

# *Atd-īus dūib a n-aicned fīr*

## A poem about tears of repentance

### *Zusammenfassung*

*Dieser Artikel enthält eine Ausgabe und Übersetzung, mit Textnotizen, von einem kurzen irischen Gedicht über Reuetränen. Das Gedicht ist in zwei handschriftlichen Kopien erhalten, die beide das Gedicht Fothad zuschreiben. Nur eine dieser Kopien ist bisher veröffentlicht worden, und es gibt keine Übersetzung oder Analyse des Textes. Der Artikel enthält also eine Diskussion des Manuskriptkontextes und der Zuschreibung, zusammen mit einer Analyse der Sprache und des Metrums. Er gibt auch einer allgemeinen Diskussion über Reuetränen in der mittelalterlichen irischen Dichtung und einer Interpretation des Gedichts in diesem weiteren literarischen Kontext.*

### *Introduction<sup>1</sup>*

In 1910, MEYER published the copy of a short poem found in RIA MS 23 N 10 (cat. no. 967). Another copy in British Library, MS Harley 5280, has not yet appeared in print. There is no translation of the poem, nor has it received any scholarly attention. The poem's brevity may have led to it being overlooked by scholarship. This article seeks to fill this gap by providing an edition and translation of the poem, along with a discussion of the manuscript context, ascription, orthography, language and metrics. It also places the poem within its broader literary context by giving an overview of similarly themed poems, namely, those concerned with tears of repentance.<sup>2</sup> Such poems are valuable for their linguistic and lexical information and illustrate concepts of repentance in medieval Ireland.



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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Liam Breatnach who generously read numerous drafts of this article and provided me with many helpful comments and corrections. I thank also Nike Stam and Jürgen Uhlich who provided useful feedback at an earlier stage. I am indebted to Gordon Ó Riain and the anonymous reader for their suggestions. I alone am responsible for any outstanding errors.

<sup>2</sup> Tears of grief, sorrow, or anger occur frequently in medieval Irish literature. For a discussion of tears of sorrow and grief, see, for instance, MILLS 2013; of 'tears of blood', see HULL 1956 and BREEZE 1988; of keening, see BERGHOLM 2015; 2021.

### *Manuscript witnesses*

The poem survives in two sixteenth-century manuscripts:<sup>3</sup>

- 1) British Library, MS Harley 5280 (henceforth Harl.; s. xvi in), fol. 35vb40–44; the scribe is Giolla Ríabhach Ó Cléirigh, who wrote at Corrlíos Conaill, parish of Kilmore, barony of Ballintober North, Co. Roscommon.<sup>4</sup> The text is illegible in places with some words difficult to read due to the fading of the ink.
- 2) RIA MS 23 N 10 (cat. no. 967; henceforth N; c. 1575), p. 55.14–18. The manuscript was written by Aodh, with the assistance of several others, in the house of Seán Ó Maoil Chonaire in Baile in Chuimíne, west of Lough Boderg in the barony of Ballintober North, Co. Roscommon as well as in Baile Tibaird ar Blá Maige.<sup>5</sup> This copy is edited without translation or commentary by MEYER (1910: 299).

These copies are preceded by two other poems in both manuscripts:

- i) *At-berim frib lith saine*, 4qq, concerning the proper food to be eaten on Beltaine, Lughnasad, Samain and Imbolc: Harl., fol. 35vb24–35; N, p. 55.5–10.<sup>6</sup>
- ii) *Frithae cech da comāmus*, 2qq, comparing the people from the provinces of Ireland with other nationalities: Harl., fol. 35vb36–9; N, p. 55.11–13.<sup>7</sup>

In Harl., the three poems serve as filler items.<sup>8</sup> In N, they are also grouped

<sup>3</sup> A digital facsimile of British Library, MS Harley 5280 is available to view online [https://access.bl.uk/item/viewer/ark:/81055/vdc\\_100123802477.0x000001/#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0](https://access.bl.uk/item/viewer/ark:/81055/vdc_100123802477.0x000001/#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0). RIA MS 23 N 10 is also digitised and available to view on Irish Script on Screen ([www.isos.dias.ie](http://www.isos.dias.ie)). BEST 1954 published a collotype facsimile of this manuscript, which also includes an introduction and description of the contents.

<sup>4</sup> For a description of the manuscript's date, contents and scribe, see FLOWER 1926: 298–9; WALSH 1947: 48.

<sup>5</sup> See MULCHRONE 1940: 2770; BEST 1954: vii–viii; cf. Ó MACHÁIN 2019: 42, n. 25 for the suggestion that the manuscript may be of Munster origin. For a discussion of the original arrangement of the manuscript, see Ó MACHÁIN 2019: 33–4; KOBEL (forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> The copy in Harl. is ed. and trans. by MEYER 1894: 49, together with variant readings from the copy in Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 512 (s. xvi in), fol. 98vb24. The copy in N remains unpublished.

