An Ceatharnach Caol Riabhach

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On 22 July 1969, Angus John MacDonald, an Honours student at Aberdeen University, doing part-time collecting work for the School of Scottish Studies, went to Aird Mhór, South Uist, knocking on doors more or less at random. One result was the discovery of Donald Alasdair Johnson, one of the most talented informants to have come to the attention of this department in recent years, a singer and composer of songs, a player of the melodeon and at one time of the pipes, but, above all, probably the best storyteller now living in the Hebrides. Besides a fine selection of international tales his repertoire includes examples of Gaelic hero tale and romance which have all but disappeared from current tradition.

A crofter, fisherman and joiner, Mr Johnson is now 80 years old but in flourishing health and looking much younger. He is still able to do hard physical work that would tax the strength of many a younger man despite having been twice seriously wounded during his service with the Royal Naval Division in the First World War. A widower, he now lives with his widowed sister Mrs. Morag MacInnes, now a vigorous 83, who also has a fine store of songs and tradition. I may add that I have seldom enjoyed the work of collecting oral tradition as much as I did in this hospitable household in summer 1969 and at Easter this year.

Most of Mr Johnson's material derives from his father who was born in Eriskay of South Uist stock. He developed an early interest in his father's stories and indeed was a practising storyteller himself in his younger days, though, owing to the lack of an audience, his talents had lain dormant for many years until they were stirred up again in 1969. He has told me that when he was young it was enough for him to hear a story once and tell it once to fix it in his memory. I propose to publish a series of his stories in *Scottish Studies* and I hope, indeed, that they may eventually appear in the form of a book.

The tale printed below represents a remarkable survival. I am not aware that any text of it has been collected since J. F. Campbell of Islay's time just over a century ago. Mr Johnson heard it from his father and says he has never heard it from anyone else.

The way in which he recalled it is in itself interesting. Either when Mr A. J. MacDonald first visited him, on 22 July, or during their first recording session on the 24th, he mentioned it as a story he had known and recited a fragment of it. When Mr MacDonald and I visited him on the 28th he recorded for us an incomplete version—the first episode, part of the last, and a few details of the rest of the story—

but he added that he would probably remember more of it, given time. On Mr MacDonald's next visit, on 11 August, he recorded the text printed here (SA 1969 / 107 A1). At Easter this year Mr Johnson made two further recordings of the story for me which correspond very closely to each other and to the present text. On balance, however, this is the best of them. In July, when this text was already in proof, I again visited Mr Johnson, made further recordings and went through the text with him in some detail. A few minor changes have been made in the light of the later recordings and Mr Johnson's explanations (see notes).

In translating I have not attempted to reproduce all the instances of 'said he' which occur in the Gaelic text. I have also avoided translating one or two phrases in the runs. These are dealt with in the appendix and indicated (- - -) in the English text. Hesitations or slight stumbles by the storyteller are indicated . . . in the Gaelic text.

The comparative appendix and notes have been kindly supplied by my colleague Dr Alan Bruford who has made a special study of this and other Gaelic Romances (Bruford 1969).

D. A. MACD.

An Ceatharnach Caol Riabhach

Bha siod ann, ann an Eirinn, ma-tha, fear ris an canadh iad O Dòmhnaill, agus bha chuile cleasaiche b'fhearr na chéile aige cruinn an oidhche bh'ann a sheo-ach agus feuch có b'fhearr a bhiodh cleas agus bha trì cheud marc aig . . . as a chuile cleas.

Agus air dhaibh a bhith ris an obair a bha seo-ach, có chunnacas a' tighinn ach . . . an Ceatharnach caol riabhach le leth chlaidheamh nochdte 'n taobh siar dha thòin an déigh a dhuille teirgeann, a dhà bhròig sgith feadalaich, a dhà chois 's barr a dhà chluais 's an treun uaine.[1]

"Gum banna dhuibh",[2] ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan.

"Gum banna dhuibh fhéin," ors O Dòmhnaill, "Co as a shnàgas[3] tu ugainn a Cheatharnaich?"

" 'M Baile Mola Rìgh Albainn a bha mi raoir," ors esan. "Bitheam-s' oidhche 'n tìr, oidhche 'n Ile 's oidhche Marainn 's oidhche 'n Arainn . . . Air Sliabh Fuaite failmide, air rìgh seachd mìle fichead 'n taobh muigh a Luimreach a rugadh mi. 'S Ceatharnach suarach, seallach, siubhlach mi."[4]

" 'S gu dé 's soicheard[5] dut a nochd a Cheatharnaich?" ors O Dòmhnaill.

" 'S cleasaiche math mi," ors esan.

" 'N dà, slàn na dé fhéin orm fhìn"[6], . . . ors O Dòmhnaill, ors esan, " 's a chuile cleasaiche tha 'san àit agam," ors esan, "cruinn a nochd," ors esan, "feuch" ors esan, "có 's fhearr a nì cleas."

" 'S dé th'agad as a' chleas?" ors an Ceatharnach.

"Tha trì cheud marc"[7], ors esan.

"Glé chcart," ors an Ceatharnach.

'S chaidh iad a staigh. Bha fear a sin-ach 'n uair a chaidh an Ceatharnach a staigh—bha fear a sin a' deanamh seasamh claidheamh 's fear eile 'deanamh car a mhìn mhoiltein 's fear a' deanamh car a' sgairbh[8] 's chuile seòrsa cleas. Lig an Ceatharnach leotha co-dhiùbh 's sguir iad a seo.

" 'N dean sibh idir," ors an Ceatharnach, "na's fhearr na siod?"

" 'N dean thu fhéin," orsa fear a bha sin-ach, ors esan, "na's fhearr?" ors esan.

"*Well*, chan eil fhiosam," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan, "ach . . . feuchaidh sinn ris co-dhiùbh," ors esan.

Dh' fhalbh e agus leum e chon an ùrlair agus chaidh e air a dhruim dìreach air an ùrlar agus thog e chas as a chionn—a chas deas as a chionn, agus chrath e i agus thug e e nuas i agus dh'éirich e 'na sheasamh.[9]

"Seo," ors esan. "Bheil duine staigh," ors esan, "a nì siod?"

" 'N dà gu dearbh fhéin," orsa fear a bha sin-ach, ors esan, "chan eil sin duilich a dheanamh," ors esan. "Cha bhi mise fad'," ors esan, "'ga dheanamh."

"Siuthad ma-tha," ors an Ceatharnach, "dean e."

Dh'fhalbh a fear sin 's chaidh e sìos 's bhuail e e fhéin air a dhruim dìreach air an ùrlar 's thog e chas dheas as a chionn mar a thog an Ceatharnach agus chrath e chas agus thuit a' chas dheth.

" 'N do rinn thu nist e?" ors an Ceatharnach.

"O cha do rinn," ors O Dòmhnaill, ors esan, "agus 'se mo bharail," ors esan, "nach dean iad gin dhe na cleasan agad a nochd," ors esan.

"*Well*," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan, "feuchaidh sinn cleas eile, ma-tha," ors esan.

Dh'fhalbh e 's chaidh e sios agus sheas e air meadhain an ùrlair agus rug e air a chluais dheis na laimh dheis agus thug e crathadh air a chluais[10] agus:

"Seo," ors esan, "a bheil duine seo," ors esan, "a nì siod a nochd?" ors esan.

"Tha," orsa fear a sin-ach a' freagairt shuas a measg na *company* a bh'ann. "Tha," ors esan, "nì mis' e," ors esan.

Agus dh'fhalbh e 's ghabh e sios agus sheas e air meadhain an ùrlair mar a sheas an Ceatharnach agus . . . rug e air a chluais dheis le laimh dheis mar a rinn an Ceatharnach fhéin agus chrath e chluas agus bha chluas na laimh a' tighinn a nuas.

" 'N do rinn thu nist e?" ors an Ceatharnach.

"O cha do rinn," ors esan.

"O cha do rinn," ors O Dòmhnaill, ors esan, "agus cha dean sibh, ma ghabhas sibh mo chomhairle-sa," ors esan, "cha dean sibh cleas," ors esan, "nan Ceatharnach a nochd," ors esan, "agus sguiridh sibh dhiubh," ors esan.

"Fhalbh ma-tha," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan, "sguiridh sinn," ors esan, "dhe na cleasan gràndа, sgreata, tha siod," ors esan, "ach nì sinn cleas eil'," ors esan.

