

An elegy on the death of Fr Nicholas Sheehy¹

Zusammenfassung

Nach einem Prozeß in Clonmel, County Tipperary, wurde ein katholischer Priester namens Nicholas Sheehy (Nioclás Mac Síthigh) eines Mordes für schuldig befunden und daraufhin am 15. März 1766 grausam hingerichtet. Der Fall Sheehys löste unter der katholischen Bevölkerung Munsters große Empörung aus, insbesondere, weil er die Schwäche sowohl des katholischen Klerus aufzeigte, der den Priester nicht in Schutz genommen hatte, als auch der zentralen Verwaltung in Dublin, die es unterlassen hatte, dem Angeklagten in Clonmel einen fairen Prozeß zu sichern. Darüber hinaus legte dieser Fall offen, wie der örtliche protestantische Adel von Tipperary, von zeitgenössischen Konfessionsspannungen angetrieben, erfolgreich darauf hingewirkt hatte, eine solche Verurteilung sicherzustellen. Das Gedicht Do chuala geoin ag slóite ar thaoibh cnoic ('Ich hörte einen Schrei unter Mengen auf einem Berghang') ist eines von mehreren Gedichten, die die allgemeine Wut über den Fall Sheehys artikuliert und weit verbreitet haben. Dieser Aufsatz bietet sowohl eine kritische Ausgabe dieses Textes als auch eine Analyse seines Kontextes.

Introduction

The subject of the elegy below, Fr Nicholas Sheehy (Nioclás Mac Síthigh), was found guilty of murder at a trial in Clonmel, County Tipperary, and was hanged, drawn and quartered on 15 March 1766. The inscription on the memorial tomb marking his grave, which is still visible today in Shanrahan cemetery outside Clogheen in south Tipperary, states that the priest was thirty-eight years of age at the time of his death.² He was thus born in 1728 or 1729, and his birthplace, although not definitive, appears to have been at Fethard, County Tipperary.³ He descended from prominent, well-to-do Catholic families, his paternal forebears being the Mac Sheehys of Drumcollogher, County Limerick, while those on his maternal side were the Powers of Bawnfoun, County Waterford.⁴ A cousin, Edmund ('Buck') Sheehy, was a Catholic landowner on the Butler (Cahir) estate who, incidentally, was himself convicted of murder and executed on 3 May 1766.⁵

¹ I am grateful to Fr Joe MacMahon, OFM, and to Professor Pádraig Ó Macháin, University College Cork, for discussing aspects of this paper with me.

² CROKER 1844: xxxi–xxxii; MADDEN 1857: 51; BURKE 1907: 390; Ó MAOLCHATHAIGH 1939–1940: 136. A sign on the pillar at the entrance to Shanrahan cemetery reads: 'Within This Graveyard Lies The Remains Of Fr Nicholas Sheehy P.P. Clogheen Executed In Clonmel March 15th 1766. Erected By The People of Clogheen March 1991'. On the construction of the memorial tomb itself as well as its commemoration by the people of Clogheen and surrounding villages, see O'RIORDAN 2012: 3–51.

³ LONERGAN 1896: 602; BURKE 1907: 368, note (d); DE BHÁL 1954: 1; MURPHY 1896; MURPHY 1950: 47.

⁴ MADDEN 1857: 88–9; BEGLEY 1938: 71–3; MURPHY 1950: 47; O'CONNELL 1967: 372.

⁵ MADDEN 1857: 65–75, 79–80; POWER 1937: 134; BRIC 1985: 159; POWER 1993: 265. Reaction to this man's death also finds literary expression in an elegy beginning *Atá créacht is brón is gleó agus sceimhle, / screada is glam go fann ag saoithe*, 'Scholars are unwillingly convulsed with injury, sorrow, uproar, terror,

Where his education is mentioned in biographical accounts, one, for example, states that Nicholas Sheehy ‘was sent to Louvain, to be educated, by a gentleman named Everard, whose family were then owners of the Barton Grove estate’ at Fethard and that at ‘some time previous he was ordained at Rome, 1752’.⁶ Sir Redmond and Lady Everard died childless in 1742, however, and the estate devolved to Everard’s near cousin, James Long, before being bought eventually in 1751 by Thomas Barton, a successful Bordeaux wine merchant.⁷ It also seems doubtful that Sheehy was ordained at Rome, given that his name does not appear on the list of Irishmen ordained in that city between 1698 and 1759.⁸ Other accounts of his life claim that he was educated for the priesthood at Louvain, but his name does not feature in published records of Irish students who studied in Louvain university (which included four Irish colleges) during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁹

Two autograph documents, in the Archives of the Irish College, Salamanca, and now housed in NUI Maynooth, County Kildare, confirm that Nicholas Sheehy was educated for the priesthood in Spain.¹⁰ According to the first, he entered the Irish college for secular students at Santiago de Compostela on 17 March 1746 when he took the triple oath: (i) to obey the superiors and observe the rules of the college; (ii) to strive after the perfection of the collegiate life; (iii) to take orders and return to the mission in Ireland when so directed by his superiors. Sheehy signed the second document on entering the Irish college at Salamanca on 17 March 1749 when he took the same three oaths.¹¹ He was, moreover, one of five seminarians involved in a curious acrimonious conflict with the college authorities at Salamanca in 1751, whereby Sheehy and two others were expelled for not observing college rules while the remaining two were sent away without letters of recommendation.¹² He was allowed to return to Salamanca, however, as is clear from a letter, written by him in ‘St. Patrick’s’ on 28 October 1756, in which he declared that he had become a deacon on that day and that he was ‘to be priested next sunday come seaven night’.¹³ Following ordination, he returned to his native county, ministering first in Newcastle parish and then as parish priest of the united parishes of Shanrahan, Ballysheehan and Templetenny — represented by the present-day Roman Catholic parish of Clogheen and Burncourt in south Tipperary.¹⁴

The agrarian secret society known as the Whiteboys (thus called because of its members’ practice of wearing white over-shirts during their nocturnal activities) began its

cries and shouting’, RIA MS 940 (23 0 15), pp. 155–61, an edition of which is being prepared by Professor Pádraig Ó Macháin.

⁶ MURPHY 1896.

⁷ O’DONNELL 1993: 103; POWER 1993: 83–4.

⁸ FENNING 1996.

⁹ POWER 1907; POWER 1913; NILIS 2006–2007.

¹⁰ I thank Susan Leyden, Project Archivist, for placing copies at my disposal.

¹¹ ‘Nicholaus Sheehy Compostellae die 17^a Martii anno Salutis 1746^o’ (SP/23/2) and ‘Salmanticae Die Salutis 17 Martii Anno 1749 Nicolaus Sheehy’ (SP/1/321), respectively; see also O’CONNELL 2007: 122 and NOGOL, BRAY & O’DOHERTY 1915: 8. For an outline of the types of oaths taken by clerical students, see O’DOHERTY 1913: 1–7.

¹² The details involving a travelling tailor who was hidden by the young clerics in the college are briefly outlined in O’CONNELL 2007: 122, 139–40.

¹³ BURKE 1914: 171–3; cf. MURPHY 1950: 48.