<sup>7</sup> Other copies are preserved in The Book of Uí Mhaine (RIA MS D ii 1; s. xv ex), fol. 83vb54–7; Oxford, Bodleian Laud Misc. 610 (s. xv), fol. 10rb29–32; NLI MS G 1 (s. xvi), fol. 47r, for a discussion of this MS, see CUNNINGHAM 2004. The copy in Oxford, MS C 112 (d), p. 5 was transcribed by Tuileagna Ó Maoil Chonaire from Laud Misc. 610. Both are ed. and trans. by Ó MACHÁIN 2010: 247–8. A slightly different copy beginning *Fritha gach da chosmuilius* is found in British Library MS Egerton 1782 (s. xvi<sup>in</sup>), fol. 56rb17–22, ed. and trans. by MEYER 1897: 112.

<sup>8</sup> Brief poems, epigrams and verses extracted from longer poems were typically suited for the purpose of filling blank spaces at the end of a column or page. For other examples and discussions of page-fillers, see KOBEL (forthcoming); Ó MACHÁIN 2013: 148–9; O'SULLIVAN 1976: 214 and 214 n. 7.

together and followed by two other short texts on the same page.<sup>9</sup> The relationship of the two copies of our poem is discussed below.

### *The ascription to Fothad*

The poem is ascribed to Fothad in both manuscript copies. FLOWER (1926: 307) suggested this was Fothad na Canóine. This historical figure is identified in the annals as the bishop of Othan (Angl. Fahan), Co. Donegal, who died in 819.<sup>10</sup> In 804, a convention of the Uí Néill was held at Dún Cúair.<sup>11</sup> Áed Oirdnide exempted ecclesiastics from military hostings at the behest of Fothad na Canóine at this meeting.<sup>12</sup> The Middle Irish Preface to *Félire Óengusso* also refers to the encounter between these two figures and Áed's subsequent granting of clerical immunity.<sup>13</sup> This prose account is followed by a brief poem concerning Fothad's judgement, the earliest copy of which survives in the Book of Leinster, where it is headed 'Fothad na Canone cecinit cu Aed Ordniithe', LL 19041.<sup>14</sup> This is preceded by the Middle Irish poem *Cert cech rig co réil*,<sup>15</sup> and it is the only one of seven witnesses that has the ascription to Fothad na Canóine (LL 18811).

The well-known connection between Fothad and Áed Oirdnide may have influenced the textual arrangement in N. The scribe writes a short prose text, con-

<sup>9</sup> This group of poems is preceded by a legal text concerning a judgement about stolen horses (ed. MEYER 1912: 103–4) and followed by two brief narrative texts containing *rosc* passages, namely, *Tochmarc Baíse* and *Táin Bó Rúanaid*. These also occur in the Harleian MS, but in a different location, i.e. Harl. fol. 48vb29–41 (ed. MEYER 1912: 104), as well as in TCD MS H 3.18 (1337), p. 60a14–22 and 60a33–42 respectively. In the latter manuscript, the two texts are separated by the prosimetric text entitled *Bruigen Séinbic Úa Sobric ind so síis* (p. 60a22–33), unpublished.

<sup>10</sup> Fothad na Canóine's death is recorded in AU 819.9 and AI 818.1.

<sup>11</sup> AU 804.7: *Congressio senadorum nepotum Neill cui dux erat Condmach, abbas Airdd Machae, i nDun Chuaer*, 'A meeting of the synods of the Uí Néill in Dún Cuair, presided over by Connmach, abbot of Ard Macha', MAC AIRT & MAC NIOCAILL 1983: 258–9. Ó CORRÁIN 1996 provides an important correction of this translation taking *senadorum* as a Hiberno-Latin spelling of Lat. *senatores* in the well-attested sense of 'nobles, optimates, leading men'. I am grateful to Liam Breatnach for bringing this reference to my attention.

<sup>12</sup> AU 804.8: *Isin bliadain-si dano ro saeradha cleirich Herenn ar fecht 7 ar sluaiged la hAed Oirniigi do bhreith Fathaidh na Canoine* 'This year, moreover, the clerics of Ireland were freed by Aed Oirdnide, at the behest of Fothad of the Canon, from [the obligation of attendance on] expeditions and hostings', MAC AIRT & MAC NIOCAILL 1983: 258–9. Ruaidhrí Ó Casaide (also referred to as H2: see MCCARTHY 2013) added this in the outer margin on fol. 36v in TCD MS H 1. 8 (1282), beside the main entry in AU 804.7.

<sup>13</sup> See STOKES 1905: 4 and 5. On the date of composition of the Preface, see Ó RIAIN 2000/2001: 237–8.

<sup>14</sup> See STOKES 1905: 4 and 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ed. and trans. O'DONOGHUE 1912.

taining *Bérla na Filed*, that pertains to Áed Oirdnide on the page immediately following our poem.<sup>16</sup> The copy of the Rule of St Carthach in this manuscript also has an ascription to Fothad (it is the only one of five witnesses to have it): ‘Fothad na Canoine cecinit hanc regulam’, p. 82, l. 9. However, CHARLES-EDWARDS (2006: 296) argued that this Rule might have been the work of Mo Chutu (†838), bishop and anchorite of Slane rather than that of Fothad na Canoine. The ascription to Fothad in this manuscript copy may therefore be a later scribal addition.