Dh'fhalbh e 's thòisich e air a fhéin fheuchainn—a phòcannan, agus dh'fhalbh e 's thug e mach ceairsle shìod as a phòc agus rug e orra 's chaith e seachad air sparr i.[11] Agus . . . thòisich e air feuchainn a phòcannan air ais agus thug e mach rìbhinn . . . as a phòc agus thrimig e 's dhreasaig e i 's lig e suas air an t-snàth i, 's siod suas air an

t-snàth a ghabh i agus thoisich e . . . 'ga fheuchainn fhéin air ais agus thug e mach òigeir cruinn gearr donn a sin agus lig e air falbh air an t-snàth—

"A hah orm," ors esan an déigh dha ligeil air falbh, "Ged a lig mi air falbh thu," ors esan, "cha bu tu mo shaoranach," ors esan, "ach mas beud dha'n rìbhinn," ors esan, ". . . on a dh'fhalbhas i bhuamsa gus an tig i ugam," ors esan, "cha bhi agads' ach na bheir thu go chionn,"[12] ors esan.

Siod a fear sin suas agus thòisicheadh ri obair air a rìbhinn a bha sin shuas agus thòisich an Ceatharnach ri tomhas . . an t-snàth na aitheamhnan móra fada fulaineach agus ge b'oil leis . . . ma'n tug e nuas a snàth . . . far na sparradh bha 'rìbhinn air a . . . a riasladh aig an fhear a chaidh suas. Agus rug e orra agus ribig e i agus chuir e air dòigh i 's chuir e na phòc i agus rug e airesan agus shniomh e 'n ceann as an amhaich aige.

"Tud, tud, mo nàire!" ors O Dòmhnaill, ors esan, ". . . Cha bu cheamha leam siod," ors esan, "na rinneadh a chleasan a seo a nochd," ors esan, ". . . air colann gun cheann a bhith seo," ors esan.

" 'N dà," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan, "ma gheibh mise trì cheud marc," ors esan, "cuiridh mi 'n ceann air mar a bha e reimhid," ors esan.

"O, ma thà, 'n ainm an Aigh, 's tusa gheibh sin," ors O Dòmhnaill, ors esan, "agus cuir air e."

Dh'fhalbh e 's rug e air a . . . cheann as a laimh chearr agus air a cholainn as a laimh dheis agus bhuail e 'n ceann air agus 'n uair a sheall e bha clàr aodainn . . air a chùlaibh.

"Fhalbh, fhalbh!" . . . ors O Dòmhnaill, ors esan. "B'fhearr e mar a bha e reimhid na mar sin," ors esan.

" 'N dà," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan, "ma gheibh mise trì cheud marc," ors esan, ". . . bheir mi dheth e," ors esan, "agus cuiridh mi air e mar a bha e reimhid" . . .

"Gheibh thu sin," ors O Dòmhnaill.

Dh'fhalbh e agus spion e dheth an ceann agus rug e air a cheann as a laimh dheis agus air a cholainn as a laimh chlì agus bhuail e 'n ceann air agus bha 'n ceann air mar a bha e riamh air. Dh'fhalbh e 's ribig e e 's chuir e na phòc e,[13] agus:

"*Well*," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan, "tha mise nist a' falbh," ors esan.

Agus:

"O chan fhalbh thu," ors O Dòmhnaill, ors esan, "gos a faigh thu do chuid fhéin."

Agus chunntais e mach dha aig ceann bùird na bh'aige ri fhaighinn airson a chleasan agus dh'fhalbh an Ceatharnach agus chuir e 'lamh a null agus rug e air agus thug e leis còglach dhe na bh'air a bhòrd agus chàirich e (?na phòc e).[14]

"Fhalbh," ors an Ceatharnach, "'s tha iomadh duine agad ri phaidheadh a seo a nochd," ors esan, "a bharrachd orm," ors esan, "agus bidh mise 'fàgail slàn agaibh."

Ach air an ath oidhch a seo-ach có bha 'g obair . . . a 'toirt seachad . . . ach fear ris an canadh iad O Ceallaigh a bha seo agus a chuile fear ciùil a b'fhearr na chéile bha 's an àite bha iad cruinn aige.

Agus cha . . . banna dhaibh[15] a bhi ris an obair seo, na có chunnacas a' tighinn ach an Ceatharnach caol riabhach le leth chlaidheamh nochdte 'n taobh siar dha thòin an déigh a dhuille teirgeann, a dhà bhroig sgith feadalaich 's a dhà chois is barr a dha chluais 's an treun uaine.

"Gum banna dhuibh," . . . ors an Ceatharnach.

"Gum banna dhuibh fhéin," ors O Ceallaigh, ors esan, "Có as a shnàgas tu ugainn a Cheatharnaich?" ors esan.

"Còmhla ri O Dòmhnaill a bha mi raoir," ors esan. "Am Baile Mola Rìgh Albainn an oidhche roimhe sin," ors esan. "Bitheam-s' oidhche 'n tìr, oidhche 'n Ile 's oidhche Marainn 's oidhche 'n Arainn. Air Sliabh Fuaite failmide air rìgh seachd mìle fichead an taobh muigh a Luimreach a rugadh mi. 'S Ceatharnach suarach scalltach siubhlach mi."

" 'S gu dé 's soicheard dhut a nochd?" ors . . . O Ceallaigh.

"Fear ciùil math a th'unnam," ors esan.

" 'N dà, slàn na dé fhéin orm fhìn," ors esan, "agus tha chuile fear ciùil a tha's an àit agam," ors esan, "cruinn ann a sheo-ach a nochd," ors esan, "còmhla rinn," ors esan.

"Agus gu dé," ors esan, "a th'agad," ors esan, "as a . . . chuile . . . *tune*?" ors esan.

"Tha . . . tha trì cheud marc agam," ors esan.

"Glé cheart," ors esan, an Ceatharnach. Chaidh iad a staigh 's bha iad ag obair a sin-ach air seinn ciùil agus sguir iad a seo.

"Nach math iad siod a' Cheatharnaich?" . . . ors O Ceallaigh.

"O seadh gu dearbha," ors an Ceatharnach. "Tha e math," ors esan, "ach bha mise 'm Brugh Mhanais," ors esan, "agus bha mi 'm Brugh Mhic an Tòisich," ors esan, "agus ma chualas sgreuchail na . . . sgreadail riamh an Ithreann," ors esan, "bha siod a cheart cho math ris," ors esan.[16]

" 'N dean thu fhéin na's fhearr na sin?" orsa galloglach mór a bha shuas a sin-ach.

Agus: "Nì neò cha dean," ors esan.

"Mar a dean," orsa . . . fear sin, ors esan, "ni mi cuacha chruinn dhiot," ors esan, "air cùl mo thuaghach fhéin."

Agus dh'fhalbh e agus thug e uige chlàrsach agus thòisich e agus ribig e agus ghlan e i 's chuir e air dòigh i 's *thune*-ig e i 's cha do sheinn e pong orra na sion.

" 'N dean thu idir na's fhearr na siod?" ors esan.

"Nì no cha dean," ors an Ceatharnach. "Cha dean ach 'n uair is àill leam fhìn," ors esan.[17]

Agus dh'fhalbh e sin-ach agus thug e . . . uige air ais i agus thòisich e ri seinn, trom go guir 's trom go gàire chuireadh na mnathan siùbhla, seachrain, nan cadal gos ma dheireadh nach robh duin' aig' ach e fhéin agus O Ceallaigh nach robh na suain chadail[18] agus dh'fhalbh an Ceatharnach agus phaisg e chlàrsach agus ribig e i 's chuir air dòigh i 's chuir e seachad i. Agus thuirt e 'n uair a bha e 'falbh:

". . . fhir an fhacail mhóir o chian," ors esan, "siod mise mach," ors esan.

Dh'éirich a' fear sin 's e . . . 'na chadal, ann am breislig, a' fear a mhaoidh air leis an tuaigh agus thòisich sliochd slachd . . air an fheadhainn a bha 'tachairt roimhe.

"Tud, tud!" ors O Ccallaigh, ors esan, "Mo nàire, mo nàire!" ors esan. "Tha thu air móran marbhaidh a dheanamh a seo-ach a nochd," ors esan.

