrote his ‘plaintive address to Donn of the Sandpits’ in the year 1740<sup>102</sup> when he was ‘in the decline of life and deserted by the gentry’. O’Looney goes on to regard the poem as ‘a truly original poem’, in which the poet entreats Donn to grant him shelter in his enchanted abode.<sup>103</sup> O’Looney alludes to a different version of the poem circulating in the hands of Clare scribes:

*Beanúghadh an doill a g-coim na h-oidhche* (‘The salutation of the blind at the approach of night’). I beg to differ with the numerous Irish scribes who have written this poem under the above heading as I feel it more consistent with reason and good sense to write thus: *Beanúghadh Doimhinn Dhuit a Dhoinn na Doibhche*.<sup>104</sup>

During a visit to west Clare by folklorist Tadhg Ó Murchú in 1943 he recorded a number of traditional stories and anecdotes from local people around Killard, Doonbeg, and Mountrivers. This seems to rebut Westropp’s view in 1910 that ‘save for a slight uneasiness in a few poor old people passing across the sandhills [...] he [Donn] is now all but forgotten’.<sup>105</sup> These local people, who recalled a slew of folktales about Donn, were dubbed by Ó Murchú as *lucht seanchais an Iarthair* (‘tradition-bearers of the West’).<sup>106</sup> One such tradition-bearer who recalled tales in Irish to Ó Murchú was Killard native, Seán Tomás Mór Mac an Airchinnigh, who had an impressive repertoire of folktales.<sup>107</sup> Ó Murchú relayed stories about Donn that regarded him as ‘the leader of the fairy host of the area and whose court was said to be in the centre of *Cnoc an tSodair*, the highest point of the sandhills at Doughmore Bay’.<sup>108</sup>

Southeast from Killard was Mountrivers where Ó Murchú recorded a number of anecdotes about Donn from another Mac an Airchinnigh (or ‘McInertney’ as

102 It is generally accepted that Mac Cruitín died in 1738. However, the slightly later date of 1740 should be given consideration.

103 RIA Ms 24 B 11, p. 12.

104 RIA Ms 24 B 11, p. 4.

105 T. J. Westropp, *Folklore of Clare: A Folklore Survey of County Clare and Country Clare Folk-Tales and Myths*, Maureen Comber (ed.) (Ennis, 2003), p. 14. Westropp refers to Mac Cruitín’s poem and suggests that on account of the poet’s petition having fallen on deaf ears, Donn has since ‘lacked a sacred bard’.

106 Patricia Lysaght, ‘Folklore Collecting in County Clare: Tadhg Ó Murchú’s Second Visit (1943)’, *Béaloideas*, 75 (2007), pp. 109–69, p. 117.

107 *Ibid.*, pp. 141–47.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

it is sometimes anglicized in west Clare). Here, Sean McNertney retold stories handed down to him in about the year 1900 by his father Tim McNertney. These stories were of some antiquity given that Tim McNertney died at the age of ninety-eight, suggesting that the stories had a pedigree stretching well into the nineteenth century.<sup>109</sup> Common to these stories was that Donn was called 'Donn Mac Cromáin' ('son of the crooked') and that Donn was believed to ride a white charger along the tidal strand.<sup>110</sup> The motif of Donn as a horseman is reflected in the placename of his fairy-dwelling, *Cnoc an tSodair* ('hill of the trotting') and is reminiscent of stories from Knockfeerina in that Donn was seen riding a white horse.<sup>111</sup> His phantom presence was significant enough to be reflected in expressions and exclamations that entered the lexicon of Clare's local population such as *Díreach Donn!* ('By the right, Donn!') or the expletive epigram, *Dar Duinnín is dar Donn!* ('By little and by big Donn!').<sup>112</sup>

### The Poem

*Dán díreach* ('straight verse') was the requisite standard in versification from the twelfth to seventeenth century during which period linguistic uniformity prevailed among the higher-ranking professional poets. This poetry adhered to the standardized literary language, characterized by a non-rhythmic style requiring a certain number of syllables to each verse. The language of this poetry was Classical Early Modern Irish and its prosody had a lasting influence on later poets, including Aindrias Mac Cruitín. Poetry of the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century retained many features germane to the strictures of the classical metres and even as tastes changed some poets such as Pádraigín Haicéad (c. 1604–54) and Dáibhí Ó Bruadair (1625–98) continued to use the older metres.

With the destruction of the Gaelic social order and the concomitant decline of the bardic schools, *dán díreach* poetry was largely abandoned in favour of less stylistic metres. From about the mid-seventeenth century verse composed in the stressed metres of the *amhrán* tended to become the literary norm.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Müller-Lisowski, 'Contributions to a Study in Irish Folklore', p. 168.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168–74.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158. The notion of a fairy or supernatural being riding a charger or accompanied by a troop of horses over sea and land, sometimes with a heavenly cavalcade, is a reoccurring motif in Irish mythology. See O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, pp. 290–94.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas F. O'Rahilly, *Dánfhocail: Irish Epigrams in Verse* (Dublin, 1921), p. 16.

<sup>113</sup> *Amhrán* metre was not new and in fact professional poets were complaining of its use by less accomplished poets and bards since the fourteenth century. In one poem from that period it was described as 'crooked faulty poetry' (*camdhán fiar fíorlochtach*) which regarded *amhrán* verse as debasing and robbing the professionally trained *dán díreach* poets of patrons and lucrative rewards for their art. See Lambert McKenna (ed.), *The Book of Magauran: Leabhar Méig Shamhradháin* (Dublin, 1947), p. 237; (translation: p. 379).

Resistance to the newer metres lasted even as late as the eighteenth century and we have from the pen of Aindrias Mac Cruitín his own protest of having to compose an ‘insipid sluggish poem, void of elegance’, rather than an ornate poem fitting for a true poet.<sup>114</sup> But Aindrias’s poetry shows that he was not averse to using the newer forms and some of his poems reflect an intermediate form whereby verses in *dán díreach* and *amhrán* metre are alternated.<sup>115</sup> He was not the only poet of his day who decried the abandonment of the classical syllabic metres. His remonstrations applied equally to other matters that impinged upon his profession, chiefly the ill conditions that prevailed for literary men of his learning and standing.

*Donn na Duimhche* was composed in *caoineadh* metre with its *ceangal* adopting *amhrán* metre.<sup>116</sup> The seventeenth century saw a shift from formulaic poetry to less conventional forms such as ‘personal elegies’, or *marbhnaí*. *Caoineadh* metre contained a stress or accentual metre that lends itself to public poetry such as political verses, hymns, and threnodic verse.<sup>117</sup> The more formal compositions in *caoineadh* metre have four rhythmic feet with assonance of the stressed syllable in the second and third foot and a constant stressed vowel which is usually *é*. In *Donn na Duimhche* the stressed vowel used is *í*, appearing in the penultimate syllable of the final.<sup>118</sup> Overall, the poem exhibits a freedom of metre rather than a strict regularity while at the same time adhering largely to *caoineadh* metre.

There are a number of literary devices employed in *caoineadh* metre which are designed to heighten impact alongside its poetic ornamentation. Numerous motifs attached to Donn are found in Mac Cruitín’s poem. He was associated with horse riding and he is evoked as a warrior who haughtily presided over great banquets. The equestrian motif appears in *Donn na Duimhche* when Mac Cruitín entreats that he may serve as a lowly horse-boy in Donn’s ‘fairy cavalry-troop’. The image of fairy-cavalry was popular in folklore and Irish

114 O’Looney (ed.), *A Collection of Poems*, pp. 6–7.

115 I thank John Minahane for this point and in identifying the following examples in Aindrias’s poetry where this intermediate form is exhibited: *Annamh sin, a Chláir Lughaidh léir* (an elegy for Donnchadh and Laoighseach); *Créad ná caoifinn mar chách* (an elegy for Séamus Ó Domhnaill of Kilkee, 1714); *Fada mo thrúth re triall turais* (poem to Níoclás Mac Gormáin); and *Diombuan dligheadh chéile don Ghleann* (an elegy for Tomás Mac Ridire an Ghleanna, 1732). See Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, pp. 1–3, 17–18, 19–21, 25–27.