The tenuous linguistic evidence, which points to an early Middle Irish date, does not support FLOWER’s (1926: 309) suggestion that this ascription referred to Fothad na Canoine. There are several other personages with the name Fothad recorded in the annals, including Fothad, the superior of Monasterboice (AU 891), Fothad mac Brain, the scribe and bishop of the islands of Scotland (AFM 961); and Fothad Ua hAille, ‘chief *anmchara*’ of Clonmacnoise and Leth Cuinn (AFM 1081). Since the poem’s ascription gives no further details other than the first name, it is difficult to determine which Fothad is intended here and the possibility that it was added later in transmission cannot be ruled out.

### *The poem’s theme*

The theme of the poem is tears of repentance. These tears demonstrate contrition and are an important part of the process of penance and an efficacious means to wash away one’s sins.<sup>17</sup> This motif is found frequently in the medieval Irish literary tradition. It first occurs in the Irish penitential literature.<sup>18</sup> The earliest instance is found in the Penitential of Cummean.<sup>19</sup> In *Apgitir Chrábaid*, the sinner, having broken the renunciations made in baptism, must pass through a pool of tears of repentance (*lind dér aithrige*).<sup>20</sup> This may refer to

<sup>16</sup> Ed. MEYER 1912: 102–3; 557.

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion of tears of repentance in the Middle Ages, see, for instance, NAGY 2004.

<sup>18</sup> O’LOUGHLIN & CONRAD O’BRIAIN (1993: 78–9) suggest this motif derives from Origen’s *In Leuiticum homilia* II and entered the Western tradition through Cassian and Caesarius of Arles. Tears of repentance are mentioned frequently in the Penitential texts. For instance, *Maruthboi olc do format errenad in met dochoid trid hi mudu ma beith hi folud mani be dígeth tria chaithrigi* (leg. *choí 7 aithrigi* ?), ed. GWYNN 1914: 160, Cap. iv §2. BINCHEY (1963: 269) translated this more accurately as ‘If evil has resulted from his envy, let him replace as much as was lost by his fault, if he have the wherewithal: if not, let him ask pardon tearfully and penitently’. In another penitential, the cleric who cannot read, and is unable to recite the customary psalms and canticles, is encouraged to pray with tears and repentance: *Maini lega arnegat inna cridiu co nduthrachtain menman co nderaib 7 aithrigi*, ‘If he cannot read, he prays in his heart with mental ardour, with tears and repentance’, ed. and trans. BINCHEY 1962: 64 and 65, §26.

<sup>19</sup> BIELER 1963: 108, no. 4.

<sup>20</sup> HULL 1968: 74, §30.

the concept of a ‘baptism of tears’, i.e. a second metaphorical baptism in analogy with the first sacrament.<sup>21</sup> In an Old Irish anecdote concerning a monk and Satan, the monk encounters a woman who asks to have sex with him. After doing so, the man flees in remorse, shedding a tear of repentance, until he reaches Findio mac Fíatach, to whom he confesses his sin (see BAUER 2018: 16 and 17).<sup>22</sup> In the Early Irish law tracts, the etymological glossing of *dairthech* (*eDIL* s.v.) explains the ‘oratory, chapel’ as a house of tears (of repentance): *dur-tec .i. dair-tech .i. tech darach, no deir-tech .i. tech a telgter dera [...]*, *CIH* 1615.23, translated by BREATNACH (2016: 123) as ‘wooden church, i.e. oak-house, i.e. house of oak, or tear-house, i.e. a house in which tears are shed’. In *Saltair na Rann*, David, having incurred God’s wrath, is depicted weeping heavily while repenting, reciting the psalms and lying prostrate:

*Do-rigni Dauíd fo gail  
aithirge fo thromdéraib  
co cétlodaib salm, slechta  
i n-étgodaib cilecda,*

SR 6869–72

‘Afflicted David repented under heavy tears, with singing of psalms, laid low in garments of sackcloth’.<sup>23</sup>

God forgave David for the sins he committed, after he repented for his sins (*iarna hettlaib athirgi*, ‘after his humilities of repentance’, SR 6876).

Marginal notes and quatrains that refer to tears of repentance, along with other devotional practices, occur frequently in the Irish manuscript tradition. In the Book of Leinster, for instance, there is a note written in the upper margin on p. 99: *laboraui in gemitu tuo lauabo per singu(...)*.<sup>24</sup> This is a citation from one of the penitential psalms, namely Psalm 6:7: *Laboravi in gemitu meo; lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum: lacrimis meis stratum meum rigabo*, ‘I have

<sup>21</sup> In the early seventeenth-century Brussels MS 20978–9, fol. 52v6–54v14, the compiler has arranged together copies of three poems (discussed further below) concerning tears of repentance and a prose homily on the baptism of tears (see Ó Cuív 1958–61; 1971/72: 17).

<sup>22</sup> This anecdote forms part of *The Monastery of Tallaght*, ed. and trans. by GWYNN and PURTON 1911–12.