" 'N do mharbh mi 'n Ceatharnach?" ors esan.

" 'N dà 's fìor mo bharail nach do mharbh," ors O Ceallaigh.

Agus stad e aige sin-ach.[19] Agus bha 'n Ceatharnach a' gabhail roimhe agus thachair bodach beag ris agus:

"Dé do naigheachd a Mhùgain?" ors esan.[20] Agus sheall am bodach air 'n uair a chual e 'n t-ainm a thug e air.

"Chan eil," ors am bodach, "gabadh," ors esan, "do naigheachd ùr agam-s'," ors esan.

"Cà'il thu 'dol?" ors esan.

"Tha mi," ors esan, "a' dol a thaigh O Ceallaigh," ors esan.

" 'N dà," ors esan, " 's colann gun cheann a bhiodh tu," ors esan, "mar a tha iomadach duine bharrachd ort 's iad ann romhad," ors esan.

"Dé seo?" ors am bodach.

Dh'innis an Ceatharnach dha mar a bha.

"Ach ma ghabhas tu mo chomhairle-s'," ors esan, "nì thu glé mhath air," ors esan, "agus dean thusa . . mar a dh'iarras mis ort," ors esan, "agus bidh thu orra dheagh phàidheadh air a shon. Bheir mise dhut," ors esan, "lùibh bheag fo shàil mo choise deiseadh," ors esan, "air barr machair," ors esan, "agus cha bhi agad," ors esan, "ach a suathadh ri deud gach duine dhiubh sin," ors esan, "agus éiridh iad fo'n driùchda mìne fala mar a bha iad riamh," ors esan. "Ach," ors esan, "bheir an aire," ors esan, "nach toir iad ort," ors esan, "a leigheas uileag," ors esan, "ma faigh thu do thuarasdal," ors esan, "agus," ors esan, "cuir *charge* gu math air," ors esan . . . "airson a leithid a dheanamh."

O thubhairt am bodach gun deanadh esan sin agus dh'fhalbh e mach—an Ceatharnach—agus bhuain e luibh a bha seo-ach dha 's dh'fhalbh am bodach leatha agus ràinaig e taigh . . O Ceallaigh a seo agus dh'innis O Ceallaigh dha mar a bha.

" 'N dà," ors am bodach, "ma bheir thu leithid . . seo-ach dhomhs ' ", ors esan, "a dh'airgiod," ors esan, ". . . bheir mi beò," ors esan, "a chuile duine dhiubh air ais," ors esan.

"Seall sin dhomh," ors esan, "air aon duin' ac'," ors esan.

Dh'fhalbh am bodach 's a' luibh seo aige thug an Ceatharnach dha 's ghabh e null 's shuath e ris an deud aig e 's dh'éirich an duine na sheasamh suas beò.

"Siuthad," . . ors O Ceallaigh, ors esan, "lean romhad."

"O cha lean," ors esan, "mi romham," ors esan, ". . . gos an toir thu dhòmhsa 'n t-suim tha mi 'g iarraidh," ors esan.

Agus thug O Ceallaigh sin-ach dha agus dh'éirich am bodach orr' as a lethoir 's na bha marbh dhiubh thug e beò a chuile duin' aca 's dh'fhalbh e.[21]

Ach bha seo-ach fear ann, fear ris an canadh iad Seathain Mac an Iallain Deas Mumhain Cnoc Aine 'n Eirinn[22] agus e 'g iarraidh seirbheiseach.

Agus có chunnacas a' tighinn ach an Ceatharnach caol riabhach le leth chlaidheamh nochdte an taobh siar dha thòin an déigh a dhuille teirgeann, a dhà bhròig sgith feadalaich 's a dhà chois is barr a dhà chluais 's an treun uaine.

"Gum banna dhuibh," ors an Ceatharnach.

"Gum banna dhuibh fhéin," orsa Seathain. "Có as a shnàgas tu ugainn a Cheatharnaich?"

"Còmhla ri O Ceallaigh a bha mi raoir," ors esan, " 's còmhla ri O Dòmhnaill an oidhche roimhe sin, 'm Baile Mola Rìgh Albainn an oidhche roimhe sin. Bitheam-s' oidhche 'n tìr, oidhche 'n Ile, oidhche Marainn, oidhche 'n Arainn, air Sliabh Fuaite failmide air rìgh seachd mìle fichead 'n taobh muigh a Luimreach a rugadh mi, 's Ceatharnach suarach, sealltach, siubhlach mi."

" 'S gu dé 's soicheard dhut . . ."orsa Seathain.

"Tha mi," ors esan, "ag iarraidh maighistir," ors esan.

" 'N dà, slàn na dé fhéin orm fhìn," ors esan, "dh'fhalbh an gille bhuam an dé,"[23] ors esan, "agus tha mi," ors esan, "ag iarraidh," ors esan, "fiach a faigh mi," ors esan, "gill'," ors esan, "na àite," ors esan, "agus b'fhearr leam fhìn gu fasdaigheadh tu agam."

"Nì mi sin," ors esan. "Fasdaighidh mi agad air cùmhnantan," ors esan.

"Dé na cùmhantan tha sin?" orsa Seathain.

"*Well* innsidh mi sin dhut," ors esan. "Bidh thu fhéin," ors esan, "a falbh," ors esan, "ann a shin-ach," ors esan," 's math dh'fhaoidte gu bheil duin' eile còmhla riut. Bidh 'n t-acras ort," ors esan, " 'n uair a thig thu dhachaidh," ors esan. "Gabhaidh tu," ors esan, "go d'bhiadh," ors esan, " 's cha toir thu for," ors esan, "gu bheil duine còmhla riut ach thu fhéin," ors esan, " 's ithidh tu do bhiadh," ors esan, " 's chan fhaighneachd thu," ors esan, ". . . bheil beul air an duin' eil'," ors esan. "Tha math dh'fhaoidte,"ors esan, ". . . gu bheil duin' aig an teine sin-ach còmhla riut," ors esan, " 's theid thu fhéin suas go d'bhiadh," ors esan, " 's gabhaidh tu do bhiadh," ors esan, " 's chan fhaighneachd thu dha'n duine sin an gabh e greim. Agus sin na cùmhnantan . . . air a fasdaigh mis' agad," ors esan.[24]

"O glé cheart," orsa Seathain, ors esan, ". . . fasdaighidh tu air a sin," ors esan.

"O nì mi sin," ors an Ceatharnach.

'S ann mar seo-ach a bha. Thugadh a staigh an Ceatharnach co-dhiubh 's fhuair e biadh is deoch agus ghabhadh aige . . . an oidhche sin agus bha niste Seathain a' falbh a la-airne-mhàireach . . . Bha aige ri creach na Cailleach Eileartach . . . a thogail far . . . na Cailleach Olartach[25] agus 'n uair a fhuair iad deiseil am braiceast 'sa mhaduinn dh'fhalbh e fhéin agus an Ceatharnach. Agus rànaig iad . . . a Chailleach Eileartach agus thog iad a' chreach agus . . . rànaig iad a sin a Chailleach Olartach agus rinn iad a leithid eile agus dh'fhalbh iad. Agus bha feasgar a' tighinn agus dh'fhalbh . . . an Ceatharnach agus bha slatag bheag aig' agus bhuail e air a bheothach[26] bu ghiorra dha e agus fhreagair am beothach a b'fhaid air falbh e agus cho fad 's gu robh 'n t-astar bhuapa, cha b'fhada 'ga ruighinn iad. Agus bha beul na h-oidhch ann 'n uair a rànaig iad agus bha nise Seathain, bha e air *fatigue* fhaighinn air falbh agus cha do rinn e ach gabhail a staigh agus bha 'm

biadh deiseil agus e air a' bhòrd 'ga feitheamh agus ghabh e go bhiadh agus ghabh e bhiadh agus cha tug e smaointinn riamh gu robh gill' aige agus cha tug e smaointinn riamh air na cùmhnantan aig an fhear eile. Agus . . . 'n uair a bha e air a bhiadh a ghabhail 's ann a *stud*aig e seo-ach ach dé rud a rinn e agus thuirt e riuth' a staigh: "Cuireabh," ors esan, "am bòrd," ors esan, "as a cheart urrachd as a robh e," ors esan, " 'n uair a thanaig mis' uige," ors esan, "agus tha mis' ", ors esan, "agus gura h-è an aon rud a bha eadar mi fhìn agus an gille b'fhearr dhe na gillean a fhuair mi riamh," ors esan, "e," ors' esan, "gun fhàgail gun bhiadh," ors esan, "agus tha mise 'dol a mach," ors esan, " 'ga iarraidh, 'ach gu dé nì e."

