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This volume is a collection of essays based on a day-long symposium held in honour of Eleanor Knott (1886–1975) at Trinity College Dublin in April 2016.¹ Knott, who was appointed the first Chair of Early Irish at Trinity in 1939, was a scholar whose expertise in the Irish language extended from the early middle ages to the twentieth century, and several of her publications – such as her edition and translation of the works of the sixteenth-century poet Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (1922, 1926), her edition of the early Irish saga *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (1936), and her contributions to the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* – remain authoritative to this day.² Six papers by contributors to the conference are included in this volume, three in Irish and three in English, which cover material ranging from the eighth century to the twentieth. As the editors note, the individual contributions are ‘predominantly philological in nature’ (p. vii) and are mostly focused on the transmission and interpretation of individual literary texts. Most of these contributions deal with texts which Knott herself had previously edited, which is hardly surprising given the nature of this volume, and half of the chapters include new editions and translations of Irish texts.

The volume opens with a brief introductory essay in Irish by Eoin Mac Cárthaigh (pp. 1–10), discussing Knott’s family, her own upbringing and personal life, and her overall influence on the study of Irish literature. One major aspect of that influence, Mac Cárthaigh reminds us, was a commitment to ‘scientific’ and philologically rigorous scholarship and, while this ethic did attract some criticism from her contemporaries and later commentators, it is no doubt the reason why so many of her editions are still considered authoritative.³ While much of this information is available in other published sources, this essay does help to provide important context for this volume, and Mac Cárthaigh’s inclusion of quotations from Knott’s unpublished correspondence gives the reader a fuller sense of the

1 The conference programme and abstracts are, at time of writing, available at <https://eleanorknottconference2016.wordpress.com/>, accessed 22/7/2024.

2 For a list of Knott’s publications, see Mac Cárthaigh 2005.

3 E.g. in a letter addressed to Knott in 1917, P. J. Connolly, editor of *Studies*, said that ‘I heard recently that Irish scholars were paralysed into inactivity by the exacting methods and high ideals of what they call “The Bergin School” – you were named as a disciple of that School’ (p. 10). Mac Cárthaigh also quotes Gerry Smyth’s *Decolonisation and criticism: the construction of Irish literature* (1998), which renounces Knott as a member of a ‘clique of “textperts”’ who ‘patrolled the borders of Celtic Studies’ (quoted p. 10).

scholar as a human being, with her own insecurities and contradictions, than that available from her publications. The essay is followed by an unsent (and seemingly incomplete) letter, dated 21 October 1959, addressed to fellow scholar Lilian Duncan (pp. 11–13). The letter is of particular interest, as Knott gives an account of how she came to be interested in Irish literature, her early education, and some of her interactions with Osborn Bergin. Mac Cárthaigh's notes provide further contextual information.

In 'Aislingí Thaidhg Dhaill Uí Uiginn agus Traidisiún na nAislingí Grá' (pp. 15–65), Síle Ní Mhurchú discusses the two extant *aisling* poems by Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn, poems which Knott had described as 'early specimens' (1922: lxii–lxiii) of the visionary poetry that was popular in the eighteenth century, and offers a reassessment of their historical significance for the development of the genre. In order to do so, Ní Mhurchú constructs a list of 'motifs' typical of eighteenth-century visionary poetry, and then surveys all known *aisling* from the seventeenth century and earlier, noting these motifs where they occur. This is followed by a discussion of other texts in which a woman appears in a vision, and of the *aisling chollai* 'carnal *aisling*,' a dream which triggers nocturnal emission, discussed in certain medical texts. When the discussion turns to the two poems by Ó hUiginn, Ní Mhurchú demonstrates that all of the motifs typical of the eighteenth-century *aisling* which are present in Ó hUiginn's poems are also found in earlier compositions, and that only one of the poems surveyed, *An tú táinig go Tadhg Dall?*, shows obvious familiarity with Ó hUiginn's poetry, although the poem contains motifs absent from Ó hUiginn's *aisling* poems but present in earlier examples of the genre. Ní Mhurchú concludes that Ó hUiginn's poems drew upon an already well-established genre, rather than laying the ground for a new tradition, and that Ó hUiginn's *aisling* poems are significant as he was seemingly the only professional poet to make use of these conventions in his work. In her discussion of the context for Ó hUiginn's poems, Ní Mhurchú provides a helpful overview of conventions surrounding erotic visions and encounters in later medieval and early modern Gaelic literature, noting potential parallels with earlier Irish literature as well as contemporary medical thought. Many of the poems and other works discussed in this section have received very little critical attention, and some have yet to be edited. In this chapter, Ní Mhurchú has created an extremely valuable resource for scholars interested in the *aisling*, one which will hopefully facilitate further work on the genre.