116 The *amhrán* metre is an accentual metre based on sequences of rhyming vowels.

117 Virginia S. Blankenhorn, *Irish Song-craft and Metrical Practice Since 1600* (Lewiston, 2003), pp. 247–48.

118 On the *caoineadh* metre see Brian Ó Broin, ‘Caoineadh’, in *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopaedia*, ed. by John J. Koch (2006), p. 341. Also see Breandán Ó Buachalla, *An Caoine agus an Chaoiteoireacht* (Dublin, 1998) and Michelle O Riordan, ‘Makers and Metre’, *The Poetry Ireland Review*, 67 (Winter, 2000), pp. 79–84, p. 83.

saga literature deriving from legends of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* and their horse-troop.<sup>119</sup> In the context of Mac Cruitín's poem the image of a fairy-horseman was possibly borrowed into Clare folklore and reflects the association of Donn as a horseman in the beliefs attached to Knockfeerina in Limerick.

The supernatural character of Donn appears in folklore traditions where he is recorded as the cause of storms and shipwrecks, exemplifying his otherworldly prowess in a dramatic and powerful way. The image of Donn presiding over feasts finds resonance in tales about the Otherworld, which was regarded as a realm replete with fabulous banquets as well as where great games were held.<sup>120</sup> The most enduring motif of Mac Cruitín's poem, however, is the pang of lost patronage and that he implores the Donn to grant him shelter in his enchanted palace and open its every door. It shows that the poet envisaged entertaining Donn in the manner of a *seanchaidhe* by reciting to him rousing stories of Ireland's past and recounting the romantic sagas. This reoccurring motif about patronage is the dominant theme of the poem and is skilfully employed. Instead of the death of a patron being the object of this threnody it is the 'death' of patronage itself which takes centre-stage. Mac Cruitín unswervingly relates its personal impact as he, aged and dispirited, is drawing closer to his own demise.

The poet, who found himself abandoned by his patrons and entering the Christmas season neglected, pours opprobrium on the wealthy upstarts of his time. In one poem he tells of a curse by St Senan in which the saint foretold that the gentry would decay if they were not visited by the poets of Clare (*le filidhe an Chláir*) and showed their munificence to the learned folk.<sup>121</sup> The absence of patronage suffuses *Donn na Duimhche*, engendering a sense of despondency as Mac Cruitín bemoans his personal circumstances. This is encapsulated in the line before the poem's *ceangal* in which he vents in full poetic vigour: *Ar sgéird Mho-ghlais im spreas 's im splíonach!* ('At bleak Moyglass, a wretch and in melancholy!'). In a line designed for impact, the alliteration of *spreas* and *splíonach* elicits a severe, almost spitting sound. The poem ends on a despairing note as the poet predicts the outcome of his entreaty to Donn:

*Ní shílim cobhair dom rochtain, ós críon me, liath,  
Ach caoi nó colla go sroiche mo chlí don chria.*

I expect no succour to reach me since I am old and grey,  
But grieving or sleeping till my flesh reaches the clay.

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119 Eugene O'Curry, 'The "Trí thruaighe na scéalaigheachta" (i.e. the "Three Most Sorrowful Tales") of Erin. — II. "The fate of the children of Lir"', *The Atlantis: A Register of Literature and Science*, 4 (1863), pp. 113–57, p. 138.

120 Carey, 'Time, Space, and the Otherworld', p. 2.

121 O'Looney (ed.), *A Collection of Poems*, pp. 14–15.

What makes the poem remarkable is its witness to the penurious life of Aindrias Mac Cruitín expressed by a desperate appeal to a supernatural patron. Mac Cruitín's world of Gaelic learning and its concerns of genealogy, poetic metres, and stories of the *fianna* was in irrevocable retreat when he penned *Donn na Duimhche* at Moyglass in the mid-1730s.

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In 1925 Celtic scholar T. F. O'Rahilly was the first to publish a full version of the poem in Irish and was careful to supplement omissions or inconsistencies with readings from other recensions.<sup>122</sup> In his edited version O'Rahilly remarked that it was 'probably the most remarkable of all the poems of Aindrias Mac Cruitín'. Striking a sombre note he decried that 'such a poem, composed nearly 200 years ago, should have remained unprinted until to-day, is a sadly eloquent testimony to our denationalization'.<sup>123</sup> This statement probably more than any other reveals something of the true value of this fine poem, composed in the final years of an ageing poet, at the twilight of the classical poetic tradition of Clare.

A literal translation of *Donn na Duimhche* is presented in Appendix 1. The Irish text of the poem is informed by T. F. O'Rahilly's printed version which appeared in the *Irish Monthly* in May 1925, as well as readings from two other sources, one of which was unknown to him.<sup>124</sup> O'Rahilly's version does not take account of the oldest known surviving manuscript version, Mount Melleray Abbey, Ms 1, which is thought to be an autograph copy penned by Aindrias Mac Cruitín himself. O'Rahilly's printed text derived from five manuscripts, almost all of which share a Clare provenance. The most interesting of these versions is RIA Ms 23 L 24, p. 182, as it was the oldest manuscript that O'Rahilly had access to. This version is in the hand of the Clare scribe, Diarmuid Ó Mulchaoinne, who wrote it for a local patron in 1766–67.<sup>125</sup>

RIA Ms 23 L 24 is a composite manuscript containing a miscellany of verse, tales, and writings, some of which were copied from a manuscript once possessed by Aindrias Mac Cruitín such as the tale of *Cath Fionntrágha* ('The Battle of Ventry') and *Caithréim Fhinn mhic Cumhaill* ('The Triumphs of Finn mac Cumhaill'). The same scribe wrote another manuscript, now RIA Ms 23 C 16 in 1767–68, in which also appeared *Donn na Duimhche*, arranged in twenty-six quatrains.<sup>126</sup> Given that these two manuscripts had a Clare provenance and

122 T. F. O'Rahilly, 'Deasgan Tuanach', *The Irish Monthly*, 53:623 (May, 1925), pp. 257–63.

123 *Ibid.*, p. 260.

124 *Ibid.*, pp. 257–63. The two other sources used are: Mount Melleray Abbey, Ms 1 and the version printed by Liam Ó Luaighnigh in 1935. See Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, pp. 7–9.

125 O'Rahilly et al., *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts* fasc. i–v, p. 84.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 611.

that they were compiled around thirty years after the death of Mac Cruitín, it would appear that they stand as authentic transmissions of his poem.<sup>127</sup>

Of all of the versions it is the calf-bound vellum manuscript, Mount Melleray Abbey, Ms 1, which is the oldest and possibly most authentic. This manuscript, which was not known by O'Rahilly, forms part of the modest collection of Irish manuscripts held at Mount Melleray Abbey.<sup>128</sup> With its earliest writing dating from 1712, the manuscript is largely attributed to the penmanship of Mac Cruitín and contains copies of *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* by Séathrún Céitinn (Geoffrey Keating) and the poetic contention known as *Iomarbhágh na bhFileadh*. It also contains an incomplete version of *Donn na Duimhche* which is believed to be in Mac Cruitín's own hand and is titled *Beanúghadh do bhain dhuith a Doinn na Daoiche*. The poem contains sixty-eight lines arranged in couplets and while it generally conforms to the exemplar that O'Rahilly used, it omits verses 41–9 and 77–120, including the *ceangal*, which appears in other copies. This version ends abruptly at line 76 making a rather odd end-verse: (*Craobh coineasa mhór-mhaicne Mhíle*, 'the genealogy of the great sons of Míl'). The remaining verses of the poem (§§77–120), which are preserved in later copies, are not found in the Melleray manuscript.