Dh'fhalbh Seathain a mach 's rànaig e 'n Ceatharnach.

"Tha mi duilich," orsa Seathain, ors esan, "mar a rinn mi," ors esan.

"O tha," ors an Ceatharnach, "tha mi creidsinn gu bheil," ors esan, "ach thug mise 'm bàirligeadh dhut air a shon," ors esan.

Agus . . . "Ach thig thusa staigh," ors esan, "agus tha 'm bòrd," ors esan, "air a chuir as a cheart shuidheachadh," ors esan, " 's a robh e," ors esan, "ma'n do shuidh mis' aige," ors esan.

"O," ors esan, an Ceatharnach, ors esan, "agad-sa gum bitheadh i, 's mise . . . nach gabhadh bhuat i."

" 'N ann a falbh tha thu?" ors esan.

" 'S ann," ors an Ceatharnach.[27]

" 'S co aige ghabhas tu do dhinneir an ath-oidhch?" ors esan.

"Gabhaidh," ors esan, "aig . . . duine ris an can iad Mac Sheoicein,"[28] ors esan.

Agus bha seo-ach fear ann ris an canadh iad Mac Sheoicein agus bha 'chas briste agus bha chuile lighiche b'fhearr . . . bha 'san àite agus timchioll agus ann an àiteachan eil' air tighinn uige agus cha do . . . rinn iad sion ri chois.

Agus có . . chunnacas a' tighinn ach an Ceatharnach agus:

"Gum banna dhuibh," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan.

"Gum banna dhut fhéin," orsa Mac Sheoicein, ors esan, "Có as a shnàgas tu ugainn a Cheatharnaich?"

"Còmhla ri Seathain Mac an Iarla bha mi 'n dé," ors esan, "còmhla ri," ors esan, "O Ceallaigh an oidhche roimhe sin," ors esan, "còmhla ri O Dòmhnaill an oidhche roimhe sin," ors esan, "am Baile Mola Rìgh Albainn an oidhche roimhe sin. Bitheams' oidhche 'n tìr, oidhche 'n Ile, oidhche Marainn, oidhche Arainn. Air Sliabh Fuaite failmide air rìgh seachd mìle fichead 'n taobh muigh a Luimreach a rugadh mi. 'S Ceatharnach suarach, sealltach, siubhlach mi."

" 'S gu dé 's soicheard dhut an diugh? ". . . orsa Mac Sheoicein ris.

" 'S e lighiche math a th'unnam," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan.

" 'N dà, slàn na dé fhéin orm fhìn," ors esan, "agus tha mi," ors esan, "o chionn a leithid seo-ach a dh-uine," ors esan, "le m' chas briste," ors esan, "agus tha chuile lighiche," ors esan, "a b'fhearr a bha 'san àit'," ors esan, "air ruith orm," ors esan, "agus," ors esan, ". . . cha do leighis duin' i," ors esan.

" 'N dà, leighisidh mis' i," ors an Ceatharnach.

Agus 's ann mar seo-ach a bha co-dhiùbh . . . Bhuain e lùibh fo shàil a choise deiscadh air barr machair agus shuath e ri cas a bhodaich e agus ann an beagan lathaichean cha robh sion air cas a bhodaich.[29]

" 'N dà," ors am bodach, ors esan, "chan eil agams'," ors esan, "ach an aon nighean," ors esan, "agus," ors esan, "bheir mi dhut," ors esan, "air son a pòsadh i," ors esan.

"Biodh i," ors a Ceatharnach, "dubh, geal, no bròdach," ors esan, "gabhaidh mis i nc̀ò cha ghabh," ors esan.[30]

Agus dh'fhalbh am bodach a seo-ach agus . . . chuireadh fiathaichean a mach airson banais a Cheatharnaich agus na h-inghinn aige.

Agus bha e fhéin agus am bodach a' gabhail cuairt a' feasgar a bha seo-ach agus chunnacas na daoine 'tighinn.

"Dé na daoine," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan, "a tha seo?" ors esan.

"O nach eil," . . . ors esan, "daoin' airson na bainnseadh agad fhéin," ors esan, " 's aig an inghinn agam," ors esan.

" 'N dà, agad-sa bhitheadh i," ors esan, " 's misc nach gabhadh bhuat i," ors esan.

"Bheil thu 'falbh?" ors am bodach.

". . . Tha," ors an Ceatharnach, ors esan.

" 'N dà nì mise," ors esan, "duan dhut," ors esan.

"Cluinneam e," ors an Ceatharnach.

"Tha leth-chomadh air Ciolla Dé," ors esan,
" 'S guma h-olc dhan teud a bh'ann" ors esan,
" 'S innseabh do mhac òg a rìgh," ors esan,
"Gu bheil leth-chomadh air Ciolla Dé," ors esan.[31]

"Fhalbh, fhalbh," ors an Ceatharnach. "Fàg mar sin fhéin e."

'S dh'fhalbh an Ceatharnach 's chan fhaca mise na 'm bodach tuilleadh an Ceatharnach 's chan eil fhiosam dé dh'éirich dha.[32]

The Lean Grizzled Ceatharnach

Well, once upon a time in Ireland there was a man called O Dòmhnaill and on this night he had gathered together all the best players to see who would perform the best trick and he had set (a prize of) three hundred marks for each trick.

And while they were at this work, who was seen coming but the lean, grizzled Ceatharnach with half his sword exposed behind his backside since the scabbard had worn out (------).[1]

"Greetings to you," said the Ceatharnach.

"Greetings to yourself," said O Dòmhnaill. "From where have you come to us, Ceatharnach?"

"In (- -) of the King of Scotland I was last night," said he. "I am one night in Kintyre, one night in Islay, one night in Man, one night in Arran. On Sliabh Fuait (- - -) twenty seven miles outside Limerick I was born. I am a worthless (?watchful) wandering Ceatharnach".[4]

"And what skill have you tonight, Ceatharnach?" said O Dòmhnaill.

"I am a good juggler," he said.

"Indeed, God's own protection upon me,"[6] said O Dòmhnaill, "and here I am with all the best jugglers in the place gathered together tonight," said he, "to see who can perform the best trick."

"And what (prize) have you set on each trick?" said the Ceatharnach.

"Three hundred marks,"[7] said he.

"Fine," said the Ceatharnach.

And they went in. There was one there when the Ceatharnach went in—there was one there standing on his head and another doing *car a mhìn mhoiltein* and one doing *car a' sgairbh*[8] and every kind of trick. The Ceatharnach let them be anyway, and then they stopped.

"Can you not do better than that?" said the Ceatharnach.

"Can you," said one who was there, "do better?" said he.

"Well, I don't know," said the Ceatharnach, "but we shall try anyway," said he.

He went and leapt to the floor and he lay flat on his back on the floor and lifted his leg above him—his right leg above him, and he shook it and he took it down and he rose to his feet.[9]

"There," said he. "Is there anyone here," said he, "who can do that?"

"Well, indeed," said one who was there, "that is not difficult to do," said he. "I shall not be long doing it," said he.

"Go on then," said the Ceatharnach. "Do it."

That man went down and threw himself flat on his back on the floor and lifted his right leg above him as the Ceatharnach had done and he shook his leg and the leg fell off him.

"Have you done it now?" said the Ceatharnach.

"O no, he has not," said O Dòmhnaill, "and it is my opinion that they will not do any of your tricks tonight," said he.

"Well," said the Ceatharnach, "we shall try another trick then," said he.

He went down and stood on the middle of the floor and took hold of his right ear in his right hand and he gave his ear a shake[10] and:

"There," said he. "Is there anyone here who will do that tonight?" said he.

"Yes," said a man there answering up among the company that was there. "Yes. I shall do it," said he.

And he went down and stood on the middle of the floor as the Ceatharnach had stood and he took hold of his right ear with his right hand and he shook his ear and his ear was in his hand coming down.

"Have you done it now?" said the Ceatharnach.

"O no," said he.

