*Courtly and Satiric Poems in the Book of the Dean of Lismore**

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The Book of the Dean of Lismore[1] (*B*) contains two main types of material—Ossianic ballads and bardic verse, the latter being further divided into official, commemorative verse (the bardic encomia proper) and bardic religious verse. These categories do not exhaust the contents of *B*, but the remainder was rather summarily dismissed by W. J. Watson as 'more or less indecent' (Watson 1937:xvii) and remains largely unedited, although E. C. Quiggin had transcribed most of it for his projected edition of *B* (on which see Quiggin 1937:vii), and made some reference to it in his prefatory Rhys Lecture (as at Quiggin 1913:7 and 39–40). Almost all of these poems concern women, whether as the subjects of love-lyric or as the objects of satire. Although comparatively neglected—in part, no doubt, because of a 'lack of euphemism' in some of them—these poems are of interest as the main source (and sometimes the only source) for certain poetic genres in Gaelic. They bear some relation to Scots literature too, though it will appear that this relation is especially difficult to assess. Moreover, some of them are very good of their kind, and deserve to be edited in full. However, the present paper is intended merely to place these poems in their Celtic and European context and give a general impression of their range.[2] I shall start with 'courtly love' poems, and then mention various other types, mostly satiric.

It is believed that love-themes deriving from the lyrics of the French *trouvère* period became naturalised in Ireland, in the halls of Norman-French settlers, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; these came to be sung in Irish and entered the native Gaelic literary tradition. (See especially Ó Tuama 1960:258–62, 1961:91–3 and 99.) One product of this transfusion was the type of poem called *dánta grádha* ('poems of love' in the syllabic quatrains of learned Gaelic verse), which present a distinctive synthesis of traditional, native elements with courtly love themes and conventions. (For an appreciation of these see Flower in O'Rahilly 1926:xi–xxxiv.) Some of the poems in *B* are *dánta grádha*.

One poet, called simply 'A Certain Lover' (*Fear éigin suirghe*) takes up a position that is quite basic to this sort of poetry: 'I have given great love to a certain one's wife;

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that is more grievous than anything under the sun.' (*Thugas ró-ghrádh do mhnaoi fir,* ⟨*is*⟩ *duilghe sin ná ní fón ghréin*: *B* 225; Q LXVI 1ab) He is in a sorry state:

Go bhfóire an dá aspal déag
oram féin fá chionn na mná—
an aoinbhean as annsa leam,
nách lamhaim a h-ai[n]m do rádh. (verse 2)

May the twelve apostles succour me with regard to that woman; the one dearest of all to me, whose name I dare not speak.

The same frustration is felt by the unnamed poet of *Fada atú i n-easbhaidh aoibhnis* ('Long am I without pleasure': *B* 161; Q XLVIII), who begins:

*Fada *atú i n-easbhaidh aoibhnis,*
fada shaoilim beith bhuaidhe;
mar atáim-se 'na [h-]urlainn—
cá bhfuil cunnradh as cruaidhe? (verse 1)

Long am I without pleasure, long I consider my exile from it; the way I am in her court—where is there a compact more harsh?

He then describes his plight in terms of morbid symptoms as a kind of life-in-death: 'I am not alive, nor yet have I perished' (*ní beó 's níor chailleadh mise*: 3d). He amplifies in the same metaphysical vein:

Saoilim nách bhfuil ar talmhain
aon mhac samhla mo ghalair—
*gé *atá mo chorp ar marthain*
táim ar scarthain rem anam.

Éinneach dá bhfuil ar domhan
do chomhthach nó do charaid
cha chluinim, is chan fhaicim
éinní as ait liom, ná as an-ait. (verses 4–5)

I think there is not on earth a single example of my malady: although my body survives I have parted from my soul.

No-one in the world, be he neighbour or friend, do I hear; nor do I see anything to tempt me—or to repel me.

The sense of Love's being a sickness (*galar*) receives a further development in the poem [*Is*] *mairg dan galar an grádh* ('Woe to him whose malady is Love': *B* 290; *W* XXXI), attributed to Isabella, Countess of Argyll; it concludes with an echo of the formulae used to ward off the evil effects of a spell, at the point where she turns them back—with interest—on their source[3]: 'if he should cast me into torment, may it be woe a hundred-fold to himself!' (*dá *gcuireadh sé mise i bpéin/ gomadh dó féin as céad mairg*: 3cd). This poem is striking amongst the present ones in that the uncaring Loved One

is 'he' rather than 'she'; in other respects it conforms to the conventions of the *dánta grádha*, for sound poetic reasons.

In John MacVurich's *Námha dhomh an dán* ('Inimical to me is the fate'[4]: *B* 61; *M* 82) we are told of a beautiful woman who has haunted the poet's sleep:

Fár bhean an dán díom
is mór m'fhíoch is m'fhearg—
cneas mar chobhar tonn,
glac chorr is gruaidh dearg.

Béal ar dath na subh
tug mo chruth ar . . .;
ód chodlas-sa a-réir
truagh, a Dhé, mo chor.

Do bhí sí far riom—
ar liom, gion go robh:
gan í ann ó ló
do-chuaidh ar bhróin domh. (verses 4–6)

Great is my fuming and resentment at what fate has snatched from me—(her) skin white as sea foam, slender hand and scarlet cheek.

Lips red as the raspberries have put my form into (a decline); since I fell asleep last night, o God, wretched is my condition.

She was beside me—(or so) I thought, though she was not; her absence since daybreak has increased sorrow for me.

