THE BOOK OF THE O’CONOR DON

Essays on an Irish Manuscript

edited by

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2010
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THE TEXTUAL QUALITY OF THE BOOK OF THE O’CONOR DON

Gordon Ó Ráin

The textual quality of the verse copies transmitted in BOCD has been the subject of adverse criticism by some modern editors. This unfavourable view was formulated by one of the most eminent, Eleanor Knott, as follows:

The hand [of Aodh Ó Dochartaigh], though extremely neat and pleasing, is not a scholarly one, that is, it does not suggest that the writer had been educated in the tradition of the native schools. The text is often faulty, and in fact the principal value of this MS. is that it contains unique copies of a great many interesting pieces.¹

While Knott’s remarks on the textual quality of BOCD are valid to a certain extent from the point of view of an editor attempting to restore a poet’s original composition (Urtext), the purpose of the present study is to assess the textual quality of BOCD in the context of late medieval and early modern manuscript transmission. This enquiry will take the form of a micro-study of selected works by the fifteenth-century poet Tadhg Óg Ó Huiginn (ob. 1448) amounting to over 1,200 lines of verse as transmitted in BOCD.² Tadhg Óg is one of the best represented poets of the Classical Irish period and can be reliably identified as author of upwards of fifty pieces treating of both secular and religious topics.³ His earlier than and contemporaneously with considerable corpus of poetry is well preserved in manuscripts written both in BOCD, and therefore provides a sound basis for assessing the scribal work of Aodh Ó Dochartaigh as compared to that of his predecessors and coevals. Furthermore, the metrical strictures of Ó ddirceach allow for scribal errors and modifications to be readily detected.

The most significant manuscript collection of Tadhg Óg’s poetry is a duanaire written in 1473 by Seanchán Ó Maol Chonaire within a generation of the poet’s death which is now bound with the Yellow Book of Lecan. This manuscript consists mainly of Tadhg Óg’s work but also contains poems by two other members of the same poetic family, namely Cormac Ruadh and Tuathal Ó Huiginn.⁴ Another notable source is the National Library of Scotland manuscript Adv. 72.1.29 penned mainly by Éoghan Carrach Ó Siaghalj (fl. 1530–45), the sole contents of which are a collection of ten religious poems by Tadhg Óg.⁵ Copies of his work are also found in a number of verse miscellanies, among which number such major collections as the Nugent and Timnacill duanaireadh, RIA A iv 3 and RIA 23 F 16, often called the O’Gara manuscript (G, T, A and F below). A brief account of the pertinent details concerning the manuscript copies of the poems referred to in the course of this study, including a list of sigla employed below, will be useful at this point.⁶

A RIA 743 (A iv 3); scribe unknown; 17th century
B BR 20978–9; scribe unknown; 1616–18
C The Book of the O’Conor Don; Aodh Ó Dochartaigh; 1631
D RIA 1 (23 D 14); Muircheartach; 17th century
F RIA 2 (23 F 16); Fearghal Dubh Ó Gadhra; 1655–9
G NLI G 992; scribe unknown; c. 1577
H RIA 6 (23 I 40); scribe unknown; c. 1700 (?)
K NLS Adv. 72.1.49; scribe unknown; 1618–47
Q NLS Adv. 72.2.14; scribe unknown; c. 1582
T TCD 1340 (H.3.19); scribe unknown; 17th century
Y TCD 1318 (H.2.16); Seanchán Ó Maol Chonaire; 1473

The question of the relationship of the above manuscripts may be disposed of in brief. (1) Brian Ó Cúiv suggested a close relationship between BOCD and B some years ago.⁷ The matter receives further study by Professor Pádraig A. Breathnach elsewhere in this volume, but

¹For a brief account of this duanaire see Ó Cuí, Irish bardic duanaire, 19–20. See also Abbott and Gwynn, Catalogue, 343.
²For notice of this manuscript see Quiggin, ‘Prolegomena’, 123; for the scribe see Ó Cuí, Catalogue I, 89. Black, ‘Gaelic manuscripts’, 155, dates this manuscript to c. 1540.
³B is catalogued by Ó Cuí, ‘Seventeenth-century manuscript’; for the name of the scribe of D see Ó Coimín, ‘Poem to Toirdhealbhach Luinneach’, 52 n. 7; for an account of G see Ó Cuí, Irish bardic duanaire, 11–14, 23–4; for the dates of K and Q see Black, ‘Gaelic manuscripts’, 155; for a detailed discussion of T see O’Sullivan, ‘Timnacill duanaire’ (O’Sullivan (p. 214) considered the manuscript to have been written in the early seventeenth century; however Gwynn (Catalogue, 362) suggested it may belong to the sixteenth century). The particulars of the other manuscripts will be found in the relevant library catalogues. See also comments on A and F in Ó Macháin, ‘Bardic poetry in the Academy’s collection’, 58–65.
⁴Ó Cuí, ‘Seventeenth-century manuscript’, 175.
it may be pointed out here that in the line 'n-a iondhaidh rod aileasdar
(‘He fondled thee on His own couch’) BOCD, in broad agreement with
Y and Q, reads rod oileasdar (recte –or Y) while B reads do oileasstar,
omitting the infixed pronoun; therefore the latter cannot have served as
the exemplar of BOCD at this point.8 (2) D derives from G.9 (3) The
other manuscripts cannot be said to be copies of each other, although
some show a certain degree of correspondence at several points.10