¹⁴ LONERGAN 1896: 603; BURKE 1907: 368; POWER 1937: 134; O’CONNELL 1967: 372; MURPHY 1950: 49.

operations in 1761 in south Tipperary, and the movement spread from there into north-east Cork, east Limerick, west Waterford and Kilkenny. Nicholas Sheehy's parish was one of the most reported areas of disturbance down to 1765, where the enclosure of the common lands, the introduction of Protestant head-tenants and landlord-sponsored conversion schemes during the 1740s spilled over into sectarian violence. Due to the suspension of restrictive cattle acts in 1758–9 that had prohibited the export of Irish beef since the late seventeenth century, as well as increased consumer demand for beef in Europe, investment in pasture became more profitable. Landlords re-let to graziers who reduced traditional access to commons by smaller tenants. The Whiteboys sought to defend these customary rights by tearing down or levelling fences, hedges and walls, by digging up pasture and by houghing cattle. Central to this agrarian unrest, moreover, was opposition to the payment of tithes — a tax levied on agricultural produce for the support of the Established Church, namely the (Anglican) Church of Ireland. Those exacting the tax itself, tithe-proctors and tithe-farmers, became the special focus of Whiteboy violence, and such was the scale of this violence that the Whiteboy Act was introduced in 1765, making the administration of oaths by threat of violence, which was the movement's defining characteristic, a capital offence.¹⁵

Nicholas Sheehy came to the particular attention of local Protestant ministers, landlords and magistrates during this time of Whiteboy unrest, although he had already attracted some notice in 1758. In that year, he was included in a list of priests who were obliged by John O'Brien, Catholic Bishop of Cloyne and Ross (1748–69), to publicize in their respective parishes an edict of excommunication which he had placed on the town of Mitchelstown, County Cork. The background to this lay in the confusion of authority over church matters in the town arising from a number of disagreements between O'Brien and James Butler, Archbishop of Cashel (1757–74). The absentee landlord of the district, James King, Fourth Baron Kingston, fearing the challenge to his own authority and commercial loss to Mitchelstown, offered a reward of twenty pounds for the apprehension of Bishop O'Brien as well as a reward of five pounds for the apprehension of each Catholic priest, including Sheehy, who publicized the ban.¹⁶

The first half of the 1760s saw a more active involvement by Sheehy in contemporary social grievances. In June 1762, for example, he was one of three presented as unregistered priests by the grand jury at the Summer assizes.¹⁷ He was further indicted for unlawful assembly and tendering oaths (May 1763), for intending 'to raise and levy open war, insurrection and rebellion' (Spring assizes, 1764), and once again for unlawful assembly as well as for assaulting one John Bridge at Shanbally (Summer assizes 1764).¹⁸ The latter indictment sent him into hiding, and in February 1765 a proclamation on a charge of high treason with a price of three-hundred pounds on his head called on all officials of the district to arrest and imprison him. Having surrendered to a local Protestant magistrate, Cornelius O'Callaghan, Sheehy was brought to trial in Dublin a year later and was acquitted on the charge of rebellion, but re-arrested for the murder of

¹⁵ DONNELLY 1978–1979; BRIC 1985: 151–7, 170–5; BUTLER 2005: 219–20.

¹⁶ COOMBES 1981: 67–8; POWER 1993: 240–1.

¹⁷ POWER 1993: 260–1.

¹⁸ MADDEN 1857: 36–8; BURKE 1907: 368–70.

John Bridge. Of this he was convicted at a trial in Clonmel in March 1766 and was sentenced to death.¹⁹

That the cleric's anti-establishment disposition was not welcomed by the Protestant polity in Tipperary seems obvious, of course, but he was also regarded within his own denomination as impulsive and outspoken. For example, Dr John Curry († 1780), a contemporary Catholic historian and founder of the Catholic Committee in Dublin in 1760, described him as follows:

This Sheehy, my lord, was a giddy, officious, but not ill-meaning man, with somewhat of a quixotish cast of mind towards the relieving of all those, whom he fancied to be injured, or distressed; and, setting aside his unavoidable connexion with these rioters, (for some hundreds of them were his parishioners) a person of good character in all other respects. In the course of these disturbances, he had been often indicted, and tried as a popish priest; but no sufficient evidence appearing against him on that charge, he was always acquitted, to his own great misfortune; for, had he been convicted, his punishment, which was only transportation, might have prevented his ignominious death, which soon after followed.²⁰

Dennis Taafe († 1813) claimed that Catholic bishops in Munster were keen to denounce the Whiteboy movement and its supporters, and he noted that Peter Creagh, Bishop of Lismore and Waterford (1747–75), was particularly keen to thwart campaigns against the payment of tithes and other grievances:

The superiors of the catholic clergy, in that province, were at the same time edifyingly active in pressing the duty of obedience and loyalty on their people. This is well known. He of Waterford exerted himself, by giving the government the best and earliest intelligence he could, of the intentions and motions of those miscreants.²¹

According to the foregoing passage, then, Bishop Creagh could not have been unaware of the involvement of Nicholas Sheehy in the social and radical issues of the day, nor would he have tolerated a priest in his diocese who attracted any imprudent attention from the authorities.

In light of the aforementioned Mitchelstown affair of 1758, of course, relations between the priest and his superior were probably strained in any case because Sheehy had ultimately followed the instructions of Bishop John O'Brien, a superior of a separate diocese, at that time. During Sheehy's troubles with the authorities up until his proclamation in 1765, moreover, Bishop Creagh was unwilling to intervene on his behalf and he was also reluctant to speak in support of the accused man at any point during his trial in Clonmel a year later.²² Nicholas Taaffe, sixth Viscount Taaffe (1677–1769), captured this unhappy state of affairs by remarking in 1766 that 'he [Bishop Creagh]

¹⁹ [Curry] 1766: 8; MADDEN 1857: 39–51; LONERGAN 1896: 608–17, 620; BURKE 1907: 371–88; DE BHÁL 1954: 10–26; O'CONNELL 1967: 379–81; BRIC 1985: 158–9; POWER 1993: 262–5; POWER 1998: 72–5.

²⁰ [CURRY] 1766: 7–8.

²¹ TAAFE 1811: 72; cf. BRIC 1985: 157.