The nocturnal visitant occurs in the *dánta grádha* too (*e.g.* O'Rahilly 1926:61–4, poems 43–5); this poem also follows the convention of encoding the name of the lady who has enthralled him—a Gaelic equivalent to the acrostic. (Compare O'Rahilly 1926:11 (poem 8, verse 9), 29 (poem 20, verse 9), *etc.*) Our poet uses the names of trees, which signify letters of the old *ogham* alphabet, to frame his clue to her name (verse 7); alas, he has done it too well for the present writer to be able to recover it as yet.

The 'bird-messenger' convention is utilised in Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy's *Teachtaire chuireas i gcéin* ('I sent a messenger afar': *B* 149; Q XLVII), though the poem itself is not a messenger-poem of the usual sort:

Teachtaire chuireas i gcéin,
mairg mé féin do-chuaidh 'na phdirt:
do-rinne dhomh-sa dá dheóin
teachtaireacht an eóin on Áirc. (verse 1)

I sent a messenger afar—woe to me the man who performed the mission; of his volition he inflicted on me the messengership of the bird from the Ark.

Having sent 'my bosom-friend and confidant' (*mo chompánach is m'fhear rúin*: 2c) on this errand,

Ní tháinig d'innse na sgéal,
a bhéal rena béal do dhruid;
do-rinne ar aithris an eóin
*acht *nachar chaith feóil mar chuid.*

Gach [éin]ní dhár iarras air
do rádha réna dreich réidh
dó féin do-rinne go deas—
agus dearmaitear leis mé. (verses 3–4)

He did not come to deliver the tidings—his lips closed with hers! He did as had been done by the bird, save that he did not consume flesh as his portion.

Everything that I asked him to say to her calm presence he performed blithely for himself—and I am forgotten by him.[5]

Despite some unique features these poems and a couple more like them correspond closely to the bulk of O'Rahilly's collection *Dánta Grádha*. Indeed, the possibility of their being independent developments in Gaelic Scotland and Ireland is precluded (on present evidence at least) by the fact that the courtliness of our poems shows eccentricities—judged from a continental standpoint—otherwise confined to the *dánta grádha* alone. For example, the *dánta grádha* in general, or a poem like *Fada atú i n-easbhaidh aoibhnis* above, can come very close to the spirit of some of the troubadour lyrics in their illicit, unsatisfied, self-abasing experience of Love, and in other minute respects; but they have completely (and, in my experience, uniquely) suppressed the May mornings and the bird-song, the day-dreaming poet and the shepherdesses (Ó Tuama 1960:173, 1961:93) to give a very literal, *indoors* signification to the word 'courtly'.[6]

As for their starting point in Scottish Gaelic literature, it is to be noted that one of the poets named above, John MacVurich, has been identified as a senior member of the ancient poetic family that had provided chief-poets to the Lords of the Isles (Watson 1937:vii; Thomson 1960–3:292, 297); the most likely hypothesis, on this and other grounds, is that these *dánta grádha* came to Scotland through the agency of the poetic order—through Scottish poets training in Irish seminaries and Irish poets visiting Scottish patrons and colleagues on their circuits. There is an apparent difficulty in this view, in that most datable examples of Irish *dánta grádha* seem to be rather later than those in *B* (Knott 1960:38; Ó Tuama 1961:92–4). However, it seems possible to put this down to their ephemeral nature (O'Rahilly 1926:vii–viii; Ó Tuama 1961:87–8) and assume that they were practised in Ireland at least as early as in Scotland.[7]

Further examples of this sort of poetry are fairly rare in the Highlands, but where they do occur they confirm a point that is clear from the Irish examples (and indeed in *B* itself), namely that the patrons themselves were quite ready to compose love-poems of this sort. Thus, besides the compositions of later members of the MacVurich bardic family (*e.g.* Niall Mór's *Soraidh slán don oidhche a-réir*: O'Rahilly 1926:51, poem 38; Thomson 1974:52–3) we find poems ascribed to members of the Gaelic nobility:

sixteenth-century ascriptions include a chief of the Mathesons (W. Matheson 1967–8: 150–2), an Earl of Argyll (R. MacDonald 1776:347; see MacKinnon 1912:304 for a conjecture as to which Earl) and a chief of the Macleans (MacKechnie and Glynn 1933:46); the individual ascriptions may be doubted, but the intended ambience is clear. At what date *dánta grádha* were first composed in Scotland I cannot say; perhaps it was not so long before the day of John MacVurich. As to their demise, they would last, no doubt, as long as trained poets could find patrons. Thereafter, amatory odes continued in fashion as a gentlemanly pursuit—in the Eigg Collection, for instance, the authors of such poems, wherever divulged, are members of at least the minor gentry of the Highlands—and some recognisably bardic traits survived the crossing from learned to vernacular language and metre, to leave their mark on men's songs to women in the modern tradition.

The second main category of poems is concerned principally with women in general rather than with particular women; these may be called contributions to that ever-present mediæval genre, the 'Argument about Women' (as defined by Utley 1944:vii[8]). As regards the present examples, their attitude to women is in general unfavourable, though there is at least one exception to that rule. The history of this brand of verse in Western Europe is just as convoluted as that of courtly verse—an ivy whose tendrils have penetrated to all countries and social levels, with literary roots that extend back to the pagan authors Juvenal and Ovid, but which intermingle at all stages with quite ubiquitous and timeless sentiments and conventions about the fair sex. Despite this complexity it will be feasible to pursue the question of origins at least one step back from *B*. I give first a selection from *B*'s examples of the genre.

In Duncan Campbell's *Fada ó mhalluigh Dia na mná* ('Long since God cursed women': *B* 10; Q LI) the *blâme des femmes* is traced directly to the first temptress:

> *An chéidbhean do mhalluigh Dia*
> *Éabha, . . .*
> *créad 'mar mheabhluigh an bhean duaigh*
> *Ádhamh, ⟨an⟩ seanóir truagh g[an chion]?* (verse 4)

The first woman God cursed was Eve, . . .; why did the hateful woman shame Adam, wretched, blameless patriarch?