"O no," said O Dòmhnaill, "and you will not if you take my advice," said he, "you will not do the tricks of the Ceatharnach tonight and you will give them up," said he.

"All right then," said the Ceatharnach. "We shall give up these nasty, horrible tricks, and we shall do another trick," said he.

He went and started to feel around himself—in his pockets and he went and took a ball of silken thread from his pocket and he seized it and threw it over a rafter.[11] And he began to feel in his pockets again and he took a maiden out of his pocket and he trimmed and dressed her and let her up on the thread and up the thread she went and he began to search himself again and he took out a neat, short, brown-haired young man then and let him away on the thread.

"A hah on me!" said he after letting him go, "though I have let you go I would not stand surety for you, but if any harm comes to the maiden, from the time she leaves me till she comes to me it will be the end of you."[12]

Up went that man and he began to molest the maiden who was up there and the Ceatharnach began to measure in the thread in great long strong fathoms and despite him, before he got the thread down off the rafter the maiden had been interfered with by the man who had gone up. And he took her and rubbed her and put her in order and put her in his pocket and he seized the man and twisted the head off his neck.

"Tut, tut, my shame!" said O Dòmhnaill. "I would not regard all the tricks that were done here tonight as compensation for having a headless body here," said he.

"Indeed," said the Ceatharnach, "if I get three hundred marks, I shall put the head on him as it was before," said he.

"Oh, indeed, in the name of goodness you shall get that," said O Dòmhnaill, said he, "and put it on him."

He went and took the head in his left hand and the body in his right and stuck the head on him and when he looked, his face was to the back.

"Away, away!" said O Dòmhnaill. "He was better the way he was than like that," said he.

"Indeed," said the Ceatharnach, "if I get three hundred marks I shall take it off him," said he, "and put it on him as it was before."

"You shall get that," said O Dòmhnaill.

He went and plucked the head off him and caught the head in his right hand and the body in his left hand and stuck the head on him and the head was on him as it had been before. He went and rubbed him and put him in his pocket[13] and:

"Well," said the Ceatharnach, "I am leaving now," said he.

"O you must not go," said O Dòmhnaill, said he, "till you get what is yours."

And he counted out for him at the head of a table what he was due for his tricks and the Ceatharnach went and put across his hand and caught and took a handful of what was on the table and put it (? in his pocket)[14].

"Away," said the Ceatharnach, "you have many a man to pay here tonight over and above me," said he, "and I shall be saying farewell to you."

But the next night then, who was working . . . giving . . but a man there called O Ceallaigh and he had gathered together all the best musicians in the place.

And they had not been (?long[15]) at this business, when who was seen coming but the lean, grizzled Ceatharnach with half his sword exposed behind his backside since the scabbard had worn out (- - - - - - - -)

"Greetings to you," said the Ceatharnach.

"Greetings to yourself," said O Ceallaigh. "From where have you come to us, Ceatharnach?"

"With O Dòmhnaill I was last night," said he, "in (- -) of the King of Scotland the night before that," said he. "I am one night in Kintyre, one night in Islay, one night in Man, one night in Arran. On Sliabh Fuait (- - -) twenty seven miles outside Limerick I was born. I am a worthless (?watchful) wandering Ceatharnach."

"And what skill have you tonight?" said O Ceallaigh.

"I am a good musician," said he.

"Indeed, God's own protection upon me," said he, "and here I am with all the best musicians in the place gathered together tonight along with us," said he.

"And what (prize) have you set on each tune?" said he.

"I have set three hundred marks," said he.

"Fine," said he, the Ceatharnach. They went in and they were busy there playing music and then they stopped.

"Are these not good, Ceatharnach?" said O Ceallaigh.

"O yes indeed," said the Ceatharnach. "It is good, but I have been in the house of Manus and I have been in the house of MacIntosh, and if there was ever shrieking or screeching in Hell, that was just as good as it," said he.[16]

"Can you do better than that yourself?" said a big gallowglass up at the other end of the room.

And: "I will or I will not," said he.

"Unless you do," said the man, "I shall make a round curl of you," said he, "on the back of my axe."

And he went and took up the harp and began and rubbed and cleaned it and set it in order and tuned it and he did not play a note on it or anything.

"Can you not do any better than that?" said he.

"I will or I will not," said the Ceatharnach. "I will not expect when I want to myself," said he.[17]

And he went then and took up the harp again and began to play it strong to lamentation and strong to laughter that would send women in child-bed to sleep until at last he had no one but himself and O Ceallaigh who was not fast asleep,[18] and the Ceatharnach went and stopped playing the harp and rubbed it and put it in order and set it aside. And he said as he was going:

"Man who talked so big before, I'm on my way," said he.

That man rose up in his sleep, in confusion, the man who had threatened him with the axe and *sliochd slachd* began on those who happened to be in his way.

"Tut, tut!" said O Ceallaigh, "My shame, my shame! You have done much killing here tonight," said he.

"Have I killed the Ceatharnach?" said he.

"Indeed I truly believe that you haven't," said O Ceallaigh.

And he stopped on that.[19] And the Ceatharnach was going on his way and he met a little old man and:

"What is your news, Mùgan?" he said.[20] And the old man looked at him when he heard the name he had called him.

"I have not a syllable of news," said he.

"Where are you going?" said he.

"I am going to the house of O Ceallaigh," said he.

"Indeed," said he, "a headless body you would be like many a one besides you who is there before you," said he.

"How so?" said the old man.

The Ceatharnach told him how it was.

"But if you take my advice," said he, "you will do very well out of it, and you do as I tell you and you shall be well paid for it. I shall give you a little herb from under the heel of my right foot on machar land, and you need only rub it on the teeth of every one of these and they will rise up (? as healthy) as they ever were. But take care that they do not make you heal them all before you get your reward, and charge him plenty," said he, "for doing such a thing."

O, the old man said that he would do that and he went out—the Ceatharnach—and plucked this herb for him, and the old man went off with it and came to the house of O Ceallaigh and O Ceallaigh told him how things were.

"Indeed," said the old man, "if you give me so much money I shall bring every man of them back to life," said he.

"Show me that on one of them," said he.

The old man took the herb which the Ceatharnach had given him and went across and rubbed it on his teeth and the man rose up alive.

"Go on," said O Ceallaigh, "keep going."

"O, I shall not keep going till you give me the sum I want," said he.

And O Ceallaigh gave him that and the old man started on them one after the other and all those who were dead he brought to life, every one of them, and he went away[21].

But there was a man there, a man called Seathain, Son of the Earl, in Desmond, Cnoc Aine in Ireland[22], looking for a servant.

And who was seen coming but the lean, grizzled Ceatharnach with half his sword exposed behind his backside since the scabbard had worn out (------)

"Greetings to you," said the Ceatharnach.

"Greetings to yourself," said Seathain. "From where have you come to us, Ceatharnach?"

"With O Ceallaigh I was last night," said he, "and with O Dòmhnaill the night before that, in (--) of the King of Scotland the night before that," said he. "I am one night in Kintyre, one night in Islay, one night in Man, one night in Arran. On Sliabh Fuait (---) twenty seven miles outside Limerick I was born. I am a worthless (?watchful) wandering Ceatharnach."

"And what skill have you?" said Seathain.

"I am looking for a master," said he.

"Indeed, God's own protection upon me," said Seathain, "my lad left me yesterday[23] and I am searching to try and find a lad in his place," said he, "and I wish you would engage with me."

"I shall do that," said he, "I shall engage with you on conditions," said he.

"What conditions are they?" said Seathain.

"Well, I shall tell you," said he. "You go about there and perhaps there is someone else with you. You are hungry when you come home. You go straight to your food, and it never occurs to you that there is anyone with you but yourself and you eat your food and you do not ask whether the other person has a mouth. Perhaps there is someone at the fireside with you and you go up to your food and take your food and you do not ask that man if he will have a bite. And these are the conditions on which I will engage with you," said he.[24]

"O, quite right," said Seathain. "You shall engage on these terms," said he.

"O, I shall do that," said the Ceatharnach.