²² BURKE 1907: 389; POWER 1998: 65.

behaved with all the severity he could towards the unfortunate priest Sheehy'.²³ Similarly, William Egan, parish priest of Clonmel at the time of Sheehy's conviction and Peter Creagh's successor as Bishop of Waterford and Lismore (1775–96), did not appear at the trial when called as a witness, while the senior cleric of the province, Archbishop James Butler of Cashel, was equally unsympathetic when reporting Sheehy's outspoken nature to Rome.²⁴

Such reluctance on the part of the Catholic clergy notwithstanding, the demise of Nicholas Sheehy ultimately testified to the failure of the central administration in Dublin in ensuring that he be accorded justice on handing him over for retrial in Clonmel. It also highlighted the effective manner in which the local Tipperary gentry, fuelled by contemporary sectarian tensions, managed to pursue its biased agenda and secure a conviction based on trumped-up evidence, which resulted in Sheehy's execution on 15 March 1766.²⁵

Literary context

Do chuala geoin ag slóite ar thaoibh cnoic in what follows below is but one of a number of texts articulating the more general support and outrage at a popular level which the Sheehy case provoked. In a second elegy beginning *Ag taisteal liom fá smúit im aonar*, 'While travelling alone in sorrow' (68 + 2 epilogue stanzas), and attributed to Seán Cúndún from Kildorrery in north Cork, the poet encounters a beautiful woman who subsequently identifies herself as Ireland or *Fódhla* (l. 61). She tells of her grief at the death of Nicholas Sheehy — *Nioclás Mac Síthigh mhill go hae me* (l. 76) — and claims that it were better for her to leave the country rather than suffer the loss of one so pious and learned. The priest's conviction was secured by lies and falsehood, moreover, and his death amounts to 'outright murder' (*murdar dubh*, l. 168). Although the poem concludes with a prayer for the acceptance of Sheehy's soul into paradise and provides a synopsis of the man's eminent qualities, its overall tenor is negative and leaves no real sense of collective redemption for Ireland's native population.²⁶

A third elegy beginning *A Athair Niocláis, mo chás id lui thú*, 'Father Nicholas, alas you lie there!' (76 lines), derives from Ring, County Waterford, and is attributed to Nicholas Sheehy's sister.²⁷ The charge made against the dead man, so this poem, is that he was 'captain of the Whiteboys' (*captaon na bhFear mBán*). In directly naming his enemies — Fr William Egan of Clonmel and Bishop Peter Creagh (*Aodhagán is Créach*), mentioned above, Mary Dunlea who was one of the chief witnesses against Sheehy at his trial in Clonmel, as well as John Bagwell MP and Sir Thomas Maude MP, members of Tipperary's Protestant gentry who were prominent in the campaign against the cleric — this poem ensures that those who brought about his death would continue to be decried. A

²³ POWER 1998: 65, n. 16.

²⁴ LONERGAN 1896: 617–19; BURKE 1907: 389–90; BRIC 1985: 159; POWER 1998: 65, n. 17.

²⁵ BRIC 1985: 168; POWER 1998: 78.

²⁶ MAC PEAIRCÍN 2012; cf. a brief discussion of the poem in BUTTIMER 2006: 330, 331. For the poet Seán Cúndún, see Ó CONCHÚIR 1982: 249, n. 40.

²⁷ [Ó NÉILL] 1934; DE BHÁL 1954: 28; MAC CÁRTHAIGH 1956; BOURKE 2002.

shorter version, vilifying Mary Dunlea and beginning *A Mháire Ní Dhuinnshléibhe, go n-imí díth ort!*, ‘Mary Dunlea, may you suffer ruin!’ (11 lines), has also survived.²⁸

The heading accompanying the earliest version of a fourth poem beginning *Is gearr do bhí mé ar leaba im luí an uair ghlaoigh amuigh*, ‘No sooner was I lying in bed when outside called’ (5 stanzas), describes ‘Fr Nicholas Sheehy’s awakening’ (*Múscladh an Athair Nioclás Ua Síothadh*) when an anonymous ally arrives at his home and requests that the priest inspect the Gaels (*Gaoidhil*) who have converged in battle against foreigners (*Gallaibh*).²⁹ It is similar to Seán Cúndún’s composition above, in that it is reminiscent of an *aisling*, but this poem is also permeated by a sense of hope for the lot of Ireland’s native population. Interestingly, the unnamed ‘vigorous priest’ (*sagart groí*) in the third line is identified in the heading as Fr Nicholas Sheehy, thereby showing that it was accepted, not only by the original author, but also by the public in general, that the priest was indeed a member of the Whiteboys.³⁰

The poem below underlines Nicholas Sheehy’s auspicious credentials as scion of nobility (ll. 5, 18, 44–6, 50–2, 54, 61, 71, 76, 78), whose unjust downfall causes a sudden loss in patronage and native learning (ll. 23, 31). His laudable characteristics include an ability to lead (*ceannasach*, l. 86) and to act as a rallying-point for the oppressed (*éachtmhar*, l. 54). Not only is he a paragon of priestly piety and learning, but his uniqueness extends even as far as being able to perform miracles (*fearta*, ll. 62, 87). The latter gift forms part of a more general belief at a popular level that Sheehy possessed special powers. His grave in Shanrahan, for example, became the focus of daily pilgrimages within a short time after his death, and the earth from his tomb was believed to contain special healing powers.³¹

Sheehy’s death was caused by treachery and lies: *do crochadh le feall* (heading), *Cē cailleadh ’na deoidh re fiarghaill ort* (l. 32), *Do tachtadh le héitheach ’s éigean naimhde* (l. 64), *Le spalpadh na mionn* (l. 77), *Do tachtadh le héigean bréige is díoltais* (l. 88). According to vernacular tradition, moreover, his head was left impaled on a spike above the prison gate in Clonmel for twenty years after his execution until his sister, Cáit de Búrca, was allowed to remove it for burial.³² Our poem conveys part of this dramatic detail in *Do cheann ar sparra le hamharc gach cladhaire* (l. 59). This, in turn, finds a parallel in English-language tradition in a poem, attributed to Catherine Burke, which first appeared in *The Limerick Reporter* in January 1846: ‘And where are they dear head, that once reviled thee / that spiked thee high — with filthy pitch defiled?’³³ A variant of the latter poem has survived in County Tipperary, in fact, down to contemporary times.³⁴

Three subjects of opprobrium, all of whom belonged to Tipperary’s Protestant gentry at that time, find particular mention. The first, Maude (ll. 60, 68, 84), refers to the aforementioned Sir Thomas Maude († 1777), a Protestant landowner who resided in Dundrum and represented County Tipperary as MP between 1761 and 1776. He was also

²⁸ Ó hÓGÁIN 1981: 58, although *Dia* in the latter edition I correct to *díth* here as it makes better sense. For Mary Dunlea (*alias* Mrs. Mary Brady), see BURKE 1907: 369, 377, 381.

²⁹ Ó MACHÁIN 2012: 207–12, which discusses four variant versions in all.

³⁰ Ó MACHÁIN 2012: 208.

³¹ CROKER 1844: xxxiii; MADDEN 1857: 51; FROUDE 1874: 31; LECKY 1892: 44; BRIC 1985: 161.

³² Ó CADHLA 2002: 80.

³³ Ó CADHLA 2002: 80.

³⁴ ANONYMOUS 1954: 95.

appointed High Sheriff for the county in 1765.³⁵ Baker (ll. 60, 68, 79) points to a member of the Baker family of Lattinmore and Lismacue in Tipperary, possibly to William Baker who was appointed High Sheriff of the county in 1726, or to his son, Hugh († 1772).³⁶ Hoops (l. 79) refers to Alexander ('Sandy') Hoops († 1780), juror in the Sheehy trial.³⁷ These individuals and the Tipperary Protestant gentry in general — *gach trū dá síolrach* (l. 79) — are viewed as having contributed to Sheehy's treacherous killing, and in referring to them specifically, our poem ensures their continued revilement in popular memory.