Another favoured tactic in this type of literature was the cumulative list—the Catalogue of Evil Women from history (Utley 1944:44). Such a list forms part of *Créad fán seach[n]ainn-sa suirghe* ('Why should I forsake love?': *B* 267; Q LVI), ascribed to 'The Parson' (*An Pearsún*). In the course of his argument (which is that women's chronic fickleness invites a cavalier attitude on his own part) he cites a series of examples from classical, biblical and native sources to show how neither a man's intellect, his strength nor his looks will keep his woman true to him. (The examples chosen are Adam, Fionn, Hercules, Solomon, Aristotle, Ealcmhar and Diarmaid: verses 6–12.)

Again, one of the poems that *B* ascribes to Earl Gerald[9] (*Mairg do léimeas thar a each,*

'Woe to him who dismounts from his horse': *B* 68; *M* 78) has a sort of refrain, 'There's no use in consorting with women' (*ní fheil feidhm beith ris na mnáibh*). 'My curse light upon women,' he says, 'although I spent a while in their company' (*Mo mhallacht i measg na mban,/ gé do bhithinn seal 'na ndáil*: 2ab). Every woman is the same—treacherous, scheming, unheeding (verses 3–5);

> *Cuiridh sí fearg ar a fear,*
> *caochlaidh a gean ris gach dáimh,*
> *cuiridh sí i n-éadtruime a céim—*
> *ní fheil feidhm beith ris na mnáibh.* (verse 6)

She infuriates her husband, (but) changes her humour whenever there's company; (then) her step becomes tripping—there's no use consorting with women.

He concludes gloomily:

> *Ní fheil feidhm beith ris na mnáibh*
> *is iad ag gldimh is i bhfeirg;*
> *gach neach nách cuir sin i gcéill,*
> *ní h-éidir nách dó féin as mairg.* (verse 10)

There's no use in consorting with women, with their snapping and raging: anyone who will not declare thus, it cannot fail to be woe to him.

In *Sgéal beag agam ar na mnáibh* ('I have a little tale about women': *B* 71; Q LXVIII), ascribed to Alan, son of Fair Dugall (*Ailéin mac Dhubhghoill Bháin*), the theme is treated dramatically, most of the poem consisting of an imaginary dialogue between a husband and wife. The poet's own bias is revealed first:

> *An aoinbhean lérbh annsa a fear*
> *dá bhfacaidh tú thear nó thiar,*
> *dh'fhéadte go bhfacaidh 'san lá*
> *fear nó dhá i mbíodh a mian.* (verse 3)

The woman who loved her husband most, of all women you've seen, east or west, it might be that she has seen one man—or two, perhaps—per day that she'd fancy.

The dialogue ensues; it starts with the woman asserting that, 'of all men under the sun, you are the one for me' (*a bhfuil d'fhearaibh fón ghréin/ mo roghainn féin díobh is tú*: 4cd). In return for that the husband pledges, while recognising (4b) her insincerity, 'if the world were at my disposal I would give you half of it for yourself' (*dá mbeadh an cruinne fám breith/ bhéarainn duit a leith id láimh*: 5cd). She is moved to even greater protestations:

> "**Bhéara mé a luach sin duid,*
> *agus tuig: gé mór an cás,*
> *éinfhear *nocha luigh lem chorp*
> *acht gé dcacha tú a-nocht bás.*" (verse 6)

"I shall give you the value of that; know this: however great the straits, no (other) man shall lie with my body, even though you die this very night."

He plays along. He is happy to believe that, he says (7ab), rather than the rumour the gossips (*lucht na mbréag*) circulate; and he promises (7cd) not to become one of those jealous husbands mocked at in another class of poems included in *Dánta Grádha* (O'Rahilly 1926:124–7, Nos. 92–4). But (she interjects) he will be given no cause for jealousy: 'you will find no living man to whom I have secretly given my kiss' (*chan fhaighfir éanduine beó/ dá dtug mé mo phóg gan fhios*: 8cd). She warms to this theme:

> "*Ghéabhainn airgead, ghéabhainn spréidh,*
> *dá dtugainn mé féin dá chionn;*
> *ó n-as duit-se bhá mo ghaol*
> *cha b'fheirrde duine a thaobh riom.*" (verse 9)

"I could get money, I could get cattle if I were to give myself for them; (but) since my love was for you, no man would be any the better off for approaching me."

The poem now ends with a dry comment from the husband:

> "*Fiosrach mé ar sin, a bhean,*
> *go bhfeadhmadh tú fear nó dhó*
> *ab fhearr ná mise fá chéad,*
> *dá mbadh áil leat féin dol dóibh.*" (verse 10)

"I'm well aware of this, woman, that you'd need a man—or two—a hundred times better than me—if you yourself would want to go to them!"

Duncan Campbell's *Mairg ó ndeachaidh a léim lúith* ('Woe to him whose vigour has departed': *B* 202; Q LXXV) is a husband's lament that his wife has no time for him since his sexual powers have declined. He used to receive all manner of attentions from her; she used to hang on his every word; but now,

> *Acht a-nis dá dtairginn di*
> *gach uile ní fán bhioth bhán,*
> *as mo bhod ó chuaidh a lúth*
> *déaradh sí, 'a thrú, ní h-áil,'* (verse 10, = Q, verse 11)

But now, if I were to offer her everything in the bright Universe, since my virility has departed she'd say, "Wretch, no thank you!"