The next known oldest version was copied by the Clare scribe Diarmuid Ó Mulchaoinne in 1766–67 (RIA Ms 23 L 24, pp. 182–85). It can be postulated that the omitted verses from the Melleray manuscript were copied elsewhere by Mac Cruitín in a now lost exemplar version which informed the manuscript transmission of later scribes such as Ó Mulchaoinne. This is because the omitted verses included by Ó Mulchaoinne do not depart from the style that is ascribed to Mac Cruitín in the Melleray manuscript. We are left to conclude that if the version found in the Melleray manuscript was in the hand of Mac Cruitín, then during his lifetime at least another version was written which contained the entire poem and that it was probably this version which informed all others.

The poem in the Melleray version is followed by a Sator Square. This is a two-dimensional word square containing a five-word Latin palindrome. The Sator Square was probably included as a scholastic flourish and it was likely the work of a later scribe rather than Mac Cruitín. The Melleray manuscript's association with Mac Cruitín makes it an authentic witness and its similarity to later versions (e.g. RIA Ms 23 L 24; RIA Ms 23 C 16) confirms the general reliability of the scribal transmission.

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127 There are several versions of the poem from the late eighteenth and nineteenth century found in the Egerton collection. See British Library [BL] Ms Egerton 118, f.32 (copied by Edward O'Reilly); BL Ms Egerton 150, f.199 (dated 1773–74, copied for Seán Ó Maoldomhnaigh of Limerick), BL Ms Egerton 209; and BL Ms Egerton 119.

128 Mount Melleray Abbey, Ms 1.

### Translations

Mac Cruitín's poem was popular among Clare's scribes. This is not surprising and was likely propelled by the county's rich tradition of copying and curating Irish-language manuscripts. Another factor may have been the early entry of the poem into circulation in English translation. This can be explained by the dynamic literary environment at the end of the eighteenth century in which great works of Irish poetry such as Brian Merriman's *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* were promulgated in their original Irish and, increasingly, in English translation.

The earliest known attempt at a translation is a metrical translation by Connor McGorman, parish priest of Cross near Carrigaholt in southwest Clare, in 1800.<sup>129</sup> This version contained rhyming couplets and opens with the line: 'Hail Donn, Dough's gen'rous chief, at plenty's board'.<sup>130</sup> McGorman appended a short note to his translation:

The above is a close translation of Andrew Mac Curtin's address to *Donn-na-Duilhe* or Donn, the Fairy Chief of the Doughs of Clahanes, traditionally Donn ruadh an fhiona Mac Gorman of Clahanes in Ibrickane, so noted for his hospitality.<sup>131</sup>

What is interesting about this account is the naming of Donn whereby he is identified as *Donn ruadh an fhiona* ('Red Donn of the Wine') and that he was associated with the MacGorman family. The appellation *an fhiona* ('of the wine') presumably reflects the belief that Donn presided over a fairy-banquet at his palace, busying himself with dispensing hospitality and partaking in games and entertainment. This point finds resonance in Mac Cruitín's poem and was one of the reasons that rendered him a worthy patron for the poet. It also stands as evidence of a tradition in west Clare that Donn was regarded as having a link to wine and festivity and it confirms that his cult centred on the 'Doughs' (sandhills) of Clohanes.<sup>132</sup> The reference that Donn was surnamed McGorman can be explained by the fact that the translator was a McGorman and the family

<sup>129</sup> RIA Ms 12 0 7, pp. 231–36. This metrical version purports to be a close translation, but it cannot be regarded as a literal translation. On Rev. Connor McGorman who was appointed parish priest of the parishes of Cross and Kilballyowen in 1797 and who died in 1830, see Ignatius Murphy, *Diocese of Killaloe 1800–1850* (Dublin, 1992), pp. 384, 419–20. I thank Brian Ó Dálaigh for this reference.

<sup>130</sup> RIA Ms 12 0 7, p. 231. Kathleen Mulchrone and Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1943), fasc. xxvi–ii, p. 3474.

<sup>131</sup> RIA Ms 12 0 7, p. 236.

<sup>132</sup> Doughmore townland situated adjacent to Clohanes. From Clohanes the sandhills that encircle Doughmore Bay are visible.

had conjectured an ancient link to Donn, perhaps on account of the fact that the McGormans were not a native Thomond lineage but originally settled in Clare from Ossory.<sup>133</sup>

In the same manuscript two other translations exist in different hands, with one beginning ‘Sincere salutation to thee oh Donn of the Vatts!’ and purporting to be a literal translation, arranged in twenty-six quatrains.<sup>134</sup> The anonymous translation, which is not metrical, is in a different hand to McGorman’s. Its author was a competent translator, rendering the Irish in lucid and unadorned English without significant departure from its literal meaning. The poem is accompanied with explanatory footnotes on placenames and other miscellanea. The same manuscript contains another metrical translation beginning: ‘Donn of the ocean vatts, I give low reverence to thee’.<sup>135</sup> Following this version are four quatrains of the *foirceann* (conclusion), separate from the main body of the poem and translated non-metrically, adhering closely to the Irish original.<sup>136</sup>

The manuscript in which these translations are found belongs to the Windele and Croker papers. Thomas Crofton Croker collected antiquarian lore and tales and in 1828 he published *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland: Part III*.<sup>137</sup> In this volume he included a free translation of almost thirty selected verses of *Donn na Duimhche*, ‘praising the splendour and hospitality of the fairy court’ in which its author ‘contrives obliquely to censure the parsimony of the county gentry’.<sup>138</sup> Croker acknowledges that the ‘curious Irish poem’ was forwarded to him by Edward O’Reilly (1765–1830), the secretary of the Ibero-Celtic Society and who is best known for his Irish-English dictionary.<sup>139</sup>

O’Reilly had a large corpus of Irish manuscripts at his disposal and he was acquainted with native scholars and their poetic works. He was responsible for copying a version of the poem with twenty-six quatrains and this is probably the version forwarded by him to Croker.<sup>140</sup> It remains a possibility that the motive behind Croker’s collection of these different translations was to make further

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133 On the settlement of the Meic Gormáin of Leinster in Ibrickan see the poem by Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha titled: *Deoraidh sonra sliocht Chathaoir* (TCD Ms 1411).

134 RIA Ms 12 0 7, pp. 215–25.

135 RIA Ms 12 0 7, pp. 227–30. Also see Mulchrone and Fitzpatrick, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts*, p. 3474.

136 RIA Ms 12 0 7, p. 237. It is uncertain what relationship this fragment has with other translations in the manuscript.

137 Thomas Crofton Croker, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland: Part III* (London, 1828), xxiv–vii.

138 *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

139 Edward O’Reilly, *An Irish-English Dictionary* (Dublin, 1817).

140 British Library, Ms Egerton, 118, f. 32.

use for them, possibly as an exemplar for publication, but which never came to fruition. The earliest printed translation was not to appear until a century after Croker's publication when a translation by James McCurtin appeared in the *Clare Champion* newspaper in 1935.