At a time when it was hoped that proscriptions against Catholics under penal legislation would relax, it is understandable that one so public in his criticism of the declining lot of his parishioners as Sheehy might meet with little support from those within the Catholic hierarchy. Not only does our poem react vehemently to the injustice perpetrated against him, however, but it regards members of the man's own church as partly responsible for this. In apportioning blame, for example, Bishop Peter Creagh (*Craobhach*, l. 84) is held to account. Moreover, Sheehy's bravery and determined disposition, as captured in *Ba teann t'acfainn chum seasamh i bhfíorghoil* (l. 29), suggests that his fellow priests and superiors were wide of the mark. And, the line *Is cásmhar claon ár gcléir gan bíogadh* (l. 42) together with *Planda séimh den chléir nár chinnte, / Úrghas aorach éachtmhar aoibhinn* (ll. 53–4) leave no doubt but that an evasive, undetermined body of churchmen could not prevent the death of a courageous, compassionate priest who was a 'friend of the absolute poor' (*cara na bhfíorbhocht*, l. 8). As a result, a helpless Catholic flock (*tréad*) is now bereft of a true shepherd to guard them (*gan aodhaire dā gcoimhdeacht*, l. 81).

Manuscript sources, metre and edition

Do chuala geoin ag slóite ar thaoibh cnoic has come down in two manuscripts, namely RIA MS 339 (23 M 21), pp. 53–6, written in 1811 by Séamus Ó Glasáin, or James Gleeson, of Herbertstown, Co. Limerick, and RIA MS 907 (12 E 24), pp. 262–6, most of which was written in 1845 by Seaghan Ua Dála / Dáladh, or John O'Daly, in Dublin.³⁸ The latter scribe added a note to the end of his text in which he suggests that the author of the poem was Uilliam Dall Ó hlfearnáin (c. 1720–c. 1803) from Lattin near Tipperary town.³⁹ An anonymous note in a different hand disputes this, however, stating the author to be 'John Condon', i.e. the aforementioned Seán Cúndún to whom the elegy *Ag taisteal liom fá smúit im aonar* is also attributed.⁴⁰ O'Daly, incidentally, may have intended his text in RIA MS 907 for printing, given his announcement that an elegy on the death of

³⁵ BRIC 1985: 150–1; POWER 1993: 228–31, 271–2; O'DONNELL 2008: 32–4.

³⁶ MONTGOMERY-MASSINGBERD 1976: 52–3.

³⁷ MADDEN 1857: 51; LONERGAN 1896: 610; BURKE 1907: 398.

³⁸ *RIA Cat.* 941–2 and 2624–33, respectively. For Ó Glasáin and his manuscripts, see Ó MADAGÁIN 1974: 91–2, while O'Daly and his contribution to Irish scholarship are discussed in Ó DRISCEOIL 2007.

³⁹ 'I should suppose Uilliam Dall to be the writer of this Elegy, as he lived at the above period — J. Daly — Anglesea St. Dublin Oct. 25. 1845' (RIA MS 907, p. 266).

⁴⁰ 'I can verily assure you he (Uilliam Dall) was not the writer of this; the celebrated John Condon of Killdoray, in the County of Cork' (RIA MS 907, p. 266); see also the note on l. 20 below.

the cleric ‘with historical notes and translations’ would ‘appear in due course’.⁴¹ The proposal itself does not seem to have been carried through.

The poem is composed in *caoineadh*, the usual metre for the literary kind of lament in Irish.⁴² Its general metrical pattern may be outlined as follows:

$$(-) |x (-) (-) |x - (-) |x - (-) |í -$$

Thus, there are four feet to the line, the final foot (or cadence) is disyllabic and the assonance here remains uniform throughout. Lines 32 and 46 deviate from the above, however, in containing three instead of four feet, while the final foot in line 32 is trisyllabic:

$$\begin{aligned} &- |x - - |x - |í - - (32) \\ &- |x - - |x - - |í - (46) \end{aligned}$$

The following may also be noted *metri causa*: *Liomsa* = /l’u:msə/ (l. 17), assonating with *Cnú* (l. 18); *naimhde* = /ni:d’ə/ (ll. 56, 64; see also note 64 below); *cladhair* = /kli:r’ə/ (l. 59); *nímhe* = /n’i:/ (l. 75); *mionn* = /m’u:n/ (l. 77), assonating with *fuigeadh* (l. 77), with *modhuil* and *chnú* (l. 78), and with *Hoops* and *trū* (l. 79); *Fuinseann* = /fi:nsən/ (l. 83). Other points are discussed in the notes accompanying the edited text.

While O’Daly’s text in RIA MS 907 seems to be a transcription of that by Ó Glasáin in RIA MS 339, there are minor deviations between the two, which are discussed in the notes below. The poem’s stanzaic arrangement in the manuscript sources is not reproduced here, particularly in view of lines 19–24, for example, which make better sense when presented as a run-on text. A macron in the edited text represents a length-mark which is not visible in the manuscripts. Capital letters, word division, punctuation are editorial. I have opted for present-day spelling (departing from it only where required by the metre) although the scribal spellings may be consulted in the manuscript readings. I also adopt the following normalized spellings silently in the edited text: (i) expansion of contractions; (ii) unstressed *io* > *ea* and unstressed *ui* > *ai*; (iii) *cc* > *gc*, *sd* > *st*, *sg* > *sc*, *tt* > *dt*; (iv) simple prepositions *a* > *i*, *aig* > *ag*, *air* > *ar*, *do* = ‘of’ > *de*; (v) prep. + article *don* = ‘of the’ > *den*, prep. + possessive pronoun *ad* ‘in your’ > *id*.

⁴¹ Ó DRISCEOIL 2007: 65.

⁴² For an overview of *caoineadh*, see Ó DONNCHADHA 1925: 48–51; BLANKENHORN 2003: 9–10, 158–9, 246–50.

Text

Marbhchaoineadh an Athar Nioclás Mac Síthigh noch do crochadh le feall i gCluain Meala, A.D. 1766.

Do chuala geoin ag slóite ar thaoibh cnoic,
Do bhúir do bhreogh an cóige thímcheall,
Do bhúir éagóir is scóladh is sceimhle,
Do thionscain ruathar buairt is bíogadh!
Tar triūch ō tháinig tásc an rí-fhlaith, 5
D'fhúig na táinte lán de líonraith,
Úrghas ard de bhláith na saoithe,
Plúr na hEaglaise is cara na bhfíorbhocht.
Níl dúil ná spéis in scléip iná 'n aoibhneas,
Ō fúigeadh craobh na cléire cloíte, 10
Brúite treascartha i dtaisce fá líoga,
Fann gan anam 's a leagadh le daoirscair.
Tá *Phaebus* fá éiclips ō cloídh tu,
Tá *Phlégon* is *Ēton* gan bhrí ar bith,
Tá gártha géarghoil éighmhe is caoineadh 15
Ag dáimh ag éigse id dhéidhse 's ag saoithe!
Liomsa is doilbh do phobal id dhíthse,
Cnú gan chogal den bhorbfhuil bhríomhar.
Is iomdha baile gan aiteas gan aoibhneas,
Ō Abhainn Ealla go fearann Lios Fuinseann, 20
Bhíodh spreagadh re hacfainn caoinchruit,
Íobairt bheannaithe is aifreann Íosa,
Duanta caomha is dréachta ag draoithe,
Fíonta ar bórd is beoir dā líonadh.
Ba bhreá do phearsa do leaca 's do ghnaoi ghlan, 25
Ba fáilteach flathamhail fleadhamhail fíontach,
Ba bhinn do bhéal i léamh gach caoinstair,
Cē táir mo dheacair gan aiseag fá líoga!
Ba teann t'acfainn chum seasamh i bhfíorghoil,
'S a' tabhairt na bpeacach fá tharmainn Íosa, 30
Cantaor suaire na nduanta bhfírcheart,
Cē cailleadh 'na deoidh re fiarghaill ort.
Scéal chuir buairt ar uaisle tíre,
Scéal chuir gruaim is ruaig ar mhílte,
Scéal d'fhúig gruaidhfliuch duairc ar saoithe, 35
Chuir duais ar chléir 's a dtréada ar díbirt.
Is cloíte céasta créimeach Clíona,
Aoibheall mhaorga ón gcaomhChraig aoibhinn;
Tug Úna is Áine is mná na mínlios
Fá chumha ó tharla ar lár ag daoirscair. 40