So it was. The Ceatharnach was taken in anyway and he got food and drink and was well cared for that night, and now Seathain was going away next day. He had to lift the cattle-spoil of the Cailleach Eileartach from the Cailleach Olartach,[25] and when they had finished their breakfast in the morning he and the Ceatharnach went off. And they reached the Cailleach Eileartach and lifted the spoil and then they reached the Cailleach Olartach and did the same, and they went off. And evening was coming and the Ceatharnach went and he had a little rod and he struck the beast[26] that was nearest to him and the beast that was furthest away answered it, and long though the distance was, they were not long in arriving. And it was nightfall when they arrived and now Seathain had had a wearying trip, and what he did was to go right in and the food was ready on the table waiting for them and it never occurred to Seathain that he had a lad and he never gave a thought to the conditions of the other. And when he had had his food, it was then that it occurred to him what he had done and he said to them in the house:

"Put the table," said he, "in the exact order it was in when I came to it, and I—and it was the one thing that was agreed between me and the best lad of all the lads I have ever got, that I should not leave him without food—and I am going out," said he, "to get him to see what he will do."

Seathain went out and came to where the Ceatharnach was.

"I am sorry," said Seathain, "for the way I have acted," said he.

"O yes," said the Ceatharnach, "I believe you are, but I warned you about it," said he.

And: "But you come in," said he, "and the table has been set in the exact order in which it was before I sat at it," said he.

"O," said he, the Ceatharnach, "you can have it. It is I who would not take it from you."

"Are you really going?" said he.

"Yes," said the Ceatharnach.[27]

"And with whom will you have your dinner tomorrow night?" said he.

"With a man who is called MacSheoicein[28]," said he.

And there was a man there who was called MacSheoicein and his leg was broken and all the best doctors in the place and round about and in other places had come to him, and they had done nothing for his leg.

And who was seen coming but the Ceatharnach.

"Greetings to you," said the Ceatharnach, said he.

"Greetings to yourself," said MacSheoicein, said he. "From where have you come to us, Ceatharnach?"

"With Seathain Son of the Earl I was last night," said he, "with O Ceallaigh the night before that," said he, "with O Dòmhnaill the night before that," said he, "in (- - -) of the King of Scotland the night before that. I am one night in Kintyre, one night in Islay, one night in Man, one night in Arran. On Sliabh Fuait (- - -) twenty seven miles outside Limerick I was born. I am a worthless (?watchful) wandering Ceatharnach."

"And what is your business today?" said MacSheoicein to him.

"I am a good doctor," said the Ceatharnach, said he.

"Indeed, God's own protection on me," said he, "and here I am since such a time with my leg broken and all the best doctors in the place have had a go at me and no one has healed it," said he.

"Indeed, I will heal it," said the Ceatharnach.

That's what happened, anyhow. He plucked a herb from under the heel of his right foot on machar land and he rubbed it on the old man's leg and in a few days there was nothing wrong with the old man's leg.[29]

"Indeed," said the old man, said he, "I have nothing," said he, "but the one daughter and I shall give her to you to marry," said he.

"Let her be," said the Ceatharnach, "black, white or swarthy, I shall take her or I shall not," said he.[30]

And the old man went now and invitations were sent out for the wedding of his daughter and the Ceatharnach.

And he and the old man were taking a stroll this evening and the people were seen coming.

"What people," said the Ceatharnach, "are these?" said he.

"O, are they not," said he, "people for your own wedding and my daughter's?" said he.

"Indeed you may keep her," said he. "It is I who would not take her from you," said he.

"Are you going?" said the old man.

"Yes," said the Ceatharnach, said he.

"Indeed, I shall make a rhyme for you," said he.

"Let me hear it," said the Ceatharnach.

"(----------[31])," said he.

"Away, away!" said the Ceatharnach. "Leave it at that."

And the Ceatharnach went away and neither I nor the old man saw the Ceatharnach again and I do not know what happened to him[32].

APPENDIX

This story is a version of the Early Modern Irish romance *Eachtra an Cheithearnaigh Chaoilriabhaigh*, or *Ceithearnach Uí Dhomhnaill*, frequently found in Irish MSS of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—I know of some fifty MSS. It has been published by O'Grady (1892 1:276–89) and Henry Morris (1912), and some notes on the story and its history may be found in the English preface to the first (O'Grady 1892 2:xii–xiii) and in a withering review of the second by O'Rahilly (1912). I know of no oral version worth naming from Ireland, but the story has been long known to exist in Scottish Gaelic oral tradition since the publication of two versions, one from Islay and one from Gairloch, by J. F. Campbell (1890:297–329.)

Campbell had also heard a version from South Uist: Donald MacPhie, from near Iochdar, told it to him, and the visit is described in Campbell's MS volume 13 in the National Library of Scotland. The printed note (Campbell 1890:329) in fact suggests that Campbell heard it on two different occasions. Unfortunately Campbell, who noted that it was 'very like the version told by James Wilson, blind fiddler in Islay', made no attempt to summarise it as he did other stories, and there is no record that Hector MacLean or any other of his helpers was sent to take it down, and no trace of the story in any of the likely parts of the Campbell MSS. It seems possible, however, that MacPhie's version is the ancestor of that printed here from Mr Johnson, who lives only a few miles from Iochdar. There is, moreover, evidence that the story was known at the other end of the island, for the hero's helper in another story related to Irish romance, which Campbell summarised from Angus MacDonald, Garrynamonie, in 1871, is called *An Ceatharnach Caoil-riabhach* (Bruford 1969:142). So it is possible that Mr Johnson's father learned the story in Eriskay, where he was born. In either case the ultimate source is likely to have been a manuscript which had belonged to the MacMhuirich family of bards (*cf.* Bruford 1965.)

Of the three existing oral versions, the Islay version (referred to below as I) reproduces the personal names of the written romance most accurately, and is alone in retaining the pseudonyms by which the hero introduces himself. The Gairloch version (G) in-

cludes an episode which the others do not: its wording is further from the MSS, but a verse of one of the decorative poems is included (see note 31). Mr Johnson's version (U) is the best in reproducing and indeed adding to the complex of runs and dialogue which introduces the Ceatharnach to each of his hosts, and the narration shows the imaginative use of detail which is the mark of the best Gaelic story-telling. It seems to me that there is no certain proof of a connection between the three versions as folktales, though at least one phrase in G and U does not seem to derive from existing MSS (see note 1); it is at least as likely that they passed into oral tradition separately from different MSS and at different dates, encouraged perhaps by the celebrity of the story. Indeed I have suggested (Bruford 1969:64, 153) that the story may have been learned by heart by tellers because of its difficult language, as an exercise or a feat of memory: why else should modern Scottish folktales accurately preserve the names of sixteenth-century Irish princelings? Their foibles, which are the basis of the satirical plot, are long since forgotten, but the language and descriptions of the satire are well worth preserving.

Detailed verbal comparisons between the three versions and the written romance are in the notes: see also Bruford 1969:202–3. For the comparisons the MS generally used is National Library of Scotland MS 72.1.36, formerly Gaelic MS XXXVI in the Advocates' Library: this has the double advantage of being the earliest extant MS of the story in the British Isles,[33] and the only known one written in Scotland. It was written by Hugh MacLean (Eoghan MacGhilleoin) an Argyll schoolmaster, who finished transcribing this story on 9th December 1690. It is referred to as A[34]; occasional references are made to the more accessible text in O'Grady (1892) as SG.

The relationship between the structure of the different versions is presented below in the form of a table. It will be seen that the episodes preserved in U are those which recur in all three oral versions. Of the other episodes in the MSS, II seems to be largely an exercise in nostalgia for the great days of the Fianna, and contains little incident worth remembering; VI is almost a duplicate of I, and can only be said to survive in G because the musical details alone make up one episode, and the bodyguard made to fight among themselves the other; VII is a brief and rather pointless detail. The four names which survive in U are likewise those which appear in both I and G also. There is nothing to prevent a change in the order of the episodes, and in fact, according to O'Rahilly (1912:207), though the sequence in A is the normal and presumably original one, at least three variant sequences can be found in eighteenth-century Irish manuscripts. Apart from the insertion of an extra episode, the main difference in these, as in the oral versions, is in the placing of episode V—presumably because this is the most striking part of the story, it is brought in earlier, except in one MS group which gives it the climactic position at the end. In addition to this U reverses the order within the two pairs of episodes as they stand in I, but this is not of much importance. All the oral versions agree that O Dòmhnaill is the host of the first visit, and Mac Eochadha has the broken leg; otherwise the names are distributed more or less at random. (See Bruford 1969:83–4, 169–70 for parallel instances.)