Appendix 2 contains a non-literal, metrical translation by the Clare hedge-schoolmaster, James McCurtin. By the time of McCurtin's death at the Ennistymon workhouse in 1870 he had earned the appellation 'last of the hereditary bards of Thomond'. McCurtin was a skilled translator, producing a partial translation of Brian Merriman's *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* for the *Limerick Reporter* in 1844.<sup>141</sup> His version of *Donn na Duimhche* follows in the same vein and displays a romantic, lyrical quality with a perfect end-rhyme scheme.

McCurtin lived at a time when a renewed interest was being shown in the Irish language among some of the gentry and he, along with others, produced translations for William Smyth O'Brien, a leader of the Young Ireland movement. The decades prior to the Great Famine witnessed a flowering of scribal activity in Irish in county Clare and the likes of James McCurtin and his contemporaries were involved.<sup>142</sup> It was buoyed by financial inducements offered by Protestant evangelical societies to schoolmasters and others who were literate in Irish and English. According to one society's records, a Daniel Curtin was furnished with religious materials in 1819 in order for him to preach to the local people in his district in Irish. Daniel Curtin, like many in his situation, was a noted scribe of Irish manuscripts.<sup>143</sup>

James McCurtin's rhyming translation was printed posthumously in the *Clare Champion* on 5 January 1935. It was printed alongside the Irish version which had been arranged by Liam Ó Luaighnigh. This was the first time that a full translation of the poem appeared in print. A sole Irish version was published in the same year by Ó Luaighnigh in a booklet titled *Dánta Aindréis Mhic Cruitín*.<sup>144</sup> The translation presented here is an attempt to provide a relatively literal translation. It is hoped that it casts light on Aindrias Mac Cruitín's role as one of the last hereditary practitioners of the classical Gaelic literary tradition in Munster.

141 *Limerick Reporter*, 16 July 1844.

142 For an overview of the scribal tradition, see Eilís Ní Dheá, 'Scriobhathie Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge i gContae an Chláir 1700–1900', in *Clare History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. by Matthew Lynch and Patrick Nugent (Dublin, 2008), pp. 139–55.

143 Pádraig de Brún, *Scriptural Instruction in the Vernacular: The Irish Society and its Teachers 1818–1827* (Dublin, 2009), pp. 200–01. He is identified as Domhnall Mac Curtin of Dysert parish.

144 Ó Luaighnigh, *Dánta*, pp. 7–9.

## Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge the generous assistance of John Minahane, especially his advice on the translation, as well as that of Fr Martin McNamara, MSC. I also thank Brian Ó Dálaigh, Ben Jones, and Rob O'Halloran for their comments on an earlier draft.

## Appendix 1 Text and Translation

Text	Translation
1. Beannúghadh doimhin duit, a Dhuinn na Duimhche! 'S ní beannúghadh Gaill do chladhaire Gaedhealaigh,	1. O Donn of the Sandhills, to you a deep greeting! And no stranger's greeting to a wretched Gael,
3. Ach beannúghadh duill i gcuiam na hoíche Le fadú fuinn is roinn dom chroí leis <sup>145</sup>	3. But the blind (man's) greeting in the midst of the night Lighting desire <sup>146</sup> with a part of my heart.
5. A uasail don fhuarfhuil <sup>147</sup> do b'aoirde, Ór huaibhreadh cleath uachtair gach craoibhe,	5. O noble (chief) of the most distinguished cold blood, By which the ruling lord of every branch is exalted,
7. Is aithne dhúinn do ghlúine dírghe, Do ghaolta agus gléire do ghníomhradh. <sup>148</sup>	7. We know your direct descent, Your kinsmen and the eminence of your deeds.
9. Is tú bráthir Áine is Aoife. Is Mhic an Dágha do b'árdfhilath ar thíortha,	9. You are the brother of Áine and Aoife. <sup>149</sup> The son of Dagda, <sup>150</sup> who was the high ruler of territories, <sup>151</sup>

145 This verse is from the Mount Melleray Abbey, Ms 1. In later versions it is given as: *Le fadú fuinn gan deadhailt ó dhiogras* ('Kindling desire without failing in zeal').

146 This translation is based on *fadú* meaning 'igniting' or 'kindling'. The context implies that the meaning of the verse is arousing Donn's desire for fame.

147 Later editions of the text contain: *A uasail don mhuarfhuil do b'aoirde* ('O noble of great and lofty blood'). I have used the oldest version here which is found in Mount Melleray Abbey, Ms 1. Hence, I use *fhuarfhuil* ('cold blood') instead of *mhuarfhuil* ('great blood').

148 The reading *do ghníomhradh* is from Mount Melleray Abbey, Ms 1.

149 Áine and Aoife were *mná sí* (banshees) and stories of them were well known. Áine was daughter of Egobail of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* and she is believed to have dwelt at Knockainey (*Cnoc Áine*) in Limerick. She was known for her power over crops and animals. Traditionally on Saint John's Eve (23 June), men would gather on *Cnoc Áine* and burn straw tied to poles which were carried in procession to the top of the hill.

150 Son of Dagda refers to Aonghus Óg. The Dagda (*An Daghdha*) was the chief god of the Irish. One of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, the Dagda is portrayed as a father-figure, king and druid. He was associated with fertility, agriculture, and strength. He had three sons, one of whom was Aonghus Óg, born of an illicit union with the goddess Boann who gave her name to the River Boyne. Aonghus Óg is the subject of the tale *Aislinge Oenguso* ('the dream of Aonghus').

151 *Árdfhilath*, alternatively can mean 'great lord' or 'great prince'.

11. Is móir-Mhic Lir do rithadh an mhíonmhuir,  
Duinn Chnuic-an-uis is Duinn Chnuic-firinn.
11. The great son of Lir who coursed [over] the smooth  
sea,  
Donn of Knockanish<sup>152</sup> and Donn of Knockfeerina.<sup>153</sup>
13. Nách tú gan doirbhe hoileadh san ríobhrog  
Ag Aongas Óg na Bóinne caoimhe?
13. Weren't you fostered without adversity in the royal  
fort  
By Aengus Óg of the pleasant Boyne?
15. Do bhí tú ag Lúig id chúinge cuionsgair<sup>154</sup>  
Ag claoi Bhalair, a dhanar 's a dhraoithe.
15. You were the battle champion with Lughaidh<sup>155</sup>  
At the defeat of Balar,<sup>156</sup> his barbarians<sup>157</sup> and his druids.
17. Do bhí tú maidhm i n-agma' Mhac Míle  
Ag teacht<sup>158</sup> isteach tar neart na gaoithe;
17. You were battling against the sons of Míl  
Once they had come in despite the power of the wind;<sup>159</sup>
19. Is 'na dhiaig sin i gciantaibh ag<sup>160</sup> Naoise,  
Is frae Cuin na gCleas i dtreas Mhuirthimhne.
19. And after that in remote places with Naoise,  
And Cúchulainn of the mighty feats at the battle of  
Muirthimhne.<sup>161</sup>

152 Knockanish near Tralee in Co. Kerry.

153 Also called Knockfeerina. This hill situates near to Ballingarry in Co. Limerick. It was the *sidhe* (fairy mound) where Donn governed the fairies of Munster and was called *Cnoc Dhoinn Firinne* ('the hill of Donn of truth').

154 For this read: *caoinsgir*.

155 Lughaidh Lámfhada who slew Balar at the battle of Magh Tuireadh. His epitaph *lámfhada* denoted 'long arm' and reflected his skill with a spear. He was a member of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* and is often portrayed as a warrior, a king, and master craftsman.

156 Balar was a leader of the *Fomhóraigh* (Fomorians) and was believed to live on Tory Island where his stronghold is still known as Dún Bhaloir. He is described as a tyrannical giant with a large eye that wrought destruction when opened, making him analogous to the Greek Cyclops. Balar took part in the Battle of Magh Tuireadh and is known from the tale in which he is killed by his grandson, Lughaidh Lámfhada, by the use of a sling aimed at his eye which drove it through the back of his head so that it unleashed its deadly power upon Balar's own followers. The confrontation between Balar and Lughaidh echoes the biblical contest between David and Goliath.