Several issues bearing on the textual quality of BOCD will be exam­
ined in what follows namely: (1) unmetrical variant forms; (2) hypo- and
hypermetric lines; (3) other selected errors; (4) sound variants and super­
ior readings; and (5) constitution of text. The examples given below are
intended to be illustrative. All but one of the poems analysed here, and
listed at the end of this paper, were edited by Lambert McKenna who was
‘sparing’ when citing manuscript readings. 

The present study is based
on my own collation of all manuscript copies of the texts. In the exam­
ples, text is cited from the printed edition along with any manuscript
reading(s) relevant to the discussion. Manuscript readings are not given,
however, where they accord with the printed edition nor are variants
without a bearing on the discussion reproduced.

1. Unmetrical variant forms

A well-known feature of Classical Early Modern Irish is that the lan­
guage permits of a relatively high number of variant forms. One or other
of these permitted variants may be employed indiscriminately by a poet
where required by rhyme. It is not uncommon, however, for the scribe
of BOCD to write one form where a different variant of the same word
is necessary for rhyme. This is exemplified in the following examples of
vocalic variation in the noun anoir

(iii) VIII.20cd

gémadh mór anoir fhallsa onoir C
sódh an anshóigh oromsa

(ii) VII.31cd

biaidh uair ar fhír an chondáigh
’s bheadh onoir libh uaith d’fhoghlóil anair C

The forms síodh/ síoth (IGT II.38) and geamhradh / geimhreadh (IGT
II.11) showing permitted consonantal variation may also be advanced
here.

(iii) V.24cd

nó go mbé séala ar ar síodh
síoth C (: síoth Y)
mé do shéana do shoighnomh

(iv) V.5cd

nó an guasacht don té do thogh
é ná glúasacht sa gheamhradh gheimhreadh C

Writing the incorrect variant form is of course not unique to BOCD as
may be seen in the following examples involving the variants rut / riot
(RST 194.14), taghaidh / taghaidh (IGT III.80), and labhradh / labhra
(IGT II.106, 3):

(v) I.10 cd

do leigeadh sé a rún rut-sa riotsa C : rit(t)sa YQ
a ghlúan do b’e th’adhart-sa

(vi) IX.27ab

Sé tar chách do thagh Torna (h)ogh CFK
an Damh Ré ó rath Eamhna

(vii) II.5cd

do bhí adhbbhar far fhuaith libh
labhradh na gcuach do chluinsin labra C : labhra F

Where more than two variant forms exist, a fuller complement of var­

iants may be reflected in the manuscript record (see IGT II.69, 70; IGT
III.69):

(viii) IX.12cd

mór do fhian uaibh ón eachtra –
le car sneachta a dtuaidh tiofa cur C : cor K
instances where

of

is surely worth noting that in the copies of the poems examined here there are merely two

2; compare also the pertinent remarks on the transmission of

prosodic tracts' and note the important comments on the latter by McManus, review, 181-

Note that Q reads 'Iuaighfidhthi' in place of

It has been observed that no copy of a Classical Irish poem (including autographs)

has been transmitted in the manuscript record without some deviation from the standard

orthography obtained and it may therefore be legitimate to ask whether

reading

The inaccuracies examined under this heading may be considered

somewhat innocuous in nature and such isolated errors are hardly

affect the sense of the texts in any way. Furthermore, such inaccuracies

are familiar from all copies of verse including those held to be more

scholarly than BOCD. The textual traditions evidenced in

Y and Q have been conflated in BOCD, however, yielding the unmetrical reading

leis : bhaithis.

The readings of both Y and Q are sound since both provide perfect rhyme

(leis : bhaithis Y; leis : bhaithais Q). The textual traditions in Y and Q have been conflated in BOCD, however, yielding the unmetrical reading

leis : bhaithais.\textsuperscript{12}

The inaccuracies examined under this heading may be considered somewhat innocuous in nature and such isolated errors are hardly indicative of a high degree of scribal incompetence. While they may throw into question the scribe's knowledge of metrics, they do not affect the sense of the texts in any way. Furthermore, such inaccuracies are familiar from all copies of verse including those held to be more scholarly than BOCD. Whereas this phenomenon is less frequent in Y than in BOCD for example, it is nevertheless worth recalling that throughout the manuscript tradition no standardized system of orthography obtained and it may therefore be legitimate to ask whether writing one or other of the variant forms

leis or lais

was a great deal different for an untrained scribe from writing -i or -e in a form such as

treise.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12}Note that Q reads ‘luaignshithi’ in place of leanfaidhe.