For the purposes of the table the episodes are numbered as follows: Ia: Hero enters castle without passing porter; Ib: he plays better than the resident harpers; Ic: he leaves against his host's will by playing the company to sleep, and—Id: making the guards kill each other; Ie: he gives the porter a herb to resurrect the dead guards. II: He will not play harp for his host until satirised; reminisces about his experiences with the Fianna. III: He cures his host of a broken leg, but leaves while host is preparing to marry him to his daughter. IV: He helps his host in a cattle-raid, but leaves when host breaks agreement by taking drink (or food) without offering him any. Va: As a juggler, he blows a straw off his palm[9]; a rival loses fingers; Vb: similar episode moving one ear; Vc: "Indian rope trick", *etc.* as in text above. VI: Hero insults host's harpers; they attack him but their blows land on one another; host's foster-brothers try to hang hero but only hang one another; he resurrects them next day. VII: Hero given meal of wild apples and thick milk, disappears. The table shows the order of episodes in each version and the name of the hero's host in each episode.

A	I	G	U
I a, b, c, d, e. O Domhnaill.	I a, b, d, e. O Domhnuill.	I b, c, e var. O Domhnuill.	Vb & var., c. O Domhnaill.[35]
II. Seán mac an Iarla Deasmumhan.	V b, c. Mac Seathain an t-Iarla Deas.[36]	V a, b. Ie var. Seathan mòr Mac an Iarla.	I b, c, d, e. O Ceallaigh.
III. Mac Eochadha.	III. Am Bodach Mac Ceochd.	VI. Ie. Fear Chuigeamh Mhumha.	IV. Seathain Mac an Iallain Deas Mumhain Cnoc Aine...
IV. O Conchubhair Sligeach.	IV. O Conachair Sligeach.	III. Rob Mac Sheoic Mhic a' Lagain.	III. Mac Sheoiccin.
V a, b, c. Tadhg O Ceallaigh.		IV. Taog mòr O Ceallaidh.	
VI. Rí Laighean.			
VII. Uillioch a Búrc.[37]	VII. Am Bodach Mac Ceochd.		

A.J.B.

NOTES

1 This follows quite closely the description of the hero which similarly introduces each episode in the MSS (except III, where he is dressed more suitably for a doctor.) A[34] . . . 'an ceitharnach caol riabhach . . . agus leth a chlaoidhemh nochtuighe don taob tsiar da thoin, agus sena-bhroga lan a d'uisce ag fedoil*each* fana chos*aibh*, agus barr a dha chluas trena shen-shuan*aigh*, agus tri gaoithe boga cuill (*var.* bonsach bhacain) 'na lethlaimh.' (A kern in narrow stripes (?) with half his naked sword [sticking out] beyond his backside, and old shoes full of water squelching under his feet, the tips of his two ears [sticking] through his old mantle, and three soft hazel javelins [*var.* a crooked (?) javelin] in one hand.) The last phrase, which may be a parody of the conventional descriptions of heroes in the romances, is not in G or U (the run is not in I); on the other hand 'an déigh a dhuille teirgeann' in U is virtually identical with 'an déigh dh'an scabard (*var.* do'n truaill) teireachdainn' in G. This could indicate an oral connection, but it may be merely a reading from a lost MS or group of MSS. The hero's title is difficult to translate. *Ceatharnach* (*ceithearnach*) originally denotes a member of a warband (*ceithearn*), but it has picked up different overtones in different regions and periods, so that it can mean a robber, a bully, a strong man or simply a soldier. In Uist today it is quite an admiring term; to the author of the romance it may well have been rather derogatory. O'Grady (1892:12) suggests that *caolriabhach* follows the presumed original meaning of *riabhach*, 'striped', and refers to the hero's dress, as he is offered a *léine riabhach* by O'Donnell in the MS text; but whether it refers to the dress or the man, the storytellers and probably the scribe of A seem to have understood *riabhach* in the modern sense of an uneven mixture of greys and browns, and *caol* as denoting a thin man, not thin stripes.

2 Though at first sight this looks like a drastically shortened version of 'go mbenaighe Dia dhuibh' (God bless you), a greeting which appears in A, Mr Johnson insists that 'gum banna dhuibh' is a known form of greeting in South Uist.

3 Very likely another MS form, for 'thángais' (Ir., you have come), but understood as relative future / present of *snàg*, creep. SG reads 'cá thaob as a dtángais?' here, though A puts it differently: 'Ca haite a rabhas areir?' (Where were you last night?)

4 In some minor details the translation follows the MS text, which reads in A: 'An Dun Monaidh, 'm baile ri Alban do choidlas areir . . . agus a nOilech na riogh do rugadh me. Bim la 'n Ile agus la a cCintire, bim la a Manain agus la a Rachlain agus la a bFioncharn na Forare ar Sliabh Fuaid. Duine siobhlach suarach siobhal me.' All of this is reproduced in Mr Johnson's version except 'a nOilech na riogh do rugadh me' (I was born in Ailech of the kings) and part of the final place-name, Fioncharn na Forare, which appears in I as 'carna fuara faire'. 'Oidhche' (night) has been substituted for 'là' (day), and 'ceatharnach' for 'duine' (man): both of these also appear in I. They make as much sense as the original reading, and improve the rhythm of the passage, which in telling is probably more important than the meaning. Perhaps for the same reason, 'la a cCintire' has been shortened to 'oidhche 'n tìr' (literally, a night in a land), to balance 'oidhche 'n Il' ' (the last syllable is hardly heard); and following the substitution of Arran for Rathlin, because the name is more familiar to Scottish hearers, 'Manainn' (Man) has been changed to 'Marainn' to rhyme perfectly with 'Arainn'—Mr Johnson no longer recognises it as Man. Among the words in U which do not follow the MS here, I cannot explain 'failmide, air rìgh', but 'seachd mìle fichead 'n taobh muigh a Luimreach' represents A's '5 mile deg amach o Luimn*each*' (fifteen miles out of Limerick), referring to the situation of Seán mac an Iarla's seat at Cnoc Áine, which the MSS mention, with the distance, not only in episode II but in all the other episodes, when the Ceatharnach is asked where he is going next or where he has been. The figure is also mentioned in I and G, where it is thirteen miles; it varies also in the MSS, for SG has it as twelve miles.

5 'Soicheard' is one word according to Mr Johnson, presumably a combination of the prefix *so-* and *ceard*, which seems a possible form though not known to dictionaries—'good craft'? The meaning is evidently the same as A's 'ca healadh duit?' in episodes III and V.

6 Mr Johnson does not take 'slàn na dé' as being connected with God, but it is no doubt a reflection of a common asseveration which appears occasionally in the MSS: in A, O'Donnell's porter swears 'dar righslana De' that the Ceatharnach never came in past him, and in SG O'Donnell himself swears 'dar slán Dé' that the Ceatharnach's music is the best he has ever heard. Something like this seems to have been taken up by a storyteller and generalised to all the episodes. Our translation is based on an intermediate form, 'slàna' or 'slànadh Dé'.

7 The sum has been subject to inflation: in the MSS it is five marks (doubled in I). Money only appears in this episode (V) in the MS, but in this version the detail is duplicated in the next (I).

8 These details are added colour in the oral version: *car a' mhoiltein* and *car a' sgairbh* are both terms current in Uist for somersaults.

9 This trick is apparently modelled on the next, and takes the place of a trick in the MSS where the Ceatharnach lays three reeds or blades of grass ('3 sibhthine' A) on his palm, holds down the outer two with the tips of two fingers, and blows away the middle one. An onlooker who tries the same trick blows the fingertips right through his hand! G gives a very simplified version of this. After both this and the next trick in the MSS the Ceatharnach cures his unfortunate imitator (free, not for money as in I.)

10 The MSS make it clear that the point of this trick is to move one ear without moving the other—which would be quite a good trick if the Ceatharnach had not used his hand!

11 In the MSS this incident is less realistic: it is in fact a version of the 'Indian rope trick' in miniature. The rope is hung from nothing but air ('i bhfroigh*thibh* na fiormameinte' A) and disappears into a cloud at the top ('co ndechaid i nél in aicoir' SG.) First a hare is sent up, then a hound; then after a pause a boy is sent up to see that the hound does not eat the hare, and finally a girl to make sure that he does it. They all come out of a 'bag of tricks' (*mála cleasaidheachta*) rather than the Ceatharnach's pockets.