157 From Old Norse *danir* ('Danes'). *Danar* can be taken as a generic term for barbarian/foreigner.

158 Mount Melleray Abbey, Ms 1 contains *iar dteacht*, 'after coming'.

159 This is an interesting allusion as it places Donn as one of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* (in this guise he is known as Donn Dumha) who unsuccessfully tried to stop the Milesians landing in southwest Ireland by conjuring great storms which drowned the sons of Míl Espáine. In the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* one of those who drowned at Inbhear Scéine (Kenmare Bay) was Donn, son of Míl, whose memory became attached to nearby *Teach Duinn* ('house of Donn') or Bull Rock. It is clear, however, that Mac Cruitín had in mind Donn of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* as the subject of his poem who, like the others of his race, was exiled to the Otherworld by the Milesians.

160 I use *ag* here, as per Hyde, rather than *frae* as per O'Rahilly. See Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland from Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Dublin, 1906), p. 50.

161 This is an allusion to Cú Chulainn who was a native of Muirtheimhne in Co. Louth. On his deeds and early life see Lady Augusta Gregory, *Cuchulainn of Muirthemne: The Story of the Men of the Red Branch of Ulster* (London, 1903).

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|--|---|
| <p>21. Do bhí tú ag Conall san gcosgar do b'aoirde,<br/>Fé cheann don ghad do cheannaibh ríthe;</p>                    | <p>21. You were with Conall in the triumph that was<br/>supreme,<br/>Engaged in putting dead kings' heads on the withe;<sup>162</sup></p>   |
| <p>23. Ba taoiseach treas i gcathibh Chuinn tu,<br/>Is do b'eólach ag Eóghan don Ísbeirn.</p>                          | <p>23. You were a battle leader in Conn's armies,<br/>And a guide<sup>163</sup> with Eoghan<sup>164</sup> going to Spain.<sup>165</sup></p> |
| <p>25. Do bhí tú ag Fionn id chúinge dídin<br/>I n-ármhach Fionntrágha, mar sgrítear.</p>                              | <p>25. You were a leading champion with Fionn<br/>At the slaughter of Ventry, as it is written.</p>   |
| <p>27. Do bhí tú ar turas ag Criomhthann mac<br/>Fíodha,<br/>Is ag Dáithí chuir<sup>166</sup> árdchíos ar chríocha</p> | <p>27. You were with Criomhthann son of Fíodha in his<br/>expedition,<br/>And with Dáithí putting great tributes on territories</p>         |
| <p>29. Ba mear dian frae Niall na sgríob thu,<br/>Ag snaidhm a ghiall 's ag triall a chíosa.</p>                       | <p>29. You were swift and nimble with Niall of the raids,<br/>At securing hostages and excursions for (collecting)<br/>tribute.</p>         |
| <p>31. Do bhí tú Brian san nglia<sup>167</sup> do bhíog me,<br/>Ag traocha Danar Chluain-tarbh Dé Haoine;</p>          | <p>31. You were with Brian in the battle that stirred me,<br/>At overthrowing the Danes at Clontarf on Good Friday;<sup>168</sup></p>       |

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162 Conall Cearnach was a warrior celebrated for this martial deeds. He features in the Ulster cycle of mythology (appearing in the *Táin Bó Fraích*, *Táin Bó Cuailnge* and *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*) and was known by the sobriquet *clae*n ('twisted' which referred to his neck). When Cú Chulainn was slain he took vengeance on those responsible, according to the twelfth-century text *Deargruathar Chonaill Chearnaigh*. The reference to Conall in Mac Cruitín's poem is an allusion to his slaying of men in revenge for Cú Chulainn's death, whereby Conall mounted the heads of his enemies on willow rods (withe)s and presented them to Emer, the wife of Cú Chulainn. Conall Cearnach was a popular figure in medieval literature and genealogies traced leading Gaelic families to him. Douglas Hyde refers to this passage in Mac Cruitín's poem in connection to the legend about Conall Cearnach's warlike deeds. See Hyde, *A Literary History*, p. 50; and see Seosamh Laoide, *Dearg-ruathar Chonaill Chearnaigh* (Dublin, 1907).

163 Eoghan went to Spain to prepare for war against Conn.

164 Conn of the Hundred battles (Conn Cétchathach) and Mugh Nuadhat divided Ireland between them with Conn taking the northern half and Mugh Nuadhat taking the southern half. It is generally believed that Mugh Nuadhat's grandson was Eóghan Mór, from who descend the Eóganachta, a dynasty which ruled as kings of Munster.

165 Ísbeirn, a name derived from the famed Garden of the Hesperides. It appears in Greek mythology as a resplendent garden located in the far western region of the known world. The garden was tended to by the nymphs of the evening who dwelt in the golden light of sunsets. The placename also occurs in the Middle Irish tale, *Acallam na Senórach*. The placename is sometimes taken to mean Spain where Eoghan Mór was said to have journeyed.

166 Mount Melleray Abbey, Ms 1 has *coir* which is taken as a form of *cuir*.

167 I take *glia* as *gliath* ('battle', 'war').

168 The battle of Clontarf was fought on Good Friday in 1014 and which saw the forces of King Brian Bóramha inflict a defeat over a Hiberno-Viking force. There is no known tradition that Donn was associated with Brian Bóramha or the Dál gCais. It is perhaps an interpolation by Mac Cruitín to link Donn to historical events.

33. Is ó shin anuas, gan chruas gan chlaoine,  
Ca b'áil liom ag áireamh do thídhís<sup>169</sup> ort?  
35. Do sháraidh tú fáinleasa Fíonsgoth,<sup>170</sup>  
Dún Léith-chraige is ré-chnoc an aoibhnis.  
37. Ach marar bodhar tusa ó thromghuth na  
taoide,  
Nó marar balbh do theanga agus th'íngne,  
39. Nó mara bhfuairis bás mar chách, a Dhuinn  
ghil,  
Do bhéarfair cabhair is freagra fuinn dam,  
41. Ós ag gearán mo cháis leat ataoim se,  
Gur fágadh me mar árthach gan dídean  
43. Cois trá amuich ag bána 's ag críona,  
Nó mar tháiplis gan tál fir ná díse  
45. Nó mar Oisín ag osnaighe 's ag caoineadh  
D'éis na Féine go léir dhul fé líoga,  
47. Ag tréigean mo chéille is mo chuimhne  
Tráth fhéachaim ar léirsgríos mo thíre.  
49. Is mór mo mhuirear, mo ghustal is íseal;  
Is gann mo charaid, is dealbh 's is dithach  
51. Bím i dtathamh ó mhaidean go hoíche  
D'éagla an bháile 'om chrá, ná an chíosá;  
53. Is bíodh ar m'fhallaing, cé deacair dam innsint,  
Dá mhéid mo chreatha trí chealga an tí<sup>174</sup> bhig,
33. From that (time) down, without stinginess (or) without  
partiality,  
How can I enumerate the households that you've had?  
35. You overpowered the fortresses of Fíonsgoth,  
The fort of Craglea<sup>171</sup> and the royal Cnoc an Aoibhnis.<sup>172</sup>  
37. But if you're not deaf from the heavy voice of the  
tide,  
Or if your tongue and intellect aren't dumbed,  
39. Or if you haven't died like all (others), oh bright  
Donn,  
You will give aid to me and a solacing reply,  
41. Since I am complaining my case to you,  
That I was left like a vessel without shelter  
43. Out by the strand, turning white and withering,  
Or like a gammon table without men or dice  
45. Or like Oisín sighing and lamenting<sup>173</sup>  
When all the Fenian bands had gone under the flagstones,  
47. Abandoning my senses and my memory  
Now that I look on the utter destruction of my country.  
49. Great is my burden, my means are low;  
And my friends are few, destitute and wanting  
51. I exist in a stupor from morning to night  
For fear of the bailiff tormenting me for the rent;  
53. By my cloak,<sup>175</sup> though it's hard for me to relate it,  
Much though I tremble at that little fellow's deceits,

169 I take *tís* as *tíos* meaning management of affairs, work, achievement, etc.

170 *Fíonsgoth*, known in English as the Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*). O'Rahilly regards this as denoting a fairy prince.