He addresses a prayer:

> [*Athchuinge* (?)] *ort, a mhic Dhé bhí,*
> *a Fhir as rí ar gach reilg:*
> *mo bhod a mhairsinn do ghnáth,*
> *do chasgadh mo mhná ón mheirg.* (verse 12, = Q, verse 13)

(A prayer) to you, son of the living God, you who are King of every holy place: may my virility last forever, to check my wife from sinning.

A poem ascribed to 'The Earl of Argyll', *A bhean dá dtugas-sa grádh* ('Woman to whom I have given love': *B* 73; Q LXX), poses in debate form the question, 'Whether does a woman prefer love or sex?':

> *"Cia as annsa leat—fear gan bhod,*
> *is é a ngeall ort do⟨n⟩ ghnáth,*
> *nó giolla an bhuid bhríoghmhoir chruaidh,*
> *bhíos ag imtheacht uait gach lá?"* (verse 2)

"Which do you prefer—a stingless fellow pledged to you forever [*i.e.* the courtly lover!], or the potent, virile lad who departs your chamber every morning?"

After an attempted compromise (in which she advances the suggestion that love and sex are not incompatible) the woman is made to admit that 'the prime cause of love' (*céad-adhbhar an ghráidh*: 5d) is the male organ. This degradation of woman to the animal level is also implicit in *Mairg ó ndeachaidh a léim lúith* and in the poem of 'The Parson' (*e.g.* verse 3). Moreover, it is well and truly justified (or would be if one could accept its ascription) by one of the poems in the name of Isabella, countess of Argyll. For *Éistibh, a lucht an tighe-se* ('Listen, people of this house': *B* 251; Q LXII) is an encomium on the sexual powers of the speaker's chaplain, who is compared to the legendary Fergus Mac Roich in this respect. One should set this beside a rumbustious *tour de force*, attributed to Duncan Campbell, entitled *Bod bríoghmhor atá ag Donnchadh* ('A potent *bod* has Duncan': *B* 37 and 157; Q p. 92 and LX). These last specimens are the product of a view diametrically opposed to the courtly ideal; for here, not only is the Lady deposed from her exalted throne, but she is held to be enslaved to men—because of the sexual gratification only they can give her.

The satirising of lascivious women and voracious priests occurs also in a couple of poems in which the latter are the prime target. Duncan Campbell's *A shagairt na h-éan-phóige* ('Priest with but one kiss': *B* 251; Q LXIII) takes the same line (and also shares the same page in *B*, and the same *aoi freislighe* metre) as *Éistibh, a lucht an tighe-se*, while *Mairg bean nach bí ag aon sagart* ('Woe to the woman whom no priest possesses': *B* 223; Q LXIX) gives a chronicle of sexual dues and tithes that the various ecclesiastical grades are imagined as exacting from their flock.[10] (This poem, also in *aoi freislighe*, is ascribed to the Dean of Lismore's brother and co-adjutor Duncan MacGregor.) A stray quatrain enshrines the same doctrine:

> *Do-chuaidh mise, Roibeart féin,*
> *don mhainistir a-né a-nonn;*
> *agus níor léigeadh mé a-steach,*
> *ó nach raibh mo bhean far riom.* (*B* 58; *M* 78)

I myself, Robert, went across yesterday to the monastery—and was not allowed inside, since my wife was not with me!

Two further poems show Milady cut down to size as firmly, but in a more quizzical, less vengeful way. In *A bhean na dtrí mbó* ('Woman of the three cows': *B* 88; Murphy 1941–2:64 and 150) Earl Gerald addresses a woman who relies on the profit from her cattle to keep him true to her—but 'there is a woman I prefer who has neither white

nor black cows' (*tá bean ab fhearr linn/ gan bhoin fhinn ná dhuibh*: 1cd). Her cattle may perish, and then she must rely on her own charms; but

Is caol cam do chas,
is is glas do cheann,
is cas t'aghaidh ort
mar bhíos boc dhá bheann. (verse 3)

Your leg is skinny and twisted, and your head is grey; your face is wrinkled like a two-horned billy-goat.

Another poem, by Farquhar, son of Patrick Grant, is an explicit reprise of the last. *A bhean 'gá bhfuil crodh* ('Woman with the cattle': *B* 88 and 171; Q LXV and A. Matheson 1945–7:156) concludes:

Gé atá mise óg glas,
tá thusa cas sean:
⟨an⟩ tráth chí mé folt nua
théid mé bhuat, a bhean. (verse 3)

Though I am young and lissom, you are wrinkled and old: when I see a new head of hair I'll be leaving you, woman.

Yet another of Earl Gerald's poems, *Mairg adeir olc ris na mnáibh* ('Woe to him who speaks ill of women': *B* 307; Q LVII) is a Defence of Women—'of the Prayiss of Wemen, and to the Reproche of Vicious Men', as it were[11]:

Mairg adeir olc ris na mnáibh—
beith 'gá n-éagnach ní dáil chruinn;
[a bhfua]radar do ghuth riamh,
dom aithne ní h-iad do thuill. (verse 1)

Woe to him who speaks ill of women—to be reviling them is no sensible course (?); to my knowledge they have not earned the ill-fame they have always received.

The poet goes on to list various bad things done by men, in which women have no part; and then, with a slight change of direction, he turns the tables on the argument of *A bhean na dtrí mbó* and *A bhean 'gá bhfuil crodh*:

Duine aosda, leathan, liath,
ní h-é a mian dul 'na dháil;
gé ⟨ba⟩ m⟨h⟩ór a chonách 's a chíos,
dar an leabhar bhíos im láimh
is annsa leo an barr scoth—
mairg adeir olc ris na mnáibh.

(verses 6 and 7, run together in *B* with loss of a couplet)

They do not wish to tryst with an aged, stout, grey-haired man; however great his wealth and his tribute, by the Book that is ever in my hand they prefer the luxuriant head of hair—woe to him who speaks ill of women!