\textsuperscript{13}It has been observed that no copy of a Classical Irish poem (including autographs)

has been transmitted in the manuscript record without some deviation from the standard

do fhuil) as prescribed in the grammatical and metrical tracts, see O Machdán, ‘Irish

prosodic tracts’ and note the important comments on the latter by McMaus, review, 181–

2; compare also the pertinent remarks on the transmission of Old English verse in Muir, ‘Issues for editors’, 198–200. Needless to say, no copy of any text is free from error and it

is surely worth noting that in the copies of the poems examined here there are merely two

instances where all copies give an unmetrical reading. These are Poem IY.12c (do fhuing (do hufa)laing MSS): bhfuilighch and Poem V.4c (bhfoil (ib)full MSS): goinik).

Almost forty hypometric and hypermetric lines occur in BOCD in the corpus examined for this study. While this represents but a tiny fraction of the lines transmitted therein, it amounts to a higher proportion than that found in the other manuscripts.

A number of examples in this category relate to permitted variant forms which are nevertheless unmetrical in the context in which they occur. Such instances are of course comparable with those advanced in the foregoing section. The first examples to be observed involve the variant past tense forms fuair and do-nuair (IGT IV.152: 22); substitution of the former for the latter leaves the text of BOCD a syllable short in several places:

(i) VIII.26c

\textit{an tslat fhúinmne do fhúair mé}

\textit{an tslat fháine fuair me C} \textsuperscript{[7]}

(cf. \textit{an tslat fháine do bhuairme F})

\textit{Cf. also Mairg do fhúair mar fhúair mise} (: Mairg fúair mur fúair mise C \textsuperscript{[7]}; nach nacht mar do uair oighildh (: nach recht mar tháir oighildh C \textsuperscript{[7]}) (VIII.16c, 28c)

The next instances involve the forms taken by the preposition \textit{i} when combined with the relative particle (\textit{i, 'na or ina}) or the third singular possessive adjective ('na / ina). Substitution of one form for another disrupts the syllable count as below:

(ii) II.7b

\textit{don bhaille a bhfaca Fearchal}

\textit{don bhaille na bhfaca fergal C} \textsuperscript{[7]}

\textit{Cf. also nach bia ar dír i n-a teannáil (: nac bia ar tür na teanáil C} \textsuperscript{[7]} (VI.12b)

Substitution of the alternative genitive singular form \textit{gach} for \textit{gach}

makes the following line hypermetrical:

\textsuperscript{4}Here and elsewhere the obelisk has been employed to indicate that the line cited is

syllabically irregular. The number following the obelisk indicates the syllable count of the

line.

\textsuperscript{14}Compare the reading of F which also scans: ‘nach recht mar fúair oighildh'.

However, the readings of Y and C suggest that F's reading is secondary.

\textsuperscript{15}Compare the reading of F which also scans: ‘nach recht mar fúair oighildh'.
The following example entails a further substitution, but differs from those above in that the compound preposition *tar eis* is replaced by its monosyllabic synonym *d'eis* creating a hypometric line. (Note that the metre is *rionnard* which requires hexasyllabic lines.)

(iv) III.2b

*uainn tar eis a chéile*

*uainn d'eis a chéile C [† 5]*

A small number of the hypo- and hypermetric lines are attributable to palaeographical error. One such error must owe its origins to the misreading of the minims in -in as -m which led to a subsequent change of preposition:

(v) V.35a

*Tugais maidein do Mhuigh Luirg*  
*Tugais maideam amoigh luirg C [† 6]*

A further example may have arisen through misreading a length mark as an n-stroke, although it may be otherwise explicable as clarifying, or simplifying, the possibly unfamiliar phrase *anaidh ag* 'desists from':

(vi) III.20b

*ní hanta 'gá ionráidh*  
*ní hanta gan a hioirmaidh C [† 7]*

Instances involving forms of *agus* (is, 's) may be included here as misexpansions of the *et*-compendium. It is also possible, however, that they represent substitution of one variant for another.