171 Craglea (*Craig Liath*) near Killaloe and where the *bean sí* of the Dál gCais, Aoibheall, was believed to have dwelt. Her origins are obscure but like other fairy-women she may have represented a sovereignty goddess. She famously features as a key protagonist in Brian Merriman's eighteenth-century poem, *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* ('The Midnight Court'). Her residence at Craglea is alluded to in a line of that poem: *Dá Coróinn na Carraige!* ('By the crown of Crag!').

172 This appears to be a placename though its precise location is not known.

173 The Irish word used here (*caoineadh*) is sometimes anglicized as 'keen'.

174 *An tí* is a form of *an té*, 'the/that person'. In this context it is taken to mean the bailiff.

175 A common exclamatory phrase in Irish. In modern usage it is usually expressed as: *dar m'fhallaing*.

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| <p>55. Gur measa liom ná a n-abraim, a Dhuinn ghil,<br/>Mar do cailleadh ar easba na dí me!</p>                | <p>55. Even worse than what I've been uttering, oh bright Donn,<br/>Is how I have dwindled for lack of drink!</p>   |
| <p>57. Is ní mhairean aon, do réir mar shílim,<br/>D'fhialfhuil Ghall ná 'o sheandfhuil Mhílidh,</p>           | <p>57. And there lives not one, as I think,<br/>Of the noble blood of the foreigners or the old blood<br/>of the Milesians,<sup>176</sup></p>                 |
| <p>59. Ó Léim na Con go portaibh Chlóna,<br/>Ó bhfuinn fó dá ló go n-oíche;</p>                                | <p>59. From the Leap of Con<sup>177</sup> to the Port of Clóna,<sup>178</sup><br/>From whom I would receive (entertainment) for two days<br/>and a night;</p> |
| <p>61. Ach dúnaid a súile nuair chíd me,<br/>Ní abraid 'Fuirig', 's ní chuirid im shuí me,</p>                 | <p>61. But they close their eyes and when they see me,<br/>They don't say 'remain' nor do they place me in a seat for<br/>a feast,<sup>179</sup></p>          |
| <p>63. Is dá bhfaicidís trí mhailibh rín me,<br/>Ní bhacfaidís don staraí bheith ag imtheacht.</p>             | <p>63. And even should they behold me through sullen<br/>eyebrows,<br/>They wouldn't hold back the historian from going.</p>                                  |
| <p>65. Ní thráchtaim ar álmhach an aoilig<br/>Do bhí iné ag tréadacht nó i ndíogaibh;</p>                      | <p>65. I do not mention the dunghill brood<sup>180</sup><br/>Yesterday herding or in ditches;<sup>181</sup></p>   |
| <p>67. D'eagla go leanfainn mar do shíolsad,<sup>182</sup><br/>Is lú ortha me ná deamhnaibh <i>Cocytus</i></p> | <p>67. For fear I might trace how their breed was propagated,<br/>They hate me even more than do the demons of <i>Cocytus</i><sup>183</sup></p>               |
| <p>69. Deir cóbach don phór san go maoiteach,<br/>Is fóis air ó ól iumad fiona:</p>                            | <p>69. A churl of that race says boastfully,<br/>In high spirits from drinking much wine:</p>   |
| <p>71. 'Ní féarrde an talamh an seancha shíne air;<br/>Is seachantar é mar <i>aspis</i> ón Nilus!'</p>         | <p>71. 'The earth is not better for the old man to lie on it;<br/>And let him be avoided like a viper<sup>184</sup> from the Nile!'</p>                       |

176 In Irish known as *Clann Mílidh*.

177 Loop Head in southwest county Clare.

178 Glandore Harbour in county Cork where a fairy princess associated with the place was known as *Tonn Chlóna* (Clóna's Wave).

179 *Cuirid[h]* is translated here as 'feast' but its literal meaning is an invitation. It connotes an invitation to dinner or a gathering of some kind.

180 i.e. base-born upstarts. This echoes the depiction of the churls in the seventeenth-century satirical poem, *Pairlement Chloinne Tomáis*. In this poem the poet launches a vituperative attack on a new class of peasant upstarts and their aping of English ways.

181 The meaning here is that only yesterday this upstart brood were in poverty.

182 Read: *do shíolraíodar* ('to breed', 'to propagate').

183 The *Cocytus* was one of the rivers that surrounded Hades and it numbered among the rivers of the underworld in Greek mythology. References to *Cocytus* appear in early Irish literature such as in the Latin poem *Altus Prosator*, which is attributed to the sixth-century saint, Colmcille. In this early poem *Cocytus* is the focus of a gloss which states that it was one of the four rivers of Hades and its name means 'without joy'. See John Carey, *King of Mysteries: Early Religious Writings* (Dublin 2000), p. 40.

184 An *aspis* is a venomous viper.

73. Is ní féidir coir im leith do liomhna,  
Ní dheárna guid ná bruid ná bruighneas,
73. Crime cannot be imputed to me,  
I never committed theft, caused distress or quarrelled,
75. Ach, mo bhróinchreach! gurab eól dam `s go  
sgríobhaim,  
Craobh coineasa mhór-mhaicne Mhíle.<sup>185</sup>
75. But, my grief! that I know about and I write,  
The genealogy of the great sons of Míl.
77. Ach ó léirsgriosadh gléirchleatha Gaoil  
Ghluis,  
Ní fhéadar cad dhéanfadh, a Dhuinn ghil;
77. But since the destruction of the noble race of Gael  
Glas,<sup>186</sup>  
I don't know what to do, oh bright Donn;
79. Ó nár éagas i n-éinfheacht rem shinsear  
Do b'fhéarr liom gur báite fé'n tuinn me.
79. Since I have not died together with my ancestors  
It were better for me if I sank in the waves.
81. Mara bhfaghad fos is fosga id bhruín-se,<sup>187</sup>  
Bead go deó, ach mara bhfóire Críost me,
81. If I do not find rest and shelter in your fairy-palace,  
I will be forever, unless Christ gives me strength,
83. Gan cuire Nollag ná sollamain saoire,  
Go lea-bheó fé anshógh<sup>188</sup> na síne.
83. Without invitation at Christmas or the solemnity of  
holidays,  
Half-alive under the misery of the weather.
85. Dá bhrí sin osgail gach doras dod ríobhrog  
Is lig id phióláid<sup>189</sup> shiorláin shí me;
85. Hence, open every door to your regal mansion  
And admit me to (your) well-provisioned fairy-palace;
87. Is ní móide do chóisir san oíche  
Do chumplacht a Dhuinn ghil,<sup>190</sup> mo mhaíomh air.
87. And there's no better banquet at night  
Than your company, O bright Donn, I declare it.
89. Do-bhéar<sup>191</sup> fuasgla, duais is díol duit.  
Is fearr dá bhfuair árdflath ná impir.
89. I will give ransom, reward and recompense to you.  
(I'll give) the best obtained by a high-prince<sup>192</sup> or emperor.
91. Snífead dréachta, léire is laoiithe,  
Bruíne tofa agus tochmharca rí-bhan;
91. Flowing compositions of lucid lays,  
The choice of hostel-stories and courtships of queens;
93. Nó léifead sgéala go binn duit  
Na hÉireann i réimheas gach aoise;
93. Or read sweetly stories to you  
Of Ireland's reign of every age;

185 At this line the oldest known version of the poem (Mount Melleray Abbey Ms 1) breaks off.

186 Góidel Glas was regarded as the creator of the Goidelic languages and the eponymous ancestor of the Gaels. This tradition is enumerated in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*.