Finally, in sir Duncan MacDiarmid's *Tuig gura* (?) *feargach an t-éad* (apparently 'Know that jealousy is ferocious': *B* 106; Q LIII) we find a sort of philosophic detachment from the Debate, and an impartial resolution of the question insofar as it concerns the jealousy that is never far behind love. After pointing out that it strikes at all social levels—kings, lords, burgesses and peasantry (verses 4–6)—he shows that the *malmarié* and the *malmariée* are equally common figures with an equal claim on our sympathy or scorn:

An fear dhíobh a bhíos go sean,
agus aige-san bean óg,
ní anfaidh sé uimpe ag éad
nó go gcuirfear é fé fhód.

An bhean tsean is an fear óg,
luighim ar an Ród fám bhráth,
nách anfaidh sí uime ag éad
. . . go ndéan an t-éag dá lá. (verses 7–8)

The man who is up in years, and has a young wife, his jealousy over her will not cease until he is buried beneath the sod.

The old wife with the young husband, I swear on the Rood by my Salvation that her jealousy over him will not cease until death puts (an end) to her days.[12]

Judged by its occurrence in the Gaelic tradition as a whole (*i.e.* in Ireland and Scotland together) this sort of poetry is perhaps best explained as crystallising in Ireland and circulating principally through the medium of the poetic order—in short, rather like the *dánta grádha*, from which it should not be too rigidly demarcated.[13] One is faced again with the difficulty that the Irish sources are all relatively late, but again there may be good reasons why such verse did not usually find room in manuscripts until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Like the *dánta grádha* it presents a synthesis of native and exotic materials and constructs. For example, one stock gambit involves the enumeration of famous elopements from Gaelic saga and romance (*e.g.* MacNiocaill 1963:29–30, poem XII; Feiritéar 1934:110–11, verses 14–16; Cameron 1892–4:1.411 (lines 1–15), 2.341–3; *etc.*). This clearly owes something to the Catalogues of Evil Women mentioned above,[14] but the theme cannot have seemed too alien to the tradition that had produced the *Ban-senchus* ('Woman-lore'—a verse encyclopaedia of the wives of Irish mythological history) and whose classification of Tales had long since extrapolated and formalised the category of Elopements (*aitheda*).[15] At a more obvious level, too, one can find catalogues in which the universally cited classical and biblical examples of false women appear side by side with native ones (*e.g.* in 'The Parson's'

poem, described above; a similar source is implied by verses found in various manuscripts of Irish provenance[16]).

The forms most frequently assumed in the Early Modern tradition *exclusive* of *B* are as follows:

(1) Inversions or parodies of the courtly love poses (compare Utley 1944:45): *Dánta Grádha* itself includes examples of a type in which the 'lover' proclaims that he is *not* suffering from the usual symptoms of Love (O'Rahilly 1926:10–11, poem 8, *etc.*). Similarly one finds poems in which the Lady is 'taken down a peg': her hair may be yellow, but not as yellow as the ragwort, and so on. (Compare O'Rahilly 1926:134–6, poem 101; MacKechnie and McGlynn 1933:74; A. MacDonald and A. MacDonald 1911:339.)

(2) Single quatrains (or numbers of such quatrains loosely strung together) containing dry, aphoristic comments on the nature of women: many of these are collected in O'Rahilly's *Dánfhocail* ('Irish Epigrams in Verse'); they belong to the period 1400–1700 (O'Rahilly 1921:59) and they include such familiar items[17] as:

Dá madh dubh an fhairge,
dá madh cailc na cruadh-chairge,
dá madh pinn eiteach na n-éan,
dá madh meamram an t-aiéar,

'S tugtar peann i láimh gach fir
do shíol Éabha agus Ádhaimh—
d'fhágadaois uile dá n-éis
dá dtrian uilc ban gan fhaisnéis.

(O'Rahilly 1921:17, no. 84; and elsewhere)

If the ocean were ink, if the hard rocks were chalk, if birds' feathers were pens, if the sky were parchment,

And a pen put in the hand of each man of the posterity of Adam and Eve—they would still leave behind them two thirds of women's evil untold.

(3) Overlapping with the last category are more or less coherent poems, sometimes bearing general titles like *Laoidh na mban* ('The Lay of the Women'—see Feiritéar 1934:70) or *Diomoladh nam ban* ('Dispraise of Women'—see A. MacDonald and A. MacDonald 1911:393). The subject-matter includes such familiar themes as 'Be slow to marry', 'The vices of women', 'The old man's lament', and so on.

Now *B*'s contributions to the 'Argument about Women' contain enough instances of identity with the rest to rule out the possibility of their being wholly independent creations. Not only are the themes similar, but some of the poems in the name of Duncan Campbell and of those ascribed to Earl Gerald share phrases, lines and figures with the later tradition of misogynist verse.[18] At the same time the poems in *B* exhibit a number of points, both general and specific, for which I can find no parallel in the

rest of the Gaelic tradition. Sometimes these points find ready and obvious parallels in Middle English (including Middle Scots) sources, and one might be forgiven for wondering whether the poets of *B* were influenced by the latter; for in the case of some of these men it is possible to demonstrate on different grounds a first-hand awareness (at the least) of some aspects of Scots and English literature. (This side of *B* requires fuller investigation than can be attempted here.) Even so, to assert that a poem like (say) *Mairg bean nach bí ag aon sagart*—above, p. 42—was never paralleled in Irish sources is to invoke the *argumentum ex silentio* in a context where, in addition to the usual perils to manuscripts, one has to reckon with the possibility of conscious suppression on grounds of moral or religious affront, at any time from the date of composition to the present century. Not only this, but the whole genre is so thoroughly diffused—*cf.* above, p. 39—that even quite close correspondences may be non-significant for the tracing of its history. One's conclusion for the present must therefore be that certain elements in these poems *may* argue direct contact with non-Gaelic literatures (or perhaps experimentation beyond the given limits of existing Gaelic literature), but that it might also be taken to suggest a little-publicised activity of some branch of the native *literati*.[19]

These two main divisions absorb most of the poems I have essayed to describe; a few remain which have some affinity with the rest, but do not really belong either with the *dánta grádha* or with the 'Argument about Women' poems.