Is cráite tréithlag faon ár saoithe,
 Is cásmhar claon ár gcléir gan bíogadh,
 Tá dáimh is éigse is béithe ' síorghol,
 Trē bhás an fhlaith de mhaithibh Chlainn tSíthe.
 'S é an buinneán de cheartlár na dtaoiseach, 45
 Ba cheannárd gan earráid gan díomas,
 De phréimh na bhfearchon bhfleadhamhail bhfíontach,
 Ba thréan mear calma lonnmhar líofa,
 Criostal na laoch is leon an chroí ghil,
 Buinne de phór na dtreon sin Mhíleadh, 50
 Cnú gan cogal den bhorbfhuil bhríomhar,
 Is crobhaire an oinigh do hoileadh go fírcheart,
 Planda séimh den chléir nár chinnte,
 Úrghas aorach éachtmhar aoibhinn,
 Is dian leanadh na habstail dob aoirde, 55
 Air gur fealladh tre anacra naimhde.
 Is cúrsaí bróin is gleo is sceimhle,
 Is cúis chum deor dar ndóigh le n-insint:
 Do cheann ar sparra le hamharc gach cladhaire,
 Is *Baker* is *Maude* re habhacht dā mhaíomh sin. 60
 Rí-ghas cailce do scagadh gan dríodar,
 Den bhuíon do ceapadh le feartaibh ó Íosa,
 Aon den Eaglais, faraire an chroí ghil,
 Do tachtadh le héitheach 's éigean naimhde.
 Is cúrsaí éighmhe is géarghoil choíche, 65
 Is cúrsaí taom is baoghail is bíogadh,
 Is cúrsaí léin an féinneadh fíorghlan,
 Is *Baker* is *Maude* go hard dā mhaíomh sin.
 Tá scamallaibh ceo i bhFódla tímcheall,
 Tá dainíd is deora is scóladh is sceimhle, 70
 Ó cailleadh an leon de phór na rí-fhlath
 Ba thaca re treon is ba lón don bhfíorlag.
 Is atuirse cléibh 's is créacht sa tír thu,
 Dearmad daorchnead léan is líonraith,
 Osna is éacht is saoghadghoin nímhe thu, 75
 Ó torcradh géag den phréimh dob aoirde.
 Le spalpadh na mionn do fúigeadh cloíte,
 An seabhac mear modhúil de chnú na dtaoiseach.
 Tá *Baker* is *Hoops* is gach trū dá síolrach
 Dā aithris go teann do cheann id dhíthse. 80
 Is dúbhach do thréad gan aodhaire dā gcoímhdeacht,
 Is dúbhach an tréan an tláith 's an t-íseal,
 Is dúbhach gach n-aon ón bhFéil go Fuinseann,
 Acht *Maude* is Craobhach 's an aicme le 'r claíodh thu!
 Fíorfhlaithe lonnmhar leanbach líofa, 85
 Fíorghas calma ceannasach croíúil,

Aon do ceapadh le feartaibh ó Íosa,
Do tachtadh le héigean bréige is díoltais.
Guím na hapstail go flaitheas id choímhdeacht,
An Mhaighdean Bheannaithe is Banaltra an Rí ghil,
Na naoimh na haingil 's gan dearmad Íosa,
Ag fuascailt t'anam go Cathair na Soíllse.

90

The elegy of Fr Nicholas Sheehy who was treacherously hung in Clonmel, A.D. 1766.

I heard a cry among multitudes on a mountain side,
Which worried [and] sickened the entire province,
Which roared injustice, torment and fear,
Which set disaster, worry and terror in motion!
Since the fatal tidings of the royal prince spread throughout the countryside, 5
It left crowds of people full of panic,
Upright young scion of the best of scholars,
Flower of the Church and friend of the absolute poor.
There is neither desire nor interest in fun or pleasure,
Since the branch of the clergy was left defeated, 10
Bruised, deposited under flagstones,
Helpless without life, and he brought down by fools.
Phoebus is eclipsed since you were captured,
And Phlegon and Eton utterly lifeless,
There are cries of bitter weeping, bawling and grief, 15
Among poets, the bardic profession and scholars in your wake!
I pity your people who feel your absence,
A treasure without impurity of the fierce, powerful stock.
Many a town is without pleasure and happiness,
From the River Allow to the Lisfunshion district, 20
There used to be exhortation accompanied by the power of a sweet harp,
A blessed offering and the mass of Jesus,
Beautiful poems and tales by learned men,
Wines on the table and beer being filled.
Your form, your cheek and your clear countenance were fine, 25
You were welcoming, generous, festive, wine-loving,
In reading every good story your mouth was sweet,
Though you are alas without recovery under flagstones!
Your ability to hold out in true valour was strong,
As well as bringing sinners under the protection of Jesus, 30
A joyous inspiration of truly proper poems,
Though you have been ruined on account of it by perverse foreigners.
Tidings which worried a land's nobility,
Tidings which saddened and dispersed thousands,
Tidings which left scholars with a grim, wet cheek, 35
Pained the clergy and sent their flock into exile.
Clóna is oppressed, tormented, bitter,
[And] noble Aoibheall from fair, delightful Crag;
It submerged Úna and Áine and the women of the fine fairyforts
In grief since [you] were struck down by fools. 40
Our scholars are tormented, exhausted, subdued,
Our clergy pitiable, compliant, listless,
Poets, the bardic profession and maidens are constantly weeping,
Because of the death of the prince of the Sheehy family's nobles.