187 I take this to be *bruíon*, denoting a fairy-palace or, in some contexts, a banqueting hall or hostel.

188 Take *anshógh* for *anó*.

189 Take *phióláid* as a poetic form for *pálás* ('palace').

190 O'Rahilly has this line as: *Ná cumplacht do dhúin ghil, mo mhaíomh air* which translates: 'than the company in your bright fort, I declare it'. The similarity between *dúin* (fort) and the inflective form of Donn, *duinn*, may have been a deliberate, but oblique, reference to convey two images, the first being a reverential address to Donn ('O bright Donn') and the second to his abode, the 'bright fort'.

191 For this read: *túrfad*.

192 Alternatively, 'high ruler'.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>95.</b> Nó bhéarfad tuairisg shluaite Mhaois duit,<br/>Nó mar théarnadar Gréagaig don Traoi thuir;<sup>193</sup></p>         | <p><b>95.</b> Or I will give you tidings of Moses' hosts,<br/>Or how the Greek's escaped from Troy in the east;</p>   |
| <p><b>97.</b> Nó chuirfead dán le cláirsig chaoin duit,<br/>Nó lámhach ar tháiplis nó ar dhisle;</p>                               | <p><b>97.</b> Or I will set a poem to a lovely harp for you,<br/>Or set about casting the dice on the<br/>backgammon-board;<sup>194</sup></p>   |
| <p><b>99.</b> Nó má fhaghaim ceól feadóg nó pípe,<br/>Do-dhéan go sásta ceáfra rince.</p>  | <p><b>99.</b> Or if I get music of the whistle or pipe,<br/>(I will) happily perform a frolicsome dance.</p>  |
| <p><b>101.</b> Nó glac isteach me ar acht gur daoirseach<br/>Ag giullaíocht<sup>195</sup> each do mharera síoga;</p>               | <p><b>101.</b> Or let me in on terms (like) a serf<br/>As a horse-boy for your fairy cavalry-troop;</p>   |
| <p><b>103.</b> Is ná fág fô cheas me, ag teacht don tsaoir<br/>Ar sgéird Mho-ghlais im spreas 's im splíonach!</p>                 | <p><b>103.</b> Don't leave me alone under sorrow<sup>196</sup> at the approach<br/>of the festival<br/>At bleak<sup>197</sup> Moyglass,<sup>198</sup> a wretch and in melancholy!<sup>199</sup></p> |
| <p><b>An tAmhrán Ceangail</b></p>  | <p><b>Binding of the song</b><sup>200</sup></p>   |
| <p><b>105.</b> A rí an chnuic shoineanta shocair na Duíche<br/>thiar,<br/>Ós taoiseach torainn-mhear troda thu tí agus triath,</p> | <p><b>105.</b> O king of the tranquil hill of the western sandhills,<br/>Since you are the spirited-clamorous chief of battle and<br/>ruler of a household,</p>                                     |

193 I take *thuir* as *thoir* meaning 'in the east'. Mac Cruitín's allusion here is probably the story of Ulysses which was in the Gaelic repertoire and its inclusion here suggests that it was well known to him.

194 The playing of backgammon was a popular pastime for the learned and upper classes and reference is made to it in poetry. A seventeenth-century poem titled *Aoibhinn beatha an scoláire* ('Sweet is the scholar's life') talks positively of students spending time at backgammon among other leisurely activities. See Thomas F. O'Rahilly (ed.), *Measgra dánta: Miscellaneous Irish Poems: Part 1* (Cork, 1927), p. 17.

195 For this read: *giollacht*. It can be anglicized as 'gilly' with the meaning of a horse boy, or more generally, a man-servant. It is cognate with *giolla*, a follower or servant. See O'Donovan and Curry, *Ordinance Survey Letters*, p. 115.

196 *Ceas* is translated here as 'sorrow' but an alternative translation is 'obscurity' which would also be appropriate.

197 Alternatively, 'wind-swept'. This would be an appropriate description for much of Ibrickan, exposed as it is to the ravages of the Atlantic winds.

198 This is Moyglass which situates in Kilmurry-Ibrickan parish and lies to the south of the village of Mullagh. Moyglass consists of two contiguous divisions, Moyglass Beg and Moyglass More. Both divisions are bounded on their southern aspect by the Annageeragh River which is forded at Knocknahilla Bridge. Moyglass More is bounded on its northeast limit by the Annageeragh River where it is forded at Moyglass Bridge. In Irish, *Maigh Ghlas* denotes the 'green plain'.

199 This is a prominent stanza for it provides the reader with details about Mac Cruitín's circumstances and dwelling-place. It being appended before the *ceangal* emphasizes the despondency felt by the poet in his declining years. The term *spreas* can be translated as 'worthless person' while *splíonach* could be translated as 'wretched', thus conveying the poet's own predicament.

200 The meaning here is to 'tie up' or 'connect' the poem.

107. Mara bhfuoid it fhochair san Nollaig seo  
roíne is riar,  
Gan aobhneas orm ná sollamain choíche biad.
107. If I cannot be in your presence this Christmas to  
share and feast,<sup>201</sup>  
I shall forever be without happiness, celebration or food.
109. Dá bhrí sin osgail gach doras dod bhrúin,  
nó stiall,  
Is aíoichta an t-ollamh, ó locadar Gaoil a riar;
109. Therefore open every door or a part<sup>202</sup> of your  
fairy-palace,  
And render hospitality to the *ollamh* since the Gaels have  
refused him victuals;
111. Ní cuibhe dhuit m'oba, is nách dola ar bith, a  
Dhuinn na gliar,  
Díol mo cholla-sa<sup>203</sup> 'o dheochanaibh milse is bia.
111. It is not fitting for you that I should be thus, and it is  
no loss to you, oh Donn of the poetic company,<sup>204</sup>  
To reward me with sweet food and drink to send me into  
slumber.
113. 'S i n-íoc mo thomaltais (follas gur díol  
math fiach)  
Dod dhírghe a toirchim nochtfad as sgríbhnihb  
fian
113. And in recompense for my consumption (clearly the  
debt is well paid)  
To rouse you from your heavy sleep I will recite from  
thrilling<sup>205</sup> writings
115. Laoithe tofa dhuit, tochmharca is brúine  
cian;  
Is má sinntear portaibh dam, coirfead le rince  
triar.
115. Choice lays for you, courtships and hostel-tales<sup>206</sup> of  
long ago;  
And if tunes are played for me I'll do a dance for three.<sup>207</sup>
117. Nó, a Dhuinn, má shochtair-se m'fhosta nó  
m'aíoicht, mar iad,  
Is gur líonta 'dhoirbhe Í Chonnuibh ma chroí 's  
mo chliabh,
117. Or, Donn, if you forbid to give me steadfast shelter,  
And since my heart and bosom are full with grief for  
Ó Connuibh<sup>208</sup>
119. Ní shilim cobhair dom rochtain, ós críon  
me, liath,  
Ach caoi nó colla go sroiche mo chlí don chria.
119. I expect no succour to reach me since I am old and  
grey,  
But grieving or sleeping till my flesh reaches the clay.