<sup>23</sup> I cite David GREENE’s edition and translation of *Saltair na Rann*, which is available on the website of the School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (<https://www.dias.ie/celt/celt-publications-2/celt-saltair-na-rann/>). Accessed on 5 October 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Ed. MANNING 2003: 215, no. 16. Unfortunately, this is no longer visible in the original manuscript. However, it was still legible at the time when Seosamh Ó Longáin transcribed the manuscript for the facsimile (see ATKINSON 1880: 99). Based on the facsimile, the marginal note appears to be written in a hybrid script, combining Irish minuscule letter-forms such as **e** and **t** and Caroline-esque **a** and **g**. It would be tempting to suggest that this note is written by the same hand as that of the main text on the page. Note, for instance, the similar use of the serif on minims of the letter **i** and **u**.

laboured in my groanings; every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears'.<sup>25</sup> Another marginal quatrain, in *rannaigecht mór*, that may refer to tears is found in the upper margin on p.272. I provide the text from the diplomatic edition of the Book of Leinster, and supply macrons and punctuation:

Ro clissa<sup>26</sup> etla dar do grūad  
scrutan screptra — crabud ñgúr.<sup>27</sup>  
comairle fri Choimdid cāid  
briathar bec bláth,<sup>28</sup> menma púr,

LL (BEST et al.) p. 1196

'May tears vanquish your shame, studying the scriptures — zealous piety.  
Counsel with the holy Lord, a little gentle saying, pure thought'.

(my translation)

*eDIL* suggests *etla* may refer to tears of repentance (s.v. 1 *etla*, III 'tears (of remorse)').<sup>29</sup> This word occurs also in a quatrain in *Félire Óengusso* where a pious couple named Scíre and Mochtae are washed with their tears: *án lanomain lígach | fris-snaig etla áinbech*, 'Splendid the lustrous couple which plenteous penitence washed', *Fél.* March 24.<sup>30</sup> The phrase *etla áinbech* is glossed *.i. déra iumda no eolchaire imda* 'i.e. plentiful tears or abundant weeping' in the copy in RIA MS 23 P 16, p. 84 (STOKES 1880: lix).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> This is from the Vulgate and the translation is cited from the Douay-Rheims version.

<sup>26</sup> I follow the diplomatic edition here which has *ro clissa*. The manuscript is now partially illegible, i.e. [......]sa. The facsimile by Seosamh Ó Longáin has *ro clissa* (ATKINSON 1880: 272). I take this as the subjunctive of *clisid + tar* 'surpasses, excels; prevails over, brings down, etc.' (*eDIL* s.v.), with the sense being that tears of repentance defeat shame. On the use of *ro* with the subjunctive, see *GOI* §531.3.

<sup>27</sup> For nasalisation following the nom. sg. in chevilles, see *SnaG* III, §4.14. The reader also points out to me that the phrase *crábad gúr* occurs in *Saltair na Rann: núal cen ecla crábuid gúir*, SR 7990, which David Greene translated 'a cry without fear of sharp piety' (<https://www.dias.ie/celt/celt-publications-2/celt-saltair-na-rann/>). Accessed on 5 October 2022.

<sup>28</sup> I suggest emending MS *bláth* to *bláith* 'mild, gentle' (*eDIL* s.v.), to provide rhyme with *cāid*.

<sup>29</sup> The phrase *tre etlai nguide* 'through tears of prayer' (my translation) is found in a short passage on prayer in NLI MS G 10, p. 46b11 and provides an additional citation which can be added to s.v. 1 *etla*, III.

<sup>30</sup> Tears of repentance feature elsewhere in the *Félire*, e.g. *Fél. Ep.* 173–4 and *Fél. Ep.* 399–400 (I am grateful to Mícheál Hoyne for bringing these instances to my attention). A distinction can perhaps be made between tears of repentance and the power of saints' tears (an instance of which is found in *Fél. Ep.* 339–340).

<sup>31</sup> The term *áinbech* with the sense of 'abundance' or a 'great amount' is also found in *Fél.* March 30: *bolg co n-ordun anbich*, 'a bag with abundant sovereignty', i.e. with great dignity (*eDIL* s.v. *áinbech*).

Another quatrain on austerity in TCD MS H 3.17 (1336), col. 676b,<sup>32</sup> edited by MEYER (1910: 297), refers to tears of repentance shed in privacy:<sup>33</sup>

Lepaid ūar  
ocus clērchīn tana trūag,  
smacht ar colainn, snige dēr,  
a crīg<sup>34</sup> nēll, bid mōr a lūag.

‘A cold bed and a thin, emaciated little cleric, restraint over flesh, shedding of tears; in the land of clouds, great will be the reward’. (my translation)