He is the sapling [sprung] from the very core of leaders, 45
 Noble-headed without vice, without pride,
 Of the root of the festive, wine-loving heroes,
 Who was strong, swift, brave, fierce, eager,
 Crystal of the heroes and lion of the good heart,
 A scion of the race of those tribes of Míleadh, 50
 A treasure without impurity of the fierce, powerful stock,
 And a sturdy man of honour who was impeccably reared,
 A fine offshoot of the uncertain clergy,
 A verdant scion, lively, warlike, wonderful,
 Who vehemently followed the noblest apostles, 55
 Until he was betrayed by the unjust pleading of enemies.
 A cause for sorrow and uproar and terror,
 And doubtless a reason for tears to report:
 Your head on a spike for every scoundrel to view,
 And Baker and Maude boasting about that with glee. 60
 A royal lime-white scion who was strained without dregs,
 Of the company who was fashioned with miracles from Jesus,
 Singular person of the Church, brighthearted soldier,
 Who was strangled because of the perjury and violence of enemies.
 The truly pure champion is a cause for anguish and bitter crying forever, 65
 A cause for outbursts, danger and distress,
 A cause for sorrow,
 And Baker and Maude boasting about that loudly.
 Clouds of grief engulf Fódla,
 Sorrow, tears, torment and fear, 70
 Since the lion of the offspring of royal princes has died
 Who was a support to the strong and an inspiration to the very weak.
 You are [the cause of] sadness of heart and a wound in the land,
 Uncertainty, intense groaning, grief and panic,
 You are [the cause of] woe, slaughter and a venomous, piercing wounding, 75
 Since the branch of the noblest root was slain.
 Due to the reckless blathering of oaths,
 The swift, gentle warrior of the noblest of leaders was left defeated.
 Baker and Hoops and every wretch of their breed
 Are intensely ridiculing your head in your absence. 80
 Your flock is sorrowful without a shepherd guarding them,
 The strong, the meek and the lowly are sorrowful,
 All from the Feale to the Funshion are sorrowful,
 Except Maude and Creagh and the sort by whom you were overthrown!
 A true prince, fierce, childlike, eager, 85
 A true scion, brave, commanding, hearty,
 A unique person who was fashioned with miracles from Jesus,
 Who was strangled because of false and vengeful violence.
 I pray that the apostles guide you to heaven,
 While the Blessed Virgin and Nurse of the bright King, 90

The saints, the angels and not to forget Jesus,
Deliver your soul to the City of Light.

A = RIA 23 M 21; B = RIA 12 E 24

Heading Marbhna an Athar Niocalas mac Síthe *remainder not included* A, Athair Niocláis Sitheadha ccluainn 1767 B.

1. chualadh B, sloighte A, sluaighte B, thaobh AB, cnuic A 2. bhuar A, bhúir B, bhreoig AB, thimpicioll A 3. mhúir A, cuir AB, sgólladh B, sgeimhle B 4. thionnsgainn A, thionsgainn B, biodha A, bíodhga! B 5. thainidh A, tháinidh B, Ríoghfhlaith A, ríoghfhlaith B 6. lann A, lionra A 7. urr ghas A 8. plurr A, carra A, caradh B 9. ní bhfuil A, ní bhfuil B, an AB, inna an A 10. fúigbheadh B, claoighthe A, claoighte B 11. bruighte AB, treasgúrtha AB 13. phoebus B, Eclips A, eclips B, claidh A, claidheadh B 14. bhrigh AB 15. garrtha A, cuimhne A, caoine B 16. dheig A, a shíthicc! B 18. bhrighmhar A, bhríoghmar B 20. eabhainn A, Abhain Caille B, Fearnn B, fuinnsionn AB 21. Mar a mbíodh A, Mar a mbeidh B, spreacadh AB, caoin cruit A 22. iodbhairt bheannuighthe A, iodbhairt beanaighthe is aifrinn B 24. 7 A, agus B, da lionna A 25. bhreagha AB, leacadh B, is AB 26. flathmhail fleagamhail fionntach A 27. leighiomh AB 28. tair A 29. tacsuinn A, ghuil A 30. tabairt A, tharramuinn A 31. canntoir A, na A, bhfior cceart A 32. cailleadh na deoig A, na dheoig re bhfior ghaill B 35. dfúig A, dfuig B, gruadhfluch A, arr A, ár B 36. cuir A, ttreata A, ttréadta B 37. claoighte A, claidhte B, creimeach cliodhna A, créimthíoch Clíodhna B 38. Aoibheall A, Aoibhill B, mhaordha AB, ón léithchraig B 39. tu ughna A, Unadh B, ainne A, Áinne B, minnlíos A 40. chumhadh A, chúmhadh B, thárladh B, larr A 41. craighte A, cráighte B, treithlag A, arr A 42. casmhar A, arr A, biodha A, bíoga B 44. tre bhais an fhlaith A, bhás flaithe B, cloinn tSightheill A 45. buingheán B, cheartlarr A 46. cheannard gan iorraid A 47. na bhfearrachoinn bhflagamhail A, phréimh bhfearra chaoin bhflagamhúil B, bhfionntach A 48. calma lanamhar A, lanamhar B, liomhtha A, líomhtha B 49. leogan A, leóghan B, chroidhe AB 50. buinge B, ttreón B 51. cogall AB, do B, bhríghmhar A, bhríoghmar B 52. oinig AB, do hoilleadh A, do hoileag B, fíorcheart A 53. plannda B, den cleir A, nar A 54. aogharach B 55. diair *with suspension-stroke* leanach A, dian leanach B, haptail A 56. falladh A, anacraith A, námhaide B 57. cur saoi A, cúrsaidhe B, sgeimhle B 58. ndoith A, ndóith B, ninnsint A, h-innsint B 59. cheann ar sparra A, homharc A, clodhaire A, claghaire B 60. Maud AB, hobhacht da mhaidheamh A, mhuidheamh B 61. Ríoghas A, Rígh ghas B, sgagach AB, gan A, drithdear A 62. bhuidheann A, bhuidhinn B, cheapadh B 63. fearaire A, fearaire B, chroidhe AB 64. do tacht A, thachtadh B, le eithíoch eigíonn A, h-éithíoch éigíon B, námhaide *latter word underlined and followed by the marginal note* – potius bíodbha to measure B 65. currsaoi A, cúrsaidhe B, choidhche A, choídhche B 66. cursaoi A, cúrsaidhe B, baoghail A, biodha A, bíoga B 67. cursaoi A, cúrsaidhe B, feinne A, féineadh B 68. Maud A, Maud *latter word underlined* B, hárd B, da mhaidhiomh A, mhuidheamh B 69. sgamalaibh A, sgamalaibh B, ceó B, bhfodhla thimpceall A 70. daithnid A, daithníd B, deara A, déara B, sgomhla A, sgolladh B, sgeimhle B 71. cailleadh an leogan do A, leóghan B, na ríoghfhlaith A, na ríoghfhlaith B 72. badh A, treón B, badh lonn A 73. creacht A, tu B 74. leun AB, lionra A 75. osnadh B, 7 A, agus B, 7 A, agus B, saod A, nimhe A, tu B 76. torchurtha A, den phreibh A 77. spalpa A, spalpa B, fúigbheadh B, claidhte A, claoighte B 78. modhail A, modhamhuil B 79. truagh B, da siolrach A, shíolrach B 80. darr A 81. aeghire A 82. trean A, sa tiosal A, san t-íosall B 83. onn bhfeil go A, fuinnsionn AB 84.

Maud A, Mád B, craoch A, créach B, le *ar* cláoidheach A, claidh tu B **85**. lanamhar leannabach A, lanamhar, leanabach B, liomhtha AB **86**. calma ceannasach croideamhail A, ceanasach croídheamhuil B **88**. do *tachta* A, thachtadh B, heigionn A **89**. Guidhim AB, habstail B, go *flathas* A, flathas B, Coimhdeacht A **90**. mhaighdeann A, beannuighthe A, bheanuighthe B, Righ A, Rígh B **91**. is *gan* A, is gan B **92**. go Caithir na Soillse A.