The next chapter is 'Uilleam Ó Ceallaigh, Gairm na Nollag (1351) agus Stair Eacnamaíoch Philíocht na Scol' by Mícheál Hoyne (pp. 67–130), which explores the historical context of the bardic poem *Filidh Éireann go hAointeach*, first (and last) edited and translated by Knott (1911). The famous fourteenth-century poet Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh composed this poem for Uilleam Ó Ceallaigh, king of Tír Mhaine, on the occasion of a feast held on Christmas of 1351, to which Ó Ceallaigh extended an invitation to all of the aristocratic poets (*filidh*) of

Ireland. Hoyne discusses the annalistic evidence for Ó Ceallaigh's life and career before turning to the question of why this feast, evidently the first of its kind, was held. Ó Dálaigh's poem and other fourteenth-century works indicate that the poets were struggling to find adequate compensation for their compositions, and that the Church (or at least factions within it) condemned the poetic profession. Hoyne states that there is no evidence for such ecclesiastical opposition to praise poetry from before the fourteenth century (arguing that the attribution to two poems in defence of poetry to the thirteenth-century poet Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe is false), and that this antagonism has its roots not in the church reforms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as has been previously argued, but in the economic situation of the fourteenth: severe climate change throughout Europe brought plague, famine, and economic recession, and the Church found itself in competition with secular poets for the limited patronage of the aristocracy. Ó Dálaigh's poem, then, is best understood in response to this climate: an ostentatious show of support, probably thought up by the poets themselves, to an embattled profession in exchange for a 'noble poem which [made him] immortal.'⁴ Hoyne reminds us that Ireland was (and is) part of Europe, and that an understanding of contemporary developments elsewhere in Europe is often necessary to understand Gaelic Ireland and its cultural productions.

Following this discussion is an edition of another poem addressed to Ó Ceallaigh, *Táth Aoinfhir ar Iath Maineach* (pp. 93–130), along with an English translation and textual notes. This anonymous poem, consisting of 76 quatrains in *deibhí*, is preserved uniquely in Dublin Royal Irish Academy MS D ii 1 (1225), known as the Book of Uí Mhaine. Hoyne has silently normalized the manuscript's orthography: marks of length and glide vowels are added, eclipsis is shown following modern conventions (e.g. *cc > gc*), and the spelling of unstressed vowels has been freely altered to show rhyme. The result is a clean-looking and readable text, uncluttered with macrons and italics.⁵ Hoyne's notes are helpful, calling attention to various points of language, metrics, onomastics, and literary parallels. Oddly, Hoyne has applied this same policy of silent normalization to all Irish-language sources quoted in the chapter, including other published editions; the rationale for this decision is never given.⁶

4 Adapted from Mathghamhain Ó hÍfearnáin's poem, *Ceist! Cia do cheinneóchadh dán?* (Bergin 1970: 145–146, 279–280). As Hoyne notes (pp. 89–90), this strategy was effective: the poem is being discussed nearly seven hundred years later, and the expression *Fáilte Uí Cheallaigh* 'Ó Ceallaigh's welcome', signifying a particularly generous reception, is still in use.

5 Readers interested in the particulars of the manuscript's orthography can of course consult the 'lightly edited' transcription in McManus & Ó Raghallaigh 2010 (poem 457, pp. 639–642) and/or the manuscript images via Irish Script On Screen (<https://www.isos.dias.ie/>).