In *Mór tubaist na táiplisge* ('Great was the upset of the tables': *B* 57, D. Greene 1955:8) the poet pretends to describe a game of backgammon played against a young lady, but also contrives a sustained *double entendre* out of terms common to gambling and love-making. This very distinctive gambit occurs in a couple of Irish sources later than *B*,[20] and also, in a striking parallel, in a twelfth-century troubadour lyric. The editor suggests that the 'literary *jeux d'esprit*' were imported along with the playing of the game itself. Now this presumably implies the same Norman–Irish context as has been assumed for the introduction of the better known love themes; it is worth noting that *Mór tubaist na táiplisge* contains a specific link with the *dánta grádha* in its scholarly clue to the girl's name (verse 14; *cf.* p. 37 above; and see D. Greene 1955:9 (notes to 14cd) for explication of the *ogham*). At a more general level, too, Ó Tuama's researches on the *amhrán* tradition have shown that the latter owes several well-developed codes of erotic ambiguity to its continental sources.[21] Clearly, what has survived merely hints at the diversity that must have perished in this area.

The two poems ascribed to 'Macintyre the Bard', *Créad í an long-sa ar Loch Inse* ('What ship is this on Loch Inch?': *B* 70; *W* xxix) and **Tánaig long ar Loch Raithneach* ('A ship has come on Loch Rannoch': *B* 266; *W* xxx), are apparently vision-poems, in each of which the poet sees a 'Ship of Evil Women' (*long na ndroch-bhan*: *W* xxx 7a) afloat, manned by specimens of female wantonness, pride, inconstancy, quarrelsomeness and so on. There are grounds for thinking that they can be quite closely defined as to date of composition, inasmuch as such 'ship-poems' had a vogue, especially in France (Pompen 1925:296), at the very beginning of the sixteenth century, through translations

and imitations of Sebastian Brant's *Das Narren Schyff*.[22] Although Macintyre's poems cannot be exactly paralleled, and in some ways seem specific in reference and original in inspiration, it is likely that some representative of this literature contributed towards the Gaelic ones (so Quiggin 1913:40). The difference between these poems and the 'Argument about Women' ones is one of seriousness: for these are directed against a monstrous regiment of *evil* women, rather than against women in general. At one point it is said: 'a good woman would not venture into the Ship' (*bean mhaith ní lamhadh 'san luing*: *W* XXIX 11a); in poems like those of Duncan Campbell there is no such thing as a good woman, and therefore no moral indignation.

Equally serious, and equally distinct from the 'Argument about Women', is Grey Donald MacGregor's poem *Tá triúr cailín as searbh glór* ('There are three maids of sour repute': *B* 199; Q LV), which is a satire in the strict, 'Celtic' sense of the word. The accusations discussed above also make their appearance here—indeed, they appear repeatedly, for in the world of the Gaelic satirist words are twice as powerful as sticks and stones; but here they are directed at named individuals, and the satirist's stated aim is to expel his victims. Thus he begins, 'Whereas it is necessary to put them away . . .' (*Ós éigin a gcur ar folbh*: 3a; *cf.* 15a).

The poem *Fuath liom bheith anmoch* (?) *ag triall* ('I hate to be late journeying': *B* 68; *W* XXXIV) offers a different sort of contrast, and gives—albeit incidentally—yet another character to women (see 1b, 2a, 4c, 5c, 6ab). In the very ancient Gaelic tradition of wisdom-literature the advice to the young prince usually includes warnings to steer clear of women, they being regarded as in all ways inimical to the well-ordered (*i.e.* the male-ordered) state. (Meyer 1909:29–35; 1906:12 (§91), 16 (§125), 32 (§238), *etc.*; compare also, from the sagas, Strachan and O'Keeffe 1912:122, lines 3646–8; Thurneysen 1951:3 (§3, lines 10–11); and the 'first jealousy' of the legendary history of Ireland: Macalister 1940:62–73 (*cf.* Ó Cuív 1975–6:9–11).) By contrast, the Gaelic poems in the 'Argument about Women'—which may be defiant, resigned, embattled, plaintive, waspish or vitriolic about women—never quite match the unselfconscious dismissiveness of the gnomic tradition. The difference between them, I suppose, is the courtly love movement of the twelfth century, which clearly gave direction and added point to the satirising of women.[23] According to this criterion a poem like *Fuath liom bheith anmoch ag triall* should rank as *pre*-courtly (rather than *anti*-courtly) even though it itself was composed long after the twelfth century.

Last of all one should note that short epigrams to women or on women occur here and there throughout *B*; they are mostly scurrilous sallies at the expense of local worthies of the Dean of Lismore's day, their wives and daughters. Opaque allusions to contemporary, unrecorded events of purely local notoriety do not prevent them from contributing something towards our conception of the historical and social circumstances which lie behind *B* as a whole.