201 *Riar* also means 'victuals' or 'sustenance'.

202 An alternative is to take *stiall* as a verb, to 'burst' or 'rip apart'. The translation offered here is informed by an earlier translation in RIA Ms 12 0 7, p. 237.

203 I take *colla* as *codladh*, to 'sleep' or 'slumber'.

204 *Cléir* is a form of *cliar*, which can mean clergy or a troop of poets.

205 Alternatively, 'wild'. *Fian* has the connotation of the *fianna* (fenians) who were a roving band of warriors and about whose doings an extensive corpus of poems and sagas was composed. This corpus, known collectively as the *fiannaíocht*, was well known to Mac Cruitín and formed part of his repertoire of traditional lore and verse.

206 This is likely a reference to medieval tales such as *Togail Bruidne Dá Derga* ('The destruction of Dá Derga's hostel') and *Togail Troí* ('The destruction of Troy').

207 *Triar* is taken here as to mean 'three persons' or 'trio'. The poet is saying that he will dance for Donn so enthusiastically that it will be akin to three people.

208 Tomas Ó Connuibh was a contemporary poet who had predeceased Mac Cruitín.

## Appendix 2

### Salutation to Don of the Sandhills

(as printed in the *Clare Champion*, 5 January 1935)

*By Andrew MacCurtin*

*(translated by James MacCurtin)*

Beneath those sandy cliffs of old repute,  
O mighty Don! accept my deep salute;  
No stranger's greeting to a wretched Gael,  
To thee I bring but the devout All Hail!

Of a poor pilgrim caught by night's cold shade,  
Whose zeal long suffering has not yet decayed.  
A noble chief of birth and blood supreme  
Sprung each branch pre-eminent in fame:

We know thy tribe and generations true  
Fair Aoife, Aine, and their magic race,  
The son of Dagh who ruled in royal state,  
O'er ancient realms, the son of Lir the Great,

Who coursed along the surface of the tide;  
Thou true-born hero first in martial pride.  
Wast thou not nourished in the royal fort  
Of skillful Aengus without frown or hurt?

Thou wert with Lughaidh on the bloody plains  
Where Balor fell with all his seers and Danes;  
Milesius' sons thou aidest once to brave  
The ruffled furies of the wind and wave.

To gain our shores thou wast in after times  
A guard with Naisi going to distant climes;  
With arch Cu Chuluin at the bloody rout  
Of famed Muirtheimhne, then with Conall  
stout,

Scouring thro' slaughter with his withe in hand.  
To hold the royal heads that fell around the  
land.  
Thou wast with Conn, a chief in all his fights,  
A guide with Eoghan in his foreign fights;

Thou wast with Fionn at Ventry's bloody bay.  
His shield of war as antiquaries say,  
Thou wert with Criomhthan in his warlike tour,  
Again with Daithi stretching forth his power;

O'er distant nations eager and adroit,  
Thou wast with Niall in many a hard exploit,

His rents and conquests aiding to maintain;  
Thou wast with Brian beating back the Danes,

At famed Clontarf on Friday; since that day  
Thy bright career has suffered no decay.  
Too faint my verse thy household to display  
The ridgy vault of Fionnscoth so renowned,

The royal mount with fairy pleasure crowned.  
O fairest Don, had not the roaring tide  
Thy hearing hinder'd by the ocean's side;  
Or death benumbed thy intellect and tongue,

Like common mortals to my plaintive song,  
Thou wouldst return some solacing reply,  
As in my deep distress to thee along I cry  
Out by the shore, forlone, I wear away,

Left like a stranded vessel to decay;  
Or like a gammon table set aside,  
Where neither man nor sporting dice abide;  
Or like poor Oisín grieving sore and sighing,

When all his bands beneath the stones were  
lying.  
My country's ruin when I still survey,  
My sense forsakes me and my temples grey;  
Great is my hardship while my means are  
low,

My friends, now few, no comfort can bestow;  
I pine at night, and fret the live-long day,  
Afraid lest the urgent bailiff come the way;  
And though I blush my frailties to relate,

Tho' much I tremble for the Calvin fate,  
Yet dearest Don, my greatest grief and worst  
Is how I'm almost gasping with the thirst,  
And now-a-days my path can trace,

Old Milesians, or of Saxon race,  
From east to west of all my native land.  
On whom for shade or shelter I could stand.  
Hence, generous Don! thy palace doors unclose,

And let the poor forsaken bard repose,  
 Where magic, joy and plenty still abound,  
 And thy expense will not the more be found;  
 Nor less thy daily banquets, or they hoard,

By my partaking of thy festive board;  
 And I will give the payment in return,  
 That neither lord nor emperor can spurn.  
 I'll sing thee smooth-flowing harmonies,

On queens' elopements and our palace feats;  
 Or Erin's stories I will sweetly trace,  
 Her weal, her woe, thro' each succeeding race;  
 Or tell how Moses did the Hebrews lead,

Or how the Greeks taught Eastern Troy to bleed,  
 Or form a concert with thy tuneful lyre,  
 Or play at gammon as you best desire;  
 Or with the music of a lute or pipe,

Thro' dancing capers gracefully I'd trip:  
 Or take me in on terms even so mean  
 As tending horses for thy fairy train;  
 And while the holy festivals draw nigh,

Oh! Leave me not in lonely grief to sigh,  
 On bleak Moyglass estranged from every eye.

**The Binding**

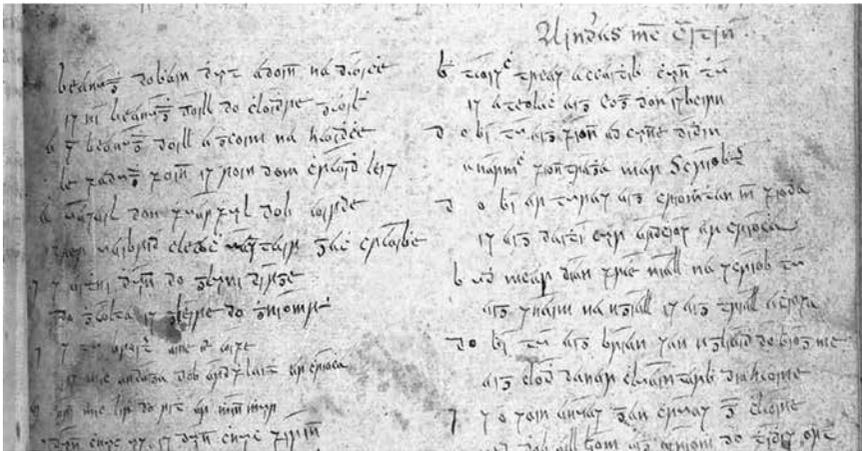
O peaceful monarch of the Sandhills west,  
 Thou lordly chief in power and value blest';  
 This Christmas treat if thou withhold from me,  
 Farewell to festive holidays or glee,

Thy royal portals, therefore, open wide,  
 And treat the bard by Erin's sons denied:  
 It suits thee not, O hospitable host.  
 To whom my fare is no increase of cost,

To send me from thy festive suite away,  
 And I thy friendly bounty will repay;  
 From ancient verse I'll quote the glorious reign  
 Of thy forefathers; or, in chosen strain,

The festive feats of palace I'll show;  
 Or, should they pipe, I dance a freak or two;  
 My hoary age no balm or hope can trust,  
 But woe and weeping till I join the dust.

**Appendix 3**



**Figure 1:** Opening of *Donn na Duimhche* by Aindrias Mac Cruitín from MS 1 (p. 161), Mount Mellera y Abbey Library;

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