6 This strategy may have been adopted in order to make the sources quoted more accessible to readers, but as all quotations of Irish-language sources are accompanied

In her chapter ‘*Scéla Mongáin mac Fiachnai ocus Ehdach Rígéicis: A reappraisal of text and language*’ (pp. 131–156), Chantal Kobel discusses another text which was first edited and translated by Knott (1916). This short tale forms part of the cycle surrounding the seventh-century figure Mongán mac Fiachnai. Several tales from this cycle can be traced to the now-lost eighth century manuscript known as *Cín Dromma Snechtai*, and in her edition, Knott suggested that the *Scéla Mongáin* ‘apparently belongs to the same period of composition’ (1916: 155) as these early tales. Kobel notes that, aside from a few brief comments by critics, the language of *Scéla Mongáin* has yet to be subjected to serious analysis, something which she sets out to accomplish in this chapter. After giving a summary of the tale, a discussion of its stylistic features and parallels with other early Irish texts, and an overview of the manuscript context, Kobel presents a new edition and translation following ‘modern editorial conventions’ (p. 138). As both Knott and Kobel present the text of the sole manuscript witness with minimal emendations, the differences between the two editions are fairly minor, although Kobel has been able to make sense of those passages which were obscure to Knott and suggested new interpretations for some other passages; any substantial differences are discussed in the footnotes. Kobel has also helpfully introduced section and line numbers, which facilitate the discussion of the text. This is followed by a thorough discussion of any potentially diagnostic linguistic features of the text. Kobel concludes that the text was most likely composed c. 850–950, a date which is consistent with her other observations on the stylistic features and literary affinities of the text, and indicates a need for further work on the tale and its relationship with the Mongán tradition as a whole.

Fangzhe Qiu’s chapter, ‘Verses in the “Iona Chronicle”?: Textual and linguistic evidence’ (pp. 157–203), is an attempt to ascertain whether the metrical material shared between the *Annals of Ulster (AU)*, the *Annals of Tigernach (AT)*, and *Chronicon Scotorum (CS)* could have been present in the ‘Iona Chronicle,’ the hypothetical *Urtext* of the annals which was maintained on Iona between the sixth and eighth centuries. In total, there are at least fifteen verse items which are included in both *AU* and in *AT* and/or *CS* (both of which belong to the ‘Clonmacnoise group’ of annals), all of which are attached to entries from between the years 516 and 695, during the period when the Iona Chronicle is thought to have been compiled. The relationship between these verses is complicated by the fact that all but one of the verses in *AU* are marginal, and therefore could have been inserted from another source. Qiu presents two conditions which must be met before the possibility that a verse entry belonged to the *Urtext* can be considered: firstly, whether the *AU* text is independent of the Clonmacnoise text,

with an English translation, this seems unnecessary. It also seems odd to apply these changes to Knott’s own edition of *Filidh Éireann go hAoindeach*, an edition which he notes ‘is difficult to find fault with, even applying the standards of today’ (p. 69 n 3).

and secondly, whether the linguistic profile of the verse is consistent with an Old Irish date. For each verse item, Qiu gives his own transcription of each manuscript witness, since ‘the edited texts... sometimes deviate from the manuscript reading and contain errors in transcription’ (p. 164 n 20), followed by his own translation (with indications where the manuscript readings diverge enough to suggest a different interpretation). This is followed by a discussion of the content of the verse, dateable linguistic and metrical features, and of possible relationships between the various witnesses, as well as of glosses and other material related to these shared verse items. Because of the complex and technical nature of the subject matter, this chapter is not the easiest reading, but it is clearly organized and laid-out, and the tables and headings are a great aid to the reader.

Qiu notes that, while some material was inserted into *AU* (from an annal of the Clonmacnoise group or another source) by a later hand, several of the verses in *AU* show systematic divergences from the text of the Clonmacnoise group which, along with the linguistic profile of some of the verses, is consistent with the possibility that these poems belonged to the textual tradition of the annals before the split into *AU* and the Clonmacnoise group. Another possibility, however, is that these poems were introduced from another source (such as a collection of elegies) into both *AU* and the *Clonmacnoise* group after these traditions had split. Qiu notes that this possibility could explain the presence of verse items in *AU* which are not found in the Clonmacnoise group and vice versa. Unfortunately, he does not let the reader know how many such verse entries are found in the various annals, or what range of time they cover, and it is unclear from this chapter what proportion of the verse material in the various annals these shared entries make up. Qiu concludes by suggesting that it is at least possible that some of these shared entries did belong to the Iona Chronicle, and may even date to the events which they commemorate, and by noting that there is still much work to be done, not only on annalistic verse, but on the entire textual tradition of the Irish annals.