(vii) VIII.4c

*do loisg sin m'fhéoil agus m'fhual*  
*do loisce sin mfhéoil is mfhul C [† 6] (agus YF)*

A more complex case presents itself in an elegy on Tadhg Ó Conchobhair who died in 1403 or 1404. McKenna printed the text of BOCD failing to notice this was hypermetric. He did however register the absence of *ní* from Y in the critical apparatus, but neglected to indicate that in this F agrees with Y:

(viii) VIII.8b

*ní sgéal orum a éagcaoinne* [† 8]  
*sgéal orum aegaeine Y : sgéil orum a eaccaoine F*

The crux may be resolved in one of two ways: the text of BOCD may be emended to *orm* as suggested by R. A. Breatnach, or the reading of Y and F may be adopted. The reading of BOCD may have arisen through the influence of *q. 7b* in the same poem (*ní loigh m'intinn ar dóbhacht*) which begins with *ní* and may have been written immediately above the present line in the scribe's exemplar. The reading of Y and F seems less easy to explain if BOCD preserves the original text. Nonetheless it is just possible that *ní* was omitted through haplography arising from the similar -ne of *daoine* at the end of the previous line, which would have preceded the negative particle *nì* in the exemplar, and that all copies of the text independently substituted disyllabic *orum* for *orm*. At this point, we may cite the quatrain in full in order to assess these arguments:

*Easbhaidh ehruidh na dlotha daoine*  
*ní sgéal orum a éagcaoine;*  
*a Dhe, is eumhang an ehumha gan mé d'fhualang m'eoasbhadha.*

This was somewhat questionably translated by McKenna as follows: 'Love [sic] of wealth, loss of friends —'twere natural I should weep for their loss; but, O God, I can not bear this loss, it oppresses me.' The idea as transmitted in BOCD is that the poet's grief is no reproach to him. An alternative interpretation based on Y and F may be tentatively offered here. The sense may be that the poet's grief is so overwhelming that he laments only Tadhg Ó Conchobhair without regard for other losses

16Although McKenna prints *Mhuigh*, both manuscripts read the permitted variant in *-oigh*. This form should have been retained by the editor.

17Note that no extant copy of the poem marks the vowel of *gu* as long. B agrees with C in reading 'bihionráidh'.

18See Breatnach, review, 155.
he has suffered thus earning reproach. Elucidation of the text seems far from straightforward however.

A final example amenable to palaeographical explanation occurs in a quatrain which is found only in BOCd and may be included here to illustrate the potential difficulties facing an editor of a unique copy in this manuscript.

(ix) V.39a

Lá dhó a laoighis na lann ecocra C [† 8] q. om. Y

This hypermetric line occurs in an anaphoric series of seven lines detailing the patron’s caithréim, each of which begins with the word lá. The initial phrase in two of these lines is lá dhó and one of these immediately follows the hypermetric line in question. This line may then be plausibly explained as due to the scribe’s eye momentarily wandering to an adjacent line; we should therefore omit dhó to restore the syllable count, reading Lá i Laoighis na lann ecocra, as suggested by McKenna in the corrigenda to his edition.19

A further hypermetric line shows confusion of the negative conjunction ná with the comparative in.20

(x) VI.43ab

Tadhg Ó Cellaígh ní go gcead

do rachadh d’éag ná Uilleag do rachadh dég ina uilleag

C [† 8]; q. om. FA

Another instance of a line containing a superfluous syllable occurs in the same poem and may owe its origin to confusion of the synonyms clo dh and cloidhe ‘ditch’; however this might alternatively be explained as owing to the identical pronunciation of both words by the scribe.21

(xi) VI.8b

d’fhéagach an chluaidh choigcríche
dféach an chloidhe choicríche C [† 8]; q. om. A

Scribal omission also has a part to play in affecting syllable count. Several instances involve short words which may have been inadvertently omitted by the scribe.22

19Aithd. D II, 362. The recent suggestion cited in Ó Machín, ‘Hand of Conall Ó Mórdha’, 72, to read a non-Classical form Lois in this line is rendered unnecessary in light of the palaeographical argument advanced above.

20For this confusion see DIL N 4.22–37.

21Compare Duin. Finn III, 129 n.

22Compare West, Textual criticism, 24.

(xii) IX.24b

ar a mnáibh suirghe seolaidh

ar mnáibh suirghe seolaidh C [† 6]

Cf. also do bhídhodh a Niall ‘n-a naoidhein (: do bhíodh niall na nainídhinn C [† 6]); ar n-aír is eadh as amhlais (: ar náir aseadh amhlais C [† 6]) (IX.20c; VII.2b)

Other possible cases of accidental omission also present alternative explanations. Thus in the example below the omission of the past tense marker do in the compound verb do-chuidh might also be explained as an instance of modernization.

(xiii) III.3c

an dream do chuidh chuga

an drem chuidh chuga C [† 5]

The form of the verb indhigh in the next example might be explained either as omission of a suspension stroke or as haplography if both fricatives were spelt as -gh- in the scribe’s exemplar.