This body of verse has some interest for Celtic scholars in that it extends the range of verse composition known from the Early Modern period. At the same time it provides

more material, and more directly comparable material than has been available hitherto, to set against Scots literature south of the Highland Line (see MacQueen 1970:lxviii). As for Scottish Gaelic studies these poems are important in several ways, not all of which have even been touched on here. For example, there is a linguistic interest, inasmuch as they appear to have been *composed* (and not merely written down) in several varieties of Gaelic, including unexceptionable Early Modern Irish in some, unexceptionable modern Scottish Gaelic in others, and various 'intermediate' grades in the rest. Again, they sometimes refer to other literary forms in a way that helps us gauge the state of the Gaelic tradition at that time, as when they refer to ancient tales still remembered or to late romantic tales already current. Finally, they tell us a lot, both directly and indirectly, about those who were associated with the compilation of the Book of the Dean itself.

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NOTES

1 *i.e.* National Library of Scotland Gaelic Manuscript Adv. XXXVII (N.L.S. 72. 1. 37), hereafter referred to simply as *B*. For other abbreviations see the next note.

2 In view of the need to cite numerous passages from *B*, and the peculiar problems that surround *B*'s text, I have adopted the following procedure: each textual reference (unless immediately preceded by a reference to another part of the same poem) consists of (1) a page-reference to *B* itself, and (2) a reference to the most recent edition, failing which the most recent printing of *B*'s text. For this purpose *M* = McLauchlan and Skene 1862 (cited by page of the Gaelic section), *C* = Cameron 1892–4 (cited by page of vol. I), Q = Quiggin 1937 (cited by poem number) and *W* = Watson 1937 (cited by poem number). I have given all quotations in conventional spelling, since more or less accurate versions of *B*'s quasi-phonetic text are available in these printed sources, whereas early attempts to interpret that text were decidedly less successful (at least down to Watson's and Quiggin's day). As to consistency, I have allowed more 'Scotticisms' to stand in some poems than in others—a reflection of my present convictions (expressed later in) about the composition of the non-official poems in *B*. I have taken all readings from *B*, but readily own my debt to previous transcribers, not least because *B* has deteriorated somewhat during the century and a half since the first transcripts were made. There are, I must confess, many points at which I am doubtful of my interpretation. Translations likewise are my own responsibility, though I have availed myself of existing versions wherever possible. Although discussion of textual matters has had to be excluded, note that [...] indicates something supplied by me, not in *B* or not visible in *B*; ⟨...⟩ indicates something in *B*, to be omitted; while an asterisk indicates a textual emendation to *B*. This unceremonious treatment I regard as being *pro tempore*: I hope to redress the balance for at least some of these poems in the future.

3 Examples may be found in Carmichael 1928:2. 56, 58; 1941:156, 158. Love had, of course, been regarded as a sickness with preternatural associations since the Old Irish period at least.

4 As Professor Thomson has pointed out (1974:52) the poet is playing on two meanings of *dán*—'poem' and 'fate'; I am conscious of such ambiguity in some of the other poems too, but have usually ignored it where formal explanation would be needed to bring it out in the passages quoted.

5 For the traitorous bird compare perhaps R. Greene 1974:xiv–xv, and also (or perhaps alternatively) the gibe aimed at the Raven in *The Houlate*, lines 812–14: 'Thow ischit out of Noyis ark, and to the erd wan,/ Tareit as tratour and brocht na tadingis.' (Bannatyne 1896:4. 892).

6 The *ogham* anagram itself is enough to link at least John MacVurich's poem with the scholastic Irish tradition; see p. 46 for another example of this practice from *B*.

7 My reasons for assuming that they came from Ireland to Scotland (rather than the reverse) are: (i) The evidence for the continental love-themes in general seems to concentrate more in the south of Ireland, less in northern Ireland and Scotland (Ó Tuama 1960:262, n. 59). (ii) Insofar as their introduction is to be associated with the Normans, several Norman families had much to do with Gaelic literature in Ireland (especially, again, in the southern half), whereas they were never more than peripheral to Gaelic culture in the Highlands. (iii) Insofar as their dissemination has been correctly linked with the poetic order, innovations from the periphery of the bardic world seem unlikely. (iv) The fifteenth-century Book of Fermoy contains a series of thirty poems ascribed to Gearóid Iarla ('Earl Gerald', *i.e.* the historical Gerald fitzMaurice, 3rd Earl of Desmond (1338–98), on whom see MacNiocaill 1963:8–11). Amongst various possible echoes of continental modes these include a 'messenger-poem' (MacNiocaill 1963:44–5, no. xxv) which may count as providing at least one wholly Irish example of a *dán grádha* from the fourteenth century. (For the series of nine Earl Gerald poems in *B* see below, note 18.)

8 '... we are forced to rely on two simple tests for a satire or a defense: that the subject matter be women primarily, and that the intent and attitude be exaggerated or controversial.'

9 See note 18 for the significance of these Earl Gerald poems.

10 Comparable in general is the passage beginning 'Another abbei is therbi' in the 'Land of Cokaygne' (Furnivall 1858:156–61); much closer to home one might compare the latter part, especially verses 45–51, of the Scots text known as 'Duncan Laideus' Testament', apparently composed at or near Taymouth soon after 1551 (Innes 1855:166–8, *cf.* xi–xv).

11 George Bannatyne's formulation; this poem belongs with such examples as 'To onpreyse wemen yt were a shame' (Robbins 1952:31, quoted by Ó Tuama 1960:167), Dunbar's 'In prais of wemen' (MacKenzie 1932:83) and many others: see Utley 1944:50.

12 But note that even sir Duncan believes women are specially burdened by Nature; for in his next verse he adds: 'Women have another practice ... (namely) that they are no less prone to jealousy when they (themselves) have strayed.' (*Ábhais eile thá ag na mnáibh,/ .../ nách lughaide a-dhéanad éad/ gé do-rinnead béad ...*: verse 9.)