Several Middle Irish poems feature tears of repentance as the central theme. These include *Tuc damh, a Dé móir / for bith ché ní céil* (8qq),<sup>35</sup> *Dera damh, a Coimde / coir do cach ind iarraidh* (21qq),<sup>36</sup> and *Dera damh, a Coimde / do dicur mo cionadh* (14qq).<sup>37</sup> The similarity between the first line in two of these poems may lead to confusion. However, the first line in the latter of these two poems should in fact read *Dera damh a Duilimh*. In the copy preserved in Brussels MS 20978–9, the scribe inserted the correction *no a duilimh* above *a Coimde* (fol. 54r13). Ó Cuív (1962: 5) expanded MS *a duil-h* as *a duilem* (voc. sg. *n*-stem) instead of *a duilimh* (voc. sg. *o*-stem), a reading which is supported by the plene reading *a Duilimh*.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, this quatrain is found as a marginal verse in two separate manuscripts where both support the scribal correction *a duilimh* in the Brussels manuscript: *Dera dam a duilim*, the Book of Uí Mhaine (RIA MS D ii 1) fol. 77vb; *d[er]a damh a dhuilig*, British Library MS Sloane 3567, fol. 27b. Although Ó Cuív (1962: 19n) referred to these marginal quatrains and the scribal correction in the notes to his edition, as well as in his description of the manuscript (Ó Cuív 1958–61: 178), he ignored it in his edition of the text. To this group of poems, we may also add the following marginal quatrain found in UCD-OFM MS A 9, p. 37, which was edited and translated by CARNEY (1939: 248) as follows:<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> In a recent statutory lecture, BREATNACH (2018) convincingly argued that the quatrains in TCD MS H 3.17 (1337), coll. 675.15–676 represented marginal verses that had been anthologised and placed as a group back into the main text frame of the page.

<sup>33</sup> I follow Meyer’s edition but the punctuation is my own. Copies are also found in British Library, MS Add. 30512, fol. 45r inf. and NLS, Adv. MS 72.1.40, p. 28b. The latter copy has been slightly modernised. It begins with *Eglus fuar* ‘a cold church’ (instead of *lepaid ūar*). In the final line, the manuscript has *ag rig nel* ‘with the king of clouds’ which is a scribal reinterpretation of *a crīg nēll* ‘in the land of clouds’, i.e. Heaven.

<sup>34</sup> I follow MEYER’s (1910: 297, n. 1) suggestion here in taking *a* as the preposition *ī* ‘in’ with the dative sg. of *crích*.

<sup>35</sup> Ed. and trans. MURPHY 1956: 62–3; ed. CARNEY 1970: 301.

<sup>36</sup> Ed. and trans. Ó Cuív 1971/72.

<sup>37</sup> Ed. and trans. Ó Cuív 1962: 4–6.

<sup>38</sup> See q. 7d in Ó Cuív 1962: 5.

<sup>39</sup> See also CARNEY 1967: 78. The catalogue description for UCD-OFM MS A 9 states

A Dhē *tuc dam topur* ndēr  
 do dīl mo c[h]inadh, nī c[h]ēl;  
 nī toirrt[h]ec[h] *talam* cen brāen,  
 nīm nāem cēn anam cen ndēr.

‘O God, give me a well of tears to atone for my sins – I shall not hide it; land is not fruitful without moisture, I am not holy while I remain without a tear’.

These poems beseech God to grant tears of repentance and share similar descriptive imagery, with tears forming waves, wells, showers etc. Phrases such as *frossa diana dēr* ‘eager shower of tears’, *tonna diana dēr*, ‘vehement waves of tears’, *cen sruthán dom grúaid* ‘no stream [of tears] to my cheek’ illustrate that an abundance of tears is required to demonstrate compunction and prove earnestness.<sup>40</sup> As in our poem, tears of repentance are described as coming from a hard heart: *ní fuil cridi crodae/ do na dlighe derae* ‘there is no stout heart from which you require not tears’;<sup>41</sup> *glan mo chridi croda / cur sile dam dera* ‘cleanse my gory heart so that it may cause me to shed tears’.<sup>42</sup> The tears serve to cleanse the sinner of his/her sins: *dib, a De, nar anar / co rabur co hiodhan*, ‘may I not desist from them [the tears], O God, until I have been purified’.<sup>43</sup>

Tears of repentance are frequently mentioned in Classical Modern Irish poetry also, such as in the poem *Múin aithrighe dhamh, a Dhé*, composed by Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn,<sup>44</sup> or the poem by Donnchadh Ó Cobhthaigh who wrote in a penitential mood at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>45</sup>

Similar to the longer aforementioned Middle Irish poems, our poem is also concerned solely with tears of repentance. But it is much more succinct in nature consisting of only two quatrains. It illustrates the true nature of tears by describing their cause, their journey and the function they fulfil. The first quatrain explains what gives rise to the tears (*fri tuirim tūir*). They originate in the heart and represent contrition.<sup>46</sup> They are depicted as tears of blood and

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that *A Dhé, tuc dam topur nDér* is comprised of two quatrains (DILLON, MOONEY & DE BRÚN 1969: 20). GROSJEAN (1926/28: 167) seemed unsure as to the arrangement of the quatrains. The metre and subject matter in the following quatrain beginning *Muna fagba anoir ann* is different which might suggest the two quatrains are separate compositions.

<sup>40</sup> See MURPHY 1956: 20–1, 62–3; and MEYER 1912: 113, respectively. An abundance of tears is not confined to tears of repentance but also used to express sorrow and grief, for instance, in *Acallamh na Senórach* (see MILLS 2013).

<sup>41</sup> See q. 4cd in Ó Cuív 1971/72: 20.

<sup>42</sup> See q. 8ef in Ó Cuív 1971/72: 20.