Notes

1 *slóite*: The variant reading *sluaighte* (B) does not adhere to the linear and vertical assonant pattern of the poem's opening three lines.

(*ar*) *thaoibh*: /i:/ is realized in the final stressed syllable throughout whence this emendation of the manuscript reading *thaobh* (A, B).

3 *éagóir*: This is an emendation of the manuscript reading *cuir* (A, B). The stress falls on the second syllable in the spoken Irish of Munster, and this, too, adheres to the poem's overall metrical pattern as outlined above.

9 *Nil*: Again, following the poem's metrical pattern, this is an emendation of *ni bhfuil* (A) / *ní bhfuil* (B).

13 *Phaebus*: Gk. *Phoibos*, lit. 'radiant', the name or description of Apollo, the Greek god of the sun.

14 *Phlégon is Ēton*: Four immortal horses of the Sun-god Helios are identified by the Latin author Julius Hyginus in his *Fabulae*, i.e. Phlegon, Aethon, Pyrois and Eous (ROSE 1934: 128). Aethon, i.e. *Ēton* here, also appears as *Etan* / *Aeton* in Irish manuscripts (DINNEEN & O'DONOGHUE 1911: 93, n. 15).

16 (*'s ag*) *saoithe*: The variant reading of B is *a shíthicc*, i.e. *a Shíthigh*, which also agrees with the pattern of the cadence throughout.

20 *Ō Abhainn Ealla go fearann Lios Fuinseann*: The River Allow rises in the eastern flanks of the Mullach an Radhairc Mountains (a range of mountains stretching from the borders of Counties Kerry, Limerick and Cork) and meets the main Blackwater channel near Mallow, County Cork. Lisfunshion, in the present-day Roman Catholic parish of Ballyporeen in south Tipperary, formerly belonged to Templetenny, where Nicholas Sheehy ministered as parish priest (see the discussion at note 14 above). For *Ō Abhainn Ealla*, the reading of B here is *o Abhain Caille*, possibly for *ó Abhainn Caoile*, *Abha Chaoil*, or the Keale River, being a stream which flows between Ballyorgan and Glenroe in south County Limerick, close to the Limerick-Cork border and Kildorrery in north Cork. This area may have prompted the writer of the anonymous note inserted into the text of B to attribute our poem to Seán Cúndún who was from Kildorrery (see note 40 above).

21 *Bhíodh spreagadh*: This emendation of *Mar a mbíodh* (A) 'where there used to be' and *Mar a mbeidh*, 'where there will be', accords with the poem's metrical pattern as outlined above. Emending *spreacadh* (A, B), 'movement, power, vigour', to *spreagadh* also seems to make better sense in the context of what follows in ll. 21–2.

22 *Íobairt bheannaithe is aifreann Íosa*: Following *iodhbairt beanaighthe is aifrinne* in the text of B, an alternative translation of the entire line would be ‘An offering blessed and masses of Jesus’.

24 *ar bórd*: ‘on the table’, i.e. laid out, *ar* + non-lenition deriving historically from O.Ir. *for*.

26 *flathamhail fleadhamhail*: Revising to the present-day spelling *flathúil fleáúil*, and thus being pronounced as disyllables with the stress on the first syllable in each case, would not break the poem’s metrical pattern; cf. the note on l. 47 below.

30 *tabhairt* /təurt’/: Thus pronounced in spoken Déise Irish (BREATNACH 1947: 25, §122, 134, §501; UA SÚILLEABHÁIN 1994: 487, §2.23, 533, §8.78), and it also assonates with *teann* (l. 29) and *Cantaíoir* (l. 31).

fá tharmainn: The broad initial *t* of *tarma(i)nn* is found in the contemporary Irish of Munster where the noun may also be feminine (Ó CRÓINÍN 1966: 60, n. 81), while the spelling *tharramuinn* (A) conveys its pronunciation as a trisyllable in southern Irish (O’RAHILLY 1932: 90, n. 1, 200).

31 *Cantaíoir* /kaunti:r’/: The short stressed vowel is diphthongized before *nt* here, as is the norm in Déise Irish (BREATNACH 1947: 142, §545; UA SÚILLEABHÁIN 1994: 484, §2.14).

(*na nduanta*) *bhfíorcheart*: The variant reading of A is *bhfíor cceart* but this breaks the pattern of the line cadence.

32 *cailleadh ’na deoidh re fiarghaill ort*: I take *’na deoidh* to refer to *acfainn* (l. 29); the variant construction of B is *cailleadh na dheoig* [= *’na dheoidh*] *re bhfíor ghaill ort*, ‘you have been ruined after all before utter foreigners’.

33 *Scéal chuir buairt ar uaisle tíre*: ‘Tidings which worried a land’s nobility’, the nobility in question referring on the one hand to prominent Catholic landowners who viewed Nicholas Sheehy as the supreme victim of the anti-Catholic frenzy of the 1760s (BRIC 1985: 153). It could also refer on the other to the Protestant landed gentry of Tipperary who feared increased sectarian animosity and Whiteboy violence in the county as a result of Sheehy’s execution. By c. 1780, for example, south Tipperary contained a higher number of government-sponsored garrisons than any of the surrounding districts and, interestingly, at Clogheen, as a direct result of Whiteboy agrarian disturbances and Nicholas Sheehy’s trial and execution, a permanent limestone-built cavalry barrack was provided in 1770 (BUTLER 2005: 224–6).

38 *Aoibheall mhaorga ón gcaomhChraig aoibhinn*: ‘noble Aoibheall from fair, delightful Crag’, *An Craig* here and in the variant reading *ón léith-chraig* (B) referring to *Craig Liath* (Craglea) in the parish of Killaloe, Co. Clare. The Otherworld mound of the supernatural Aoibheall was believed to be located there; cf. NÍ ÚRDAIL 2011: 136.

46 (*Ba*) *cheannárd gan earráid*: Following the poem's metrical pattern, the stress falls on the first syllables of *ceannárd* and *earráid*, which, of course, is not the case in spoken Munster Irish.

47 (*De phréimh na*) *bhfearchon bhfleadhamhail* /v'arəχən vl'agəvəl'/: This follows the reading of A *bhfearrachoinn bhflagamhail*, while the variant reading *bhfearra chaoín bhflagamhúil* (B) might be rendered *bhfearchaoín bhfleadhamhail*, '(of the) festive best of fair ones'. The scribal spelling of *bhfearchon* represents the epenthetic vowel which occurs in the spoken language in Munster when the first component of a compound ends in a liquid (or nasal) and the second begins with a consonant (cf. O'RAHILLY 1932: 200). Revising *bhfleadhamhail* to the present-day disyllabic form *bhfleáúil*, with the stress on the first syllable, would also observe the poem's metrical pattern; cf. the note on l. 26 above.

48 *lonnmhar* /lonəvər/: 'fierce, violent, angry, valiant, bold', which is an emendation of *lanamhar* (A, B) here and in l. 85. The latter scribal spelling once again represents the epenthetic vowel, which occurs in this instance in the spoken language in Munster after a liquid or nasal preceded by a short vowel (cf. O'RAHILLY 1932: 199).