(xiv) III.1d

imdhighem go hinill

imgiom go hinnhill [† 5] C (cf. imigiom T)

Other omissions are attributable to elision as would have occurred in speech but was not permissible in poetry.23

(xv) V.10d

dá chara ar ais, a Uilleag
da ccora ar ais uilleag C [† 6]

Cf. also lór a ulbhachtaí iocfaidear (: lór umhila iocfáidear C [† 6]);24 gan duine ar a fluid d’fhaicis (: gan duine ar fluid dhfaicis C [† 6]); is léir ar a fhreas n-íomhna (: as léir ar fhreis iontha C [† 6]); is liom e tair gach

23For the rules governing elision (bithadh) see BST 208.14–209.2 and GGBM 2464–74, 3440–60.

24The reading ‘umhila’ in C (incorrectly transcribed as ‘umhla’ by McKenna) may derive from the form ulmhla (a variant of ulbhachtaí, see IGT IV.10) with transposition of consonants.
Conversely, the scribe sometimes writes a pleonastic a which would be subject to elision in speech but serves to create a hypermetric line. 26

(a) addition of the possessive seems little more than capricious, whereas in the second the absence of a possessive adjective is more unusual and its addition seems motivated by a desire for clarification.

A comparable instance occurs in the poet’s elegy on his brother and received the ‘very summit of honour and kindness’ from his sibling: mentor Fearghal Ruadh where he poignantly remarks that he formerly ddnacht.

In classical genitive form of the grammatical persons employed in this section with an eye to other manuscripts, they nevertheless attest to a deliberate reworking in this section and results from a substitution of a second plural form in place of the metrically appropriate first plural possessive adjective.

While elision could have occurred in the reading of BOCD in the spoken language, the possessive adjective has presumably been inserted there on the analogy of the reading re cois a chomaoine in the second line. (Since a possessive adjective would also be required before the noun aoire in line a the possibility of reading a shortened form of agus and taking the text of BOCD to be original is precluded.) Furthermore, the form roinn ‘share’ in BOCD suggests banalization of the lyrical word rinn ‘summit’.

Questions of style are concerned in a further hypermetric line which occurs in the elegy beginning Fulangidh bhur lean, a Leath Cuinn. 28 In the opening section of this composition the poet apostrophizes the people of the Northern Half. The hypermetric line that will concern us occurs in this section and results from a substitution of a second plural form in place of the metrically appropriate first plural possessive adjective.

25The reading ‘linne é’ might also have originated by ditography. The text of this couplet in DDé reads as follows: is liom é tar gach n-aon-ole i sionn ar duinnacht Dél ag dmachta. However, all manuscripts read liom (: sionn) (cf. is liom tar gach naor ole Q : q. om. 1); no manuscript readings are cited by McKenna nor is any explanation offered for such a gratuitous emendation.

26Further instances of this pleonastic a are found in Duanaire Finn, written by the same scribe, where they do not affect the syllable count; see Duan. Finn Poem XX.3b, 10c, 13a (dia attug, is a mathair, fora a bhréith).

27McKenna printed the text of C and F without noticing the line is hypermetric.

28McKenna printed Coim, the reading of A, in the incipit of this poem. However, the Classical genitive form of Conn is Cuinn (see IGT II.67 and e.g. Poem IX.12ab); the latter is the reading of YCF and should be preferred.

29A further example involving person-switching between first and second plural is found in this poem (16cd), namely: do-chauidh le hénitlce oile / uaidh réiteach na rioghadha (sian C, IGT).
A number of other substitutions detrimental to the metre, and in some cases also to the sense, are less easily explained. The first involves the replacement of a positive construction with a negative one:

(xxi) VI.10

Tabhraidh mar tugadar dháothaigh
freagra umhal d’fhuaill Chathaoir;
i n-aighidh ar léigeadh linn
Laighin is éigean d’aicill. [sic]

a Tabhraidh ó nach tugattur dháothaigh’ C [† 8]
(cf. ‘Tabhraidh mar tugadh dháothaigh’ A [† 6])

The argument advanced is that as the Leinstermen formerly obeyed the Northern Half the latter will now have to obey the Leinstermen after the death of the patron Uilleag Burc. The reading of preposition being unmetrical, is incongruous with this argument.

A further instance from the same poem involves substitution of pare a similar alteration of a positive construction to a negative one in syllable count is not affected:

(xxii) VI.31

Id thóráideachta don tuoibh iar,
a earr meige Meic Uilliam, derr mheirge mic uilliam C [† 6]
oiread shlóigh Connacht red chois (re chois Y)
do-chonnarc d’fhóir an Fhorgais.