<sup>43</sup> See q. 1cd in Ó Cuív 1962: 4.

<sup>44</sup> Ed. and trans. Ó HÁINLE 2004. See also the apologue *Ab fíréanda fada ó shin*, ed. and trans. by Ó HÁINLE 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Ed. and trans. Ó CRÓINÍN 1984: 169; cf. HOWLETT 1986: 150.

<sup>46</sup> The heart is understood here perhaps as referring to the seat of emotion (*eDIL* s.v. *cride* (a)). The heart appears to have served as the seat of both good and bad emotions;



gore dripping from the walls and veins of a sinful heart.<sup>47</sup> The second quatrain outlines the physical act of weeping itself. A salty stream of tears in a sinner's eyes is pushed forth through a shut eye. The tears, flowing across the cheek, cleanse away sins.

### *Orthography, language, and metrics*

Both manuscript copies have later orthographical features, with N's orthography slightly more modernised than Harl. The former marks lenited *t*, *d* and *g*, shows confusion of unstressed *e* with *i* in *tuirem*, and has the later variant *daib* for earlier *duib* (in Harl.). N omits the palatal glide in *usci* and the neutral glide in *glanit[h]*, probably reflecting the scribe's orthographical tendency rather than a copied archaism.<sup>48</sup> Final unstressed vowels are reduced to schwa in Harl. and N, e.g. the gen. sg. *críde* (note also that *cri-* is preserved here rather than the later *craí-*, for which see *SnaG* III, §3.12). The scribes of these manuscripts have a penchant for pseudo-archaising and hypercorrect spellings.<sup>49</sup> N has pseudo-archaic *di* for *do*,<sup>50</sup> and innovatory *-t[h]* for final unstressed *-d* in *glanit[h]*.<sup>51</sup> Harl.'s *inda* reflects the falling together of *nd* and *nn* and the subsequent confused spelling found in later manuscripts rather than a preserved archaism.<sup>52</sup>

In *atd-ius* [1a], both copies have a mixed archaising and phonetic spelling (for earlier *at-ius*, with unlenited *d* earlier spelled as *t*), with omission of lenited *f*.<sup>53</sup>

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for examples from the Glosses and medieval Irish literature, see MAC MATHÚNA 2003: 8–10.

<sup>47</sup> For another instance of tears described as drops of blood and gore, see the poems of Blathmac: *Ba méte no bed co bráth | tar cech ngruaid hi cech oentráth | tromdér folo, loim cró | oc coiniud in chimbetho*, 'It were no matter for surprise that there should be at every single hour till doom a heavy tear of blood, a drop of gore, upon every cheek keening the captive', ll. 525–8 (CARNEY 1964: 44). Bloody tears of repentance are encountered, for instance, in a homily in which Peter sheds tears for his denial of Christ: *déra folo din tarlaic Petar is-in aithrigi-sin, amal indisit na scribenna*, 'tears of blood shed Peter in that repentance, as the writers relate', *PH* 3199–3200; trans. ATKINSON 1887: 378. For further references to tears of blood in early Irish literature, see HULL 1956.

<sup>48</sup> The palatal glide is also omitted, for instance, in N's copy of the Middle Irish tale *Airec Menman Uraird Meic Coisse*: *Orgain Dune Delgon*, p. 31, l. 25; *Orgain Slebi Soilgech*, p. 31, l. 27; *Ecsi*, p. 35, l. 31 (vs *Ecsi*, p. 35, l. 12), etc.

<sup>49</sup> On the peculiar orthography used in N and Harl., see BREATNACH 2012: 43–50.

<sup>50</sup> See also BREATNACH 2012: 44.

<sup>51</sup> For final *-th* in unstressed position reflecting a pseudo-archaic spelling in later manuscripts and thus not being a reliable dating criterion, see McCONE 1981: 42, n. 42 and STIFTER 2013: 175.

<sup>52</sup> For examples of archaic *-nd-* in the article, see *GOI* §§ 151 (c) and 467; HULL 1946.

<sup>53</sup> On the omission of lenited *f* in the Old Irish period, see *GOI* §231.

The preverb has a proleptic neuter infixed pronoun,<sup>54</sup> referring to *aicned* (orig. neut.) which is preceded by the neut. acc. sg. article.<sup>55</sup> Alternatively, the preverb could be meaningless (for which see *SnaG* III, §11.23) and *a<sup>n</sup>* could be taken as the 3pl. proleptic possessive pronoun co-referential with the genitive in the following line.<sup>56</sup> The dat. pl. ending is preserved in *clēithib* [1c] and *fēithib* [1d]. In [2c], *pecda* (in Harl. against N's *pecdo*) shows the spread of the nominative plural ending to the accusative plural in *u*-stems.<sup>57</sup> Also in [2c], *es* 'away, out of him', the 3sg. masc. of the conjugated preposition *a*, might be understood as an archaic form.<sup>58</sup> But given the lack of any other diagnostic early Old Irish features, this more likely represents an archaising spelling. The preposition *a* in [2b] is followed by the accusative *fraig* (nasalising following *abrat*), reflecting the Middle Irish confusion of accusative and dative following prepositions (*SnaG* III, §5.1). The tenuous linguistic evidence points to an early Middle Irish date for the poem.