51 *Cnú gan cogal den bhorbfhuil bhríomhar*: This is a repeat of l. 18, although lenition does not follow the preposition *gan* here (see the manuscript readings above), whereas it does in l. 18. This conforms with Munster Irish where *gan* may or may not lenite a consonant, except d, t, s, f, which remain unlenited; cf. UA SÚILLEABHÁIN 1994: 506, §6.11.

52 *do hoileadh*: The spelling of B is *do hoileag*, /əg/ being the pronunciation of the past passive ending in Déise Irish, as well as in the spoken language of Ballymacoda and Muskerry; cf. UA SÚILLEABHÁIN 1994: 486, §2.19.

53 *den chléir nár chinnnte*: 'of the uncertain clergy'. When taken together with a clergy deemed in l. 42 to be *cásmhar* ('pitiable'), *claon* ('compliant') and *gan bíogadh* ('listless'), the poem highlights the lack of support given to Nicholas Sheehy by those within the Catholic church.

54 *aorach*: 'lively', although in the context of the preceding line, an alternative translation might be 'sarcastic'. The latter description draws attention to Nicholas Sheehy's utter contempt for the social injustices of his time and, unlike those within his own church, his fearlessness in speaking out against them; cf. the discussion under 'Literary context' above.

55 *Is dian*: The reading *dian* in B makes good sense here. The variant reading of A *is diair* + suspension-stroke may represent *is diaire*, i.e. the superlative form of the adjective *diar* 'quick'.

56 *naimhde*: Pronounced /ni:d'ə/ in accordance with the pattern of the line cadence. B's reading *námhaide* here and in l. 64 departs from this (see the note on *naimhde* in l. 64 below).

58 *le n-insint*: Lit. 'to their reporting / telling', i.e. *le* + *a*ⁿ + verbal noun, the pl. poss. pronoun referring proleptically to ll. 59–60. The reading of B *le h-innsint* contains the simple preposition only.

59–60 (*le*) *hamharc* ... (*re*) *habhacht*: A pronunciation /havərɔk/ and /havəxt/, respectively (as opposed to /həurk/ and /həuɣt/, as is the case, for example, in spoken Déise Irish) ensures assonance with *sparra* (l. 59), *scagadh* (l. 61), *ceapadh* (l. 62), *feartaibh* (l. 62), *Eaglais* (l. 63), *faraire* (l. 63) and *tachtadh* (l. 64).

61 *do scagadh gan dríodar*: The reading *sgagach* (A, B) points to the past indicative passive, i.e. 'who was strained without dregs'. Taking *gan* to mean 'gan', the alternative translation 'who was sifted (i.e. quartered) by the dregs' would also make good sense. A third interpretation, but with the pronunciation /skagə/, might be *do* (= *de*) *scagadh gan dríodar*, 'of descent without dregs', i.e. of noble descent; cf. DINNEEN 1927: s.v. *sgagadh*, 'springing from, descending from, as a family, or person' and Ó DÓNAILL 1977: s.v. *scag* 5.

62 *den bhuíon*: The manuscript readings show that the classical distinction between dative and nominative of the feminine noun is not necessarily upheld. *Buidheann* (A) shows nominative for dative singular, whereas *buidhinn* (B) upholds the dative; cf. Ó CUÍV 1952: 161.

do ceapadh: The reading of B here, but not in l. 87, is *do cheapadh*, 'to fashion'.

64 *do tachtadh*: The reading of B here and in l. 88 is *do thachtadh*, 'to strangle'.

naimhde /ni:d'ə/: As in the case of l. 56, the reading of B *námhaide* (which is underlined) breaks the pattern of the line cadence, and this is further highlighted by the suggestion 'potius bíodbha to measure', which appears in a marginal note in an unidentified hand (see the manuscript readings above).

68 *Is Baker is Maude go hard dā mhaíomh sin*: This finds a parallel in l. 60.

70 *dainíd*: Alternatively, *danaíd*, 'sorrow, grief, regret, loss', the second syllable being long in Déise Irish (SHEEHAN 1906: 68; O'RAHILLY, 1942: 202, n. 3); cf. the manuscript spelling *daithníd* (B). In accordance with the metrical pattern, however, the stress here is on the first syllable of the word. The *-th-* in the forms *daithnid* (A) and *daithníd* (B) is possibly due to the influence of *aithnid*, and *dainid* / *dainíd* are modern developments of *dainimh* / *dainmhídh* (or *dainmhe*), respectively, whereby the final *-d* is borrowed from the preposition *do* which commonly followed (O'RAHILLY 1942: 202–3).

deora: This emended form observes the linear and vertical assonant pattern of ll. 69–72, whereas the variant form *déara* (see the manuscript readings) does not.

76 *torcradh*: Lit. ‘was felled’, i.e. passive of *do-tuit*.

74 *Dearmad*: Pronounced as /d’arəməd/, or as /d’aru:d/ with the stress falling on the first syllable, both adhere to the pattern of the first foot in the line.

78 *mear modhúil*: *Mear* is unstressed *metri causa* while the stress falling on the second syllable of *modhúil* in spoken Munster Irish also observes the the linear and vertical assonant pattern of ll. 77–9. Although B retains the classical spelling *modhamhuil*, the scribe probably intended it to be pronounced as a disyllable, which is rendered in the variant reading *modhail* (A).

79 *dá síolrach*: The reading of B is *dá shíolrach*, ‘of his [Alexander Hoops’] breed’.

81 *dúbhach*: Thus spelled in the manuscripts here and in ll. 82–3, thereby indicating its pronunciation as a monosyllable, i.e. /du:χ/, in the spoken language of Munster.

83 *ón bhFéil go Fuinseann*: The River Feale (*An Fhéil / Abha na Féile*) rises in the Mullach an Radhairc Mountains (see the note on l. 20 above). It flows northwest through the towns of Abbeyfeale in County Limerick and Listowel in County Kerry, and empties into the sea south of Ballybunion, County Kerry. The River Funshion rises in the Galty Mountains along the border of Counties Limerick and Tipperary, and flows southwest towards Kildorrery, County Cork, before eventually joining the River Blackwater northeast of Fermoy.

84 *Craobhach* /kre:χ/: The manuscript readings *craoch* (A) and *créach* (B) confirm that the surname is monosyllabic in Munster Irish.

85 *lonnmhar*: See the note on l. 48 above.

leanbach /l’anəbəχ/: The manuscript spellings *leannabach* (A) and *leanabach* (B) represent the epenthetic vowel, which occurs here again in the spoken language in Munster after a liquid or nasal preceded by a short vowel (cf. O’RAHILLY 1932: 199).

87 *Aon do ceapadh le feartaibh ó Íosa*: This line finds a parallel in l. 62 of the poem.

88 *Do tachtadh le héigean bréige is díoltais*: Once again, this echoes l. 64; see also the the note on *do tachtadh* in l. 64 above.

91 *dearmad*: A pronunciation /d’arəməd/, or /d’aru:d/ with the stress falling on the first syllable, observes the pattern of the penultimate foot in the line.

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