A further instance from the same poem involves substitution of ag by na in BOCD:

(xxiii) VI.37

Nír lamhadh leannhaih a creach;
móide a-táthar go toirrseach

McKenna’s translation (‘None dared to follow his creachs; this makes our folk the sadder for now Leath Cuinn is being burned and none (of us) can even check the raiding’) seems correct and appears also to render his emendation in the third line ([ie]l unnecessary.

Another hypermetric line occurs where the scribe writes a suspension stroke over the word ‘fheind’ (‘fheindidh’ or ‘fheindibh’) corresponding to the metrically correct fhéin of the other manuscripts. It may be that the scribe was influenced by the suspension stroke over the final word of this line (‘fhadhaigh’) and wrote it twice in error.

(xxiv) IX.22c

a bhrait ar fhéin an fhidaigh
abrait ar feindich (?) an fhidadhagh C [† 8]

A last example involves the substitution of the simple preposition with the preposition and article and seems capricious, although we may note that the phrase don fhoghail occurs in close proximity in the other manuscripts but not in BOCD:34

(xxv) IX.33d

ní thabhair sé fhuath d’fhoghail
náthabhair sé fadha don fhoghail C [† 8]

The errors enumerated in this section must be considered serious and it may be noted that with one exception ([(xxviii) above]) the readings are unique to BOCD. Nevertheless it is worth bearing in mind that not all of these affect the meaning of the text.

3. Other selected errors

A selection of other errors made in copies of the poems examined from BOCD may be offered here to supplement the foregoing.

30McKenna incorrectly gives the reading of BOCD as ‘fhuaicilli’ (recte dhfaicilli). Compare a similar alteration of a positive construction to a negative one in BOCD where the syllable count is not affected: Truagh mar thargamar a ceith; (Truagh nír thairgiomar achéilt) C (VIII.3a); the latter example may have arisen through a misreading of ies in n. 31McKenna’s translation of the quatrains seems wide of the mark: ‘To Cathaoir give the humble answer they used to give you; we must be watchful of the Laighin, and be thankful for what they leave us’. I translate as follows: ‘Render humble service to the race of Cathaoir as they did to you; in return for (or ‘owing to’) all that was conceded to us (sc. by the Leinstermen), we must be wary of the Leinstermen.’ For freagra in the sense translated see DIL F 407.3–7.

32Compare the correction of na to ag in BOCD adverted to at p. 154 below.
These encompass instances of (a) further palaeographical error, (b) erroneous spelling, (c) non-historical inflection, (d) forms or usages not countenanced by the Grammatical Tracts, and (e) defective readings.

(a) Palaeographical errors include instances of mis-expansion of suspension strokes such as:

(i) VII.3b
\[ bheith\ gan\ bhiu\ bheith\ gan\ eocha\ gach\ C \]

(ii) V.43a
\[ Do\ la\ do\ laochraidh\ Ghaoidheal\ laochraibh\ C \]

(iii) V.42b
\[ tionsoighidh\ an\ áthasa\ tionsoighedh\ C^{35} \]

Other instances of palaeographical error include: (iv) misreading of \( d \) as \( t \); (v) misreading of minims, and (vi) omission of \( n \)-stroke, or perhaps simply omission of the letter \( n \):

(iv) IX.25b
\[ dá\ bhiodhbhaidh\ ag\ bhein\ driucha\ triócha\ C \]

(v) II.21a
\[ An\ oideacht\ do-nín\ aniog\ -nín\ C \]

(vi) IV.3d, 7d
\[ teine\ i\ geronn\ ar\ gcosmhail-ne\ (:\ aighne)\ ccosmhuiile\ C \]
\[ San\ (:\ rabh)\ Doiminic\ dom\ dhíadh\ sa\ C \]

Attraction to a subsequent word may have occurred in \( nfhuil\ eas\ acht\ ar\ iarraidh\) (each C) (IX.35a) and \( easbhaidh\ chumhine\ ar\ a\ chaidhribh\) (easbhaidh carad\ ar\ chaidhribh\ C) (VI.42b), although the latter instance seems to have undergone reworking since the possessive adjective has been omitted thus remedying the syllable count.

A further instance of palaeographical error also involves grammatical person-switching and a change of tense:

\[ \text{vi) VIII.33cd} \]
\[ \text{“tionsoighidh” ar na teacha } \text{tionsaigh bhr C} \]
\[ \text{“d’ionsoighidh bhr n-oidhreachta.” dionsaighi bhar} \]
\[ \text{noireacha C} \]

This occurs in an apologue based on the tale Bruiden Da Choca where a group of messengers address Cormac Con Loingeas after the death of his father Conchobhar. While the other manuscripts have a metrically sound second plural imperative form, BOCD reads a second singular present indicative form. It reads a further non-Classical form \( d’ionsaighi \) to present the illusion of rhyme. One explanation for the reading of BOCD may be phonological, based on the loss of \(-dh\) as a fricative long before the time of writing. The similarity of the endings of \( tionsaigh(\text{dh}) \) and \( dionsaigh(\text{dh}) \) also seem to have resulted in an instance of homoeoteleuton, causing the scribe to write \( but \) in place of \( ar \) in line c.