13 Points of comparison include the following: (i) These poems tend to occur in the same manuscripts as the *dánta grádha*; indeed, some of them are included in *Dánta Grádha* (as will be clear from citations in the text above). (ii) 'Gentlemen amateurs' may be connected with this sort of verse too: *e.g.* the seventeenth-century Kerry figure Peirce Ferriter (Feiritéar 1934:69–70; Flower 1944:84–91) in Ireland, John Carswell (A. Matheson 1953–9:204) and 'The son of the Earl of Lennox' (MacColl 1891–2:429–30) in Scotland, not to mention several of the poets of *B* (including Earl Gerald). (iii) The relationship between these poems and such *amhráin* as *An Seanduine dóighte* and *An Pósadh Brónach* may turn out to be the same as that between the *dánta grádha* and the *amhráin ghrá*.

Note, however, that English and Latin (as opposed to French) analogues seem to be more to the fore with misogynist verse than with the love-songs.

14 P. 39. The enumerating of famous women doubtless goes back to Ovid's *Heroides* (who were, however, more sinned against than sinning); the enumerating of *evil* women goes back, in the first instance, to Boccaccio's *In Mulieres*: *cf.* Utley 1944:44, 192–3.

15 For the *Ban-senchus* see Dobbs 1930:282–339, who distinguishes a nucleus of names completed by the late eleventh century, with twelfth-century redactors adding in more recent names in some versions. For the Tale-lists see Thurneysen 1921:21–4, who shows that the existing lists presuppose an earlier compilation dating from no later than the tenth century. The earliest 'Catalogue of Elopements' known to me occurs in the twelfth-century Fenian poem *Cotail becán becán bec* (Murphy 1956:160), verses 4–7, sung by Gráinne over the sleeping Diarmaid. It is clear that this topic would bear further investigation: *cf.* Murphy 1953:xlvii, n. 3 and lxxxiv, n. 4.

16 *E.g.* the common *Do mealladh* (or *cailleadh*) *Ádhamh le mnaoi*; *cf.* the equally common *Do cailleadh* (or *Ó mealladh*) *le mnaoi Dáith rí 7 Solomon glic* in stressed metre.

17 Compare the 'Chaucerian' pieces beginning 'Thocht all the wod vnder the hevin that growis' and 'Gif all the erth war perchmene scribable' amongst the *Schort Epegrammis aganis Women* (Bannatyne 1896:4. 754–5), and many others cited by Linn 1938:962–5.

18 See note 7 (iv) above for the historical Earl Gerald. Given that the poems described above (and such others in *B* as resemble them) form a unity, Gerald's presence amongst a group of poets who hail from Argyll or Perthshire in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century raises complex questions which cannot be dealt with here. The main possibilities are that a given ascription to Gerald in *B* is either (i) correct, (ii) a 'courtesy' ascription (like those to Chaucer in contemporary Scots sources), or (iii) to be understood as '*à la* Gerald'; but in any case the facts require an explanation that links *B* with Ireland.

As to the verse itself, note the following correspondences: (i) *Mairg do léimeas thar a each*, verse 7, is very close to MacColl 1891–2:429, verse 4. (ii) *Mairg ó ndeachaidh a léim lúith*, verse 10, draws on the same topos (that a woman will *believe* white black if her lover says so, but will *call* white black to vex her husband) as O'Rahilly 1921:16, no. 77, *etc.* (iii) A reminiscence of at least the title of *Sgéal beag agam ar na mnáibh* seems to appear in *(A)tá sgéal agam ar na mnáibh*, found in several Irish manuscripts. In subject-matter the *B* poem is closer to another poem, *Mairg do-ní cumann le mnáibh* (O'Rahilly 1926:108–11); one might also suspect a distant connection with the much more slapstick 'A lytyll tale I will you tell' in R. Greene 1935:273. (iv) An echo of *A bhean na dtrí mbó* occurs in *Go réidh, a bhean na dtrí mbó* (Ó Canainn 1939:176), of which the first two verses and the last correspond roughly to our poem. (v) An anonymous version of *Mairg adeir olc ris na mnáibh* occurs in two late Irish manuscripts (O'Rahilly 1926:4; *cf.* 1935:47); it is shorter than *B*'s version, but agrees quite closely in the verses that are common to both.

19 *Cf.* Knott 1960:38, n. 1, who says that the poets who composed the *dánta grádha* 'could be ... extremely indecorous, in quite a stately style.' Note also such scholars' *jeux* as *Beith Onn Duir do-bhérainn duit*, *Muin an briathar ré mbiodhgaim*, or *Truagh liom do bhás, a bhoill*, found in the class of manuscripts to which we owe the preservation of many of the *dánta grádha*.

20 D. Greene, *loc. cit.*; to these may be added Ó Máille 1916:135, no. 23, lines 4–6 (with variants).

21 See especially Ó Tuama 1960:144–6; these include an association of 'tables' with love, though not the sustained and elaborate word-play. For a Scottish example *cf.* R. MacDonald 1776:292, verse 6.

22 Women received their own special treatment in the *Stultiferae Naves* of Jodocus Badius Ascensius, published in 1501 (Renouard 1908:158); the 'Ship of Fools' itself was available in English, in Barclay's translation, from 1509 (Pompen 1925:18).

23 Recent scholarship has undermined the idea of courtly love as something new and unique that sprang into being in Provence around 1100; while a parallel argument emphasises the 'timeless and universal' (Utley 1944:5) occurrence of satire on women. This does not mean that no new ingredients were added in the twelfth century, with results for the tenor and constitution of both these sorts of verse: *cf.* Dronke 1968:46. But in any case, our concern is with Ireland, upon whose comparatively sheltered, even ingrown literature the continental modes made unmistakable impressions at various levels during the centuries following the twelfth.

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