12 The translation follows Mr Johnson's own interpretation of the phrase, which he says is quite commonly used as a threat.

13 The girl's fate is given with rather less frankness than in the MSS—both dog and boy are caught in the act, and O'Grady's translation breaks into asterisks—but otherwise this passage is very well told here. The picture of the Ceatharnach grooming his little people before he lets them go and coiling his rope in lengths like a sailor helps to make the scene more convincing.

14 This detail must be a result of the inflation mentioned in note 7: in the MSS the Ceatharnach takes all the money, but it is only twenty marks—five for each trick and five for the girl, who is going to have a son. He praises O'Kelly (who is the host in this episode in the MS) for his generosity, and no doubt the author felt that O'Kelly deserved such praise.

15 Possibly 'Cha b'fhada dhaibh' (they were not long), but influenced by 'Gum banna dhuibh'.

16 Two parts of the Ceatharnach's comments seem to have been run together. In A he first lists devils in Hell, Beelzebub, Abiron, Satan and some more obscure characters, to whose noise he compares the harping he has just heard, and then some famous fairy harpers he has heard. In SG the second comparison is made by his host on hearing the Ceatharnach's playing. Here, 'Brugh Mhanais' and 'Brugh Mhic an Toisich' must be fairy dwellings, and in fact they probably derive from a description of sweet music which can be found in another story in the same MS as A: '[Níor] chualus canain siothbhaobh no lochda garduidh [Br]ogh Mananain no Brogh mac Naoi, ceoil sioth no codalta ba bhinne lem . . . ' (I [never] heard song of sirens or the festive throng of Manannán's fairy dwelling or the dwelling of (?) Angus [O.I. Maice ind Óic], peace-music or sleep-music that I found sweeter . . . (Bruford 1968:313, rev. D.A.M.).) The phrase may come from the presumed MS original of U, or perhaps from an oral version of the other story, well-known in Uist as 'Fear na h-Aibid'. *Cf.* note 18.

17 This detail seems to be borrowed from the lost episode II of the MS, where the Ceatharnach refuses to read or play the harp for his host until the latter makes up a *rann* satirising him.

18 The words follow the same theme as those in the MSS: 'Fir ghonta agus mna re niodhnaibh, agus lucht fiabhras agus treablaid an domhan, do choideoildais le foghur an cheoil chainbhin . . .' (A: Wounded men and women with child, [all] the fevered and suffering folk of the world, would fall asleep at the sound of that soft sweet music . . .) But this is a run found elsewhere (see further Bruford 1969:203, which also gives another parallel to a phrase in note 16.) Here, as in G, it is made clear that the music did indeed put the hearers to sleep: the MSS simply repeat the run, which occurs twice in this episode, and leave it to be deduced that this time the music had the desired effect. In 'trom gu guir' here we have taken 'guir' to be for 'gul' (weeping.)

19 In the MSS the guard of gallowglasses outside the door are still awake, and are made to hit each other by the Ceatharnach's magic, though they are aiming at him. But this version, with the following dialogue, is more amusing.

20 The character is usually nameless: in the MSS he is O'Donnell's porter, who has a grievance against the Ceatharnach for appearing in the court without passing through the gate. In G, where the incident is repeated after three different visits (I, V and VI), he is in turn a herdsman, a thresher and a poor man. For 'Mùgan' compare the word in Dwelly ('gloomy, surly or morose fellow; snuffler') and possibly the Uillioch a Búrc who is the Ceatharnach's last host in A (*cf.* note 36). See also note 28 below.

21 This incident is very much expanded from the MS, especially the way in which Mùgan makes sure he is not cheated of his reward. To make good dialogue out of a brief summary of plot as has been done here is one of the ways in which a line of good storytellers can improve a story. The detail that the herb is to be pressed to the teeth, not as one might expect the lips, follows the MSS, where it is the upper gum or jaw (*carbad uachtair.*)

22 Again the translation of the name follows the MSS in part: Seán is there son of the Earl of Desmond, and his residence is Cnoc Áine (Knockany, Co. Limerick). 'An Eirinn' (in Ireland) is frequently added to the names of characters by Scottish Gaelic storytellers: it seems to confer added respectability.

23 In the MSS O'Connor-Sligo (who is the host in this episode) has already set out on the cattle-raid which follows; but though he has plenty of men with him, and they indeed object to him hiring another, he takes on the Ceatharnach.

24 In the later recordings Mr Johnson made it quite clear that the sort of inhospitable behaviour described here was a bad habit of Seathain's, and the Ceatharnach wanted to make him mend his ways—which may indeed have been the intention of the original author of the story in satirising O'Connor.

25 In the MSS O'Connor is going 'do dhioghuilt cleibhin na call*aighe* Conachtuidh ar in chaill*igh* Mhuimhnidh'. (A: to get satisfaction from the Munster granny for the Connacht granny's jug (*or* little basket.)) It seems likely that another of O'Connor's faults was a tendency to go on a cattle-raid on the slightest pretext, though there may be a disguised reference to some actual incident. It should be only the one old woman's cattle which are taken to give to the other.

26 'Air a' chraoibh . . .' in SA 1969/107; 'air a' bheothach' is supplied from the later recordings. In the MSS the Ceatharnach not only drives the cattle at top speed, but also keeps off the pursuers with his bow and arrows, though he had only undertaken to do one or the other.

27 In the MSS O'Connor is handed a drink and drinks it off without thinking, a rather more trivial affair than a whole meal. Once more the incident, especially the dialogue, is very much expanded. The poem in the last episode really belongs to the end of this one: see note 31.

28 In SA 1969/107 Mr Johnson could not remember the name of this character, and borrowed the name of the minor character Mùgan. 'Mac Sheoicein', which he remembered later, is here substituted throughout from the later recordings. The fact that all the oral versions have a *c* or *chd* sound in the

name in place of the *ch* of the MS 'Mac Eochadha' could be taken as evidence of a connection between the oral versions; but it seems equally possible that they arise independently from a misreading of the MS contraction 'Mac Eoc—a' (*cf.* note 2).

29 This is very matter-of-fact. In the MSS and the other oral versions the Ceatharnach tells Mac Eochadha to get up and run a race with the eighteen doctors who have failed to cure him, and he is better at once and wins the race. The description of the herb here is the same as that used by Mùgan to cure O Ceallaigh's men.

30 The ambiguous reply is in A: 'Mata si glan, mata si grana, biaidh si agam no ni bhiaidh' (if she be bonny or if she be ugly I will have her, or I won't,) though not in SG.

31 This poem belongs to the end of the previous episode. Another verse of it is quoted in G. For this verse, A reads:

'Leith chumaidh ar Ghiolla De	(Cheating Giolla Dé of his due—
Neimhchoman don te do ní:	No thanks to him who does it;
Innus uaimsi don fhlaith	Tell the prince from me
Nach breith mhath do rug an rí.'	That he [*lit.* the king] did not judge well.)

'Giolla Dé' (Servant of God) is the Ceatharnach's pseudonym in that episode. Here the poem is evidently taken for a reproach by Mac Sheoicein on the Ceatharnach.

32 The end of the story is never very satisfactory: the Ceatharnach simply disappears as suddenly as he appeared. In I he chokes, but this is merely the storyteller's attempt to give a function to the curious meal of crab-apples and thick milk which he is given just before he disappears finally in the MS. Some Irish MSS add that the Ceatharnach was in fact Manannán, a supernatural being who might well be credited with such feats, but, *pace* O'Rahilly, this seems to be a later accretion: there is certainly no trace of it in A.

33 A slightly older MS (1684) is in the University Library of Giessen.

34 In quotations from A contractions are expanded, missing lenition supplied, and punctuation added silently, except that I have italicised entire syllables expanded from one stroke. I have not supplied accents or made any effort to regularise the rather eccentric spellings.

35 In his first fragmentary recording Mr Johnson made the host in this episode O Ceallaigh, which corresponds to the MS.

36 The original host in this episode does appear in I in the form of the rival juggler, 'Taog pratach Mac a' Cheallaich'.

37 *Sic* A; 'Seán O Domhnallán' SG; 'Seán O Dornáin' is the usual Irish reading according to O'Rahilly (1912:207.)

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