(b) A small selection of erroneous spellings may be singled out for attention here.\(^{36}\) The first might be taken as an etymological spelling for \( éanar / aonar \) which derives from the numeral \( óen \) and the noun \( fer \) but it nevertheless fails to provide rhyme:

(i) VI.8cd
\[ via\ do\ leamhadh,\ a\ Leath\ Cuinn\ da\ [sic]\ mbeath\ 'n-a\ éanar\ aguitum?\ éfer\ C\ (q. om. A) \]

Other noteworthy instances involve what may be termed hypercorrect forms which the scribe has written in order to create the impression of rhyme.\(^{37}\) So in one instance involving the variant present dependent forms of the substantive verb \( -fhuil \) and \( -jhoil \) the scribe of BOCD writes the former and then writes ‘shuin’ for eye-rhyme, whereas the scribe of Y erroneously wrote ‘fhui’ at first, but realized his mistake and made the necessary correction for rhyme with ‘shoin’.\(^{38}\)

35The other manuscripts have \textit{plene} readings for these examples. In example (i) above another hand, that of Charles O’Conor, has written ‘bheith gur eocha’ in the margin of C.

36Gerard Murphy comments on a number of orthographical features from this scribe’s hand indicative of modern and/or dialectical features in a lengthy note in Duall. Finn III, 126-32. Such features are not common in the poems examined here and I have not thought it necessary to include them for discussion.

37Compare comments on and examples of spellings employed in copies of Middle Irish poems to highlight rhyme in Breatnach, ‘An Mhean-Ghaeilge’, § 2.11.

38The form \( shuin \) does not seem to be confirmed in any unambiguous rhyming examples, see McManus, ‘Niall Frosach’, 155 (28 n.).
Another instance involves the dental stem **cumha** (*IGT II.4*) and the variant second plural past tense ending **-abhait**(*). The scribe of **BOeD** is alone in reading the latter form with palatal final and has coined a genitive singular **cumhaidh** to present the illusion of rhyme:

(iii) **VI.20ab**

**Do bhádair i gceas cumhaidh**  
**Leath Cainn mar do-chuialbhar**  
**cumhaidh C (; cumhaidh A)**  
** dochúáilbhair C**

The same process occurs in the following example where **Aodh Ó Dochartaigh** uniquely presents the reading of a recognized variant form of the adverb **anall** and then creates an impossible nominative form of the adjective **annamh** with palatal final. 

(iv) **VI.26cd**

**do bhí si a-nallan ag neoch**  
**annallain C**  
**garbh annamh i go huaingeoch**  
**annamh C**

Two other forms worthy of note may be termed ‘pronunciation spellings’:

(v) **IX.13d**

**beire ar sheas meadhóin Midhe**  
**thes C**

(vi) **IX.23bd**

**do mheall mnaoí 'n-a mnaóí sídhe**  
**guaille cruic ar fhear n-ile**  
**ndáolí C (Ile F)**

The originally distinct sounds **th**- and **sh**- would presumably have been pronounced identically by the scribe as would nasalized long **i** and nasalized **daoi**-.

39Both **Y** and **F** read a lenited form of **cumhaidh** which should be adopted in the text.

40For the variant forms of **anall** in **-at**(*n*), **-anai** and **-amhainn** see **BST** 217.29–218.13.

41The reading of **C** is given as ‘ar theas’ in **Aithd. D** 1, 56, where McKenna transcribes **tall i** as **eo**.

42Y and **K** read lenited forms of the first instance of **mnaoi** and also of **sídhe**; these mutated forms should have been adopted in the edition.

The paucity of similar examples means that they can hardly be taken to imply that the poems were transcribed from dictation particularly when assessed in light of the greater number of errors, the cause of which is palaeographical.

(c) Non-historical inflection is demonstrated in **BOCD** in several instances. So we find nominative for dative or accusative, and vice versa, in:

(i) **V.28a**

**ó Chnuic Láithrigh**  
**chnoc C (cf. **IGT II.67**)

(ii) **IX.4c**

**d'fhiúir (: ción) fhaghla**  
**dfer C (cf. **IGT II.65**)

(iii) **VII.35c**

**truaigh an bheart aghadh (; rabhaidh) ionnta aghaidh C ; aghaidhe [sic] Q** (cf. **IGT II.4**)

(iv) **III.16ab**

**Do cheannuigh cloinn Ádhaimh elann eB : eland T ; iosá ar fhuil a thaoibha cláinn D : cloinn Y (cf. **IGT II.40**)**

Furthermore, the scribe writes the nominative singular ‘**bliadhun**’ where we would expect the genitive plural in **Triucha bliadhan** (II.16a).