The poem is written in *rannaigecht mór*. There is internal rhyme between *clēithib*: *fēithib* [1cd] and *blad*: *glan* [2cd]. *Aicill* does not occur between [1cd]. This is compensated for by [1a] and [1c] making *úaitne* with [1b] and [1d].<sup>59</sup> *Aicill* occurs between *saig*: *fraig* [2ab] and *binn*: *chinn* [2cd]. Alliteration occurs throughout. There is no *dúnad*.<sup>60</sup>

The shared textual arrangement in both manuscripts suggests a close relationship between Harl. and N. The two copies largely agree with each other apart from minor differences in orthography and modernisation. There is no evidence to suggest that N copied from Harl. but this cannot be ruled out entirely. Shared readings such as *atdius* and *es* may be due to an archaising author, while the corrupt reading *asloc(h)a* must have occurred in a later archetype from which Harl. and N derive.

<sup>54</sup> For other examples of a proleptic infixed pronoun referring to a following noun, see BREATHNACH (1977: 88).

<sup>55</sup> The neuter article is found in some early Middle Irish texts such as *Saltair na Rann* (for which see *SnaG* III, §7.2; STRACHAN 1905: 208).

<sup>56</sup> On the separation of the head-noun and the genitive across the line-break in Old and Middle Irish poetry, see BREATHNACH 2016.

<sup>57</sup> This occurs already towards the end of the Old Irish period, for which see *GOI* §309; *SnaG* III, §5.8.

<sup>58</sup> Another example is found in the text known as 'Finn and the Man in the Tree' in the Introduction to *Senchas Már*, i.e. *CIH* 879.38 (see *GOI* §436, citing this example). On the date of this tale, see MEYER (1910b: xviii–xix); BREATHNACH 1990: 139–40.

<sup>59</sup> For the compensatory function of *úaitne*, see MURPHY (1961: 36). I am grateful to Gordon Ó Riain for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>60</sup> A *dúnad* between the unstressed initial syllable *ad-* (*atd*) and *grúad* would be allowed in Bardic poetry (see Ní DHOMHNAILL 1981: 55; cf. MURPHY 1956: 45). However, this does not seem to be a permissible feature in the earlier period. For example, there are no instances of this type of loose *dúnad* found in the metrical *dindsenchas* (ed. and trans. GWYNN 1903–35), as far as I am aware.

Capitalisation, punctuation and macrons are editorial. Diplomatic transcriptions of both copies are provided beneath the restored text. Unambiguous abbreviations are expanded in italics and ambiguous suspension-strokes are underlined. Square brackets indicate poorly legible letters; dots represent the approximate number of entirely illegible letters.

### Text & Translation

Fothad dixit:	Fothad said:
1 Atd-ius dūib a n-aiened fir inna ndér fri tuirim tūir, crū a clēithib cridi c[h]rūaid fuil a fēithib – feb do rūin.	I will tell you the true nature of tears by recounting a cause (?); blood from a hard heart's walls, gore from veins – [it is] excellent for a reason.
2 Sruth serb sāili i sūilib saig, asloch a fraig n-abrat n-ūar. Glanaid pecda es – blad binn – uisce glan in chinn tar grūad.	A bitter salty stream in an evil per- son's eyes, urging [it] out of a wall of cold eyelashes; the head's pure water across a cheek cleanses sins away – a pleasing acclaim.

#### Harl.

Fothad dixid Atdius \duib/ anaicned  
fir | indander frituirim tur | cru  
acleitib cride cruaid | fuil afeithib feib  
dorun [sruth] serbh<sup>61</sup> saili hisuilib  
saig | asloca fraig na[... n]uar |  
[glan]<sup>62</sup> pecd[a] hess blaid binn |  
usq[ue] glan an cinn t[.]g[ru]ad

#### N

Fothad dixit hoc Atdius daib ana-  
icned fir. inander frituirem tur. cru  
acleithib cridhe cruaid. fuil afeithib  
feb dirun Sruth serb saile isuilib saigh.  
aslocha fraigh nabrat nuar. gl[an]it[.]  
pecdo esblad bi[n.] usci<sup>63</sup> [g]lan an  
cinn tar gruaad.

### Notes

**1b.** I restore the gen. sg. of *túr* (*eDIL* s.v. 1 *túr*), which provides rhyme with dat. sg. *rūin* and *úaitne* with *c[h]rūaid*. *Túr* here seems to have the sense of *túar* ‘sign, cause’ (*eDIL* s.vv. 1 *túr*, II (b); 1 *túar*, I (a)), rather than its original meaning ‘searching, investigating’.

<sup>61</sup> The manuscript reading here has the *ser*-compendium, which consists of the *s* with a slanting stroke through the descender of the letter.

<sup>62</sup> This is very difficult to read in the manuscript and it is possible that an original suspension-stroke may now be entirely illegible.

<sup>63</sup> The manuscript appears to have undergone some damage here, i.e. there is a small tear in the page above the letter *s* in *usci*. This must have occurred during the restoration work that took place in 1920. This damage is not visible in the printed facsimile (BEST 1954: 55), the images for which were taken in 1915 (BEST 1954: vi).