The final chapter, ‘Comments on the *remscéla to Togail Bruidne Da Derga*’ (pp. 205–229) by Christina Cleary, is an attempt to identify the three *remscéla* mentioned in a passage in *Lebor na hUidre*, supposedly copied from *Cín Dromma Snechtai*, which follows the saga.⁷ Cleary begins with a discussion of the term *remscél* ‘prefatory tale’ and its attestations in early Irish literature, and suggests that the fact that the *remscéla to Togail Bruidne Da Derga* reflect episodes in the related tale *Tochmarc Étaíne* might support the idea that these episodes were originally transmitted as separate tales before some redactor combined them into the extant tale. She then attempts to identify the possible referents of the three

7 This is based on a chapter in Cleary’s 2018 doctoral dissertation (i: 189–219), although it has been revised significantly for this volume. This is most apparent when comparing the ‘very rough translation’ of *Tochmarc Étaíne* §12 in the dissertation with the critical edition and commentary offered in the present volume.

titles mentioned in the list. One title, *Tesbaid Étaíne ingine Ailello* (translated as ‘The absence of Étaín daughter of Ailill’), can be identified with Étaín’s banishment in *Tochmarc Étaíne* I.⁸ Another, *Aisnéis Síde Maic Óic do Midir Breg Leith ina Síde* (translated as ‘The Instruction Regarding the Síde of Mac Óc Given by Midir [of Bri Léith] in his Síde’), might refer to the episodes in *Tochmarc Étaíne* I where the Mac Óc takes possession of Brug na Bóinne, although Cleary rejects this as Midir does not give any ‘instruction’ to Óengus.⁹ The identity of *Tromdám Echdach Airemon* (translated as ‘The Burdensome Company of Echaid Airem’) is also uncertain, although Cleary notes that the term *tromdám* is used in reference to Midir’s host in *Tochmarc Étaíne* III. In order to assess this connection, Cleary offers an analysis, edition, translation and notes to the *retoiric* passage in §12 of *Tochmarc Étaíne* III, which was left untranslated in Bergin and Best’s edition of the text.¹⁰ While there are some unusual translation choices (such as *fer brón* as ‘a man of the phalanx’), this is the first English translation of this passage and a welcome contribution. Cleary states that there is not enough evidence for identifying the *Tromdám* as this passage, and cites a poem attributed to Flann Mainistrech as possible evidence for the existence of an alternate version of this tale. The fact that most of the titles in the *remscél* list are not perfect matches for episodes of *Tochmarc Étaíne*, Cleary concludes, supports the idea that sections of the tale circulated independently before they were compiled together.

While reading the volume, I did not notice any typos, and only one erroneous reference (‘AU’ iii, 492–4’ *recte* ‘AU’ ii, 492–5’, p. 68). The back matter includes a general bibliography with a list of abbreviations, a general index, and an index of first lines to verse. There are, however, some omissions and inconsistencies here: the abbreviations *AC* and *Clonm.* are not explained, all but one of the poems quoted in Qiu’s chapter are absent in the index of first lines, as is the poem *Tánag d’Fhanaid an Einigh* quoted in Hoyne’s contribution. In the general index some manuscripts and personal names are included as main entries, while others are included as sub-entries under ‘manuscripts’ or ‘personal names’, with no clear reason why; Irish-language versions of proper names may be indexed under the Irish versions or their English equivalents, with or without mention of the equivalent in the other language. These are all very minor issues, which do not subtract from the high quality of the contributions.

8 Cleary follows Ó Cathasaigh’s translation of the *remscél* list (1990: 105–106).

9 Cleary claims that Ó Cathasaigh’s translation of *aisnéis* as ‘instruction’ is ‘a superior interpretation to “story/narration”’ with no further explanation. The more typical meaning given in *DIL* of ‘narration’ would make this identification somewhat less complicated: ‘the narration of the *Síde* of the Mac Óc to/by Midir...’

10 As Cleary notes, Wolfgang Meid (2020) had published an edition and German translation of this passage while this volume was being prepared. This edition is frequently referenced, and Cleary discusses any points where her interpretation has differed significantly from that of Meid.

As was mentioned above, the contributions cover a wide chronological range, matching Knott's own broad expertise as a scholar. The chapters are rigorous and thought-provoking, and identify promising areas for further work. As most of the chapters engage with Knott's work, the volume is a compelling testimony to the ongoing relevance of her scholarship, in some cases over a century after its publication. All in all, this volume is a fitting tribute to Knott and her legacy, both at Trinity, and on the field as a whole.

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