**1c.** N's *crú a cléithib cridhe* is the only citation given in *eDIL* s.v. 1 *cleth* (g). However, taking this as a form of *cleth* is problematic. Firstly, given that *cleth* is an *ā*-stem, the dat. pl. *clethaib* with neutral *-th-* would be expected; for a discussion of the etymology of *cleth* (from otherwise unattested *\*clenaid*), see MARSTRANDER (1924: 43) and WATKINS (1958: 99). Harl.'s *clētib* is ambiguous here, given the use of the *et*-compendium, but N clearly reads *cléithib*. Secondly, the short *e* would destroy what seems to be internal rhyme; cf. *blad : glan* [2cd]. I propose that it is likely a form of *cléithe*, used in the sense of the wider application referring to the top layer or surface of an object (*eDIL* s.v. *cléithe* (f); cf. s.v. *forcléithe*), here referring to the outer surface of the heart.

**1d.** *eDIL* s.v. 1 *féith* (b) suggests that 'a fibre, or sinew' is perhaps the original meaning and later also comes to mean 'vein, artery, vessel'. An Old Irish attestation of *féith* 'vein', or perhaps more specifically 'artery', is seen in *Bretha Déin Chécht: tuile fuile fethe*, 'floods of arterial bleedings', BINCHY (1966: 38, §28). A later example is found in a medieval Irish medical catechism, preserved in a fifteenth-century manuscript: *Dā fhéith atā a bun in croidhe .i. féith dā leith deis 7 féith ele dā leith clé*, 'There are two veins at the base of the heart, i.e. a vein on the right side of it and another vein on the left side of it' (HAYDEN 2016: 45). HAYDEN (2016: 44–5) suggests that these two *féithe* protruding from the heart are possibly carotid arteries. Therefore, I translate *féithib* as 'veins' in this instance.

MEYER (1910: 299) emended N's *feb dirun* to *febdae rún*, taking *febdae* 'excellent' as a preposed adjective preceding a nom. sg. *rún*. However, I suggest that *feb* 'excellent' (*eDIL* s.v. *feb*) is a predicative nominative, seen here with omitted copula (*eDIL* s.v. *is* (h)). Another example of the predicative nominative *feb* is found in a gloss on the phrase *ba léir Patraicc* 'Patrick was diligent' in Fiacc's Hymn (STOKES and STRACHAN 1903: 314, l. 6): *.i. ba feb ar crábud*, 'he is excellent for piety', STOKES and STRACHAN (1903: 314, l. 35). Harl.'s *feib* is a scribal modernisation (*SnaG* III, §5.6). The preposition *do* governs the dative sg. *rūin*, which is restored here to provide rhyme with *tūir* [1b].

**2a.** Harl.'s [*sruth*] is now barely legible due to fading and the mark of lenition is almost completely illegible. I take *saig* as a by-form of the substantivised adjective *saich* 'a bad person' (*eDIL* s.v. *saich*), as suggested to me by Liam Breatnach. An alternative reading would be to take *saig* as the 3sg. pres. ind. conj. form of *saigid* in final position, i.e. Bergin's Law as defined by BERGIN (1938: 197). For the intransitive use of the verb, see *eDIL* s.v. 1 *saigid*, II, which cites this example. If this interpretation is followed, the accusative *i súili* 'into the eyes', with implied motion, would be expected. Harl.'s ambiguous *hi suil-* could be expanded as the acc. pl. *súili* (for other instances of *l* with a suspension-stroke standing for a final vowel, see for example C. BREATNACH 2011: 103), with N's *isuilib* reflecting a modernisation (*SnaG* III, §5.1).

The phrase *sruth serbh sáili*, referring to tears, is found elsewhere in the literary tradition, for example, in a Middle Irish poem on prophecies: *iar n-*

*argain Brigdi bāine | caīfit srotha searbh[š]āili*,<sup>64</sup> ‘after the ravaging of pale Brighid they will weep bitter salt streams’, §5cd (ed. and trans. KNOTT 1958: 58, 59).

**2b.** Harl. and N read *asloca* and *aslocha*, respectively, which appears to be a corruption introduced in the archetype. Harl. may originally have had a mark of lenition above the *c* but this now no longer legible. A redivision of the manuscript readings provides *asloch* ‘urging, tempting’ (*eDIL* s.v. *aslach*) and the preposition *a* ‘out of, from’. A literal translation of the phrase *a fraig n-abrat n-ūar* would be ‘from a wall of cold eyelashes’, (see *eDIL* s.vv. 1 *fraig* (a) ‘an interior wall’; 1 *abra* (b)), referring to a closed eyelid.

**2c.** I expand N’s *bl-* as *blad* (*DIL* s.v. 1 *blad*) since the neutral quality of the final consonant is confirmed by internal rhyme with *glan* in [2d]. Harl.’s *blaid* is a scribal modernisation.

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<sup>64</sup> KNOTT (1958: 58) supplies the lenited letter *s* in the compound *searbh[s]āili* in q. 5d, which is omitted in the Book of Uí Mhaine (RIA MS D ii 1), fol. 68ra23.

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