We also encounter confusion of the masculine **u-stem** **aos** ‘people’ with the feminine **a-stem** **aois** ‘age’ (*IGT II.38, 14*); this confusion is mirrored in the sixteenth-century **Nugent duanaire** (**G**) in one instance:

(v) **II.4b**

‘**gún aos ealadhuin** aos C : aosí G

43I is the only manuscript that does not give a **plene** reading for the relevant noun; however, since this manuscript (incorrectly) reads ‘rabhaidh’ in **d**, perhaps ‘aghaidh’ is intended in **c**.

44The latter case is of course not unambiguous as the reading of **Y** is abbreviated. Note that we would expect lenition of an indefinite noun which differs in its accusative form from the nominative (viz. **cloinn**), although the scribe may simply have omitted the mutation in this instance.

45On the spread of the nominative singular after substantive numbers see **McManus**, ‘**Nua-Ghaeilge Chlasaiceach**’, § 8.4 where he refers to four examples confirmed by rhyme from the poetry of **Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn**.
(vi) VIII.17b

cora an aosa ealadha ñ ñoisí C

The scribe also writes genitive singular -bèil where the historical form -bèil (sic Y) is confirmed by rhyme (shoibhèil : roidheòin) (IX.15bd; cf. IGT II.61). A number of examples of the raising of the vowel in cu-to co- occur such as 'conntánóí' (: cundæi Y : cundraf IGT) (V.32d) and 'choiléin' (IX.1.5a; cf. IGT II.35). In the latter example Y and K preserve the historical form, while F agrees with C. McKenna adopted the reading of C and F for his edition which introduces a metrical fault to the quatrain by rhyming the final of a with the final of e (coineil): 48

(vii) IX.15

Feacfa, a rí, ríoth do choiléin choilén C : coileain F : do-ní ríoth nach doid roidheòin chuilein Y : chuilein K cu ag breith a cinn a coinéil re foidin t'éich shing shoibhèil [sic].

While this may suggest a slight tendency towards modernization, this category cannot be said to be large and some of the examples may represent unconscious slips on the part of the scribe.

(d) Forms and usages not countenanced in the Grammatical Tracts sometimes occur in BOCD and other manuscripts. For example, prefixing t to s following -nm is considered a fault in the teaching of the Tracts, yet this occurs in:

(i) VIII.30c

clann sheanRosa tshenrosa C : tsenrosa Y : seanrosa F

(ii) II.4a

ar chionn tSamhna tshamhna C : tsamna Y : hshamhna G : samhna F 49

46Y and C read ‘bealadha’ which should be adopted in the text.
47F has the curious reading ‘soibhèil’ at this point, while K is faded and torn. McKenna printed the unmetrical form of BOCD in his edition in Aithd. D 1, 56, but corrected this to the reading of Y in the Corrigenda (Aithd. D II, 26).
48For the fault (known as rudhreach naitheine) see IGT V.101 and GGBM 3688–9. For the raising of u to o see O’Rahilly, Irish dialects, 194–5.
49Bergin printed Samhna in his edition as above. Ó Cuív, ‘Roinnt leasaite teacs’, 14, also noted that this does not accord with the teaching of the tracts and cited the readings of G and F; compare Duasen, Finn III, 132 n.

50See BST 29b.14–16 and 189.11–12.
51The line is mar thòid clar a tuibh thunna where BOCD is alone in reading a different preposition (do thalb). The reading glas may

52Note the occurrence of the faulted form cathair (dat.) rhyming with athair in McManus, ‘Niall Fiosraich’, 146 q. 24ed. The form ‘chathair’ (dat.) also occurs in the C and F copies of Poem IX.18c where Y and K read chathair (: bifathaibh). In the latter example F alters the rhyming word to ‘bifathaibh’; this may be to suggest rhyme with cathair optically, but note that a form flath does occur, if rarely, for which see McKenna, O’Hara, 400 (3350 n.), TD 7.46a, and Watson, Scottish verse, p. xxii.
53For the phrase bas re see As bas re sruth nó sruth re hár t’sonaidh re triath ‘Rivalry with our lord is as a hand holding back a stream or as a stream flowing uphill’, McKenna, ‘A poem by Gofraidh Piomn’, 135 q. 59ab.
have been altered to avoid the repetition apparent in Y. The latter reading may in fact exemplify the fault known as caoiche where a word rhymes with itself; however the different phraseology employed in the separate lines may be sufficient to circumvent this.\(^{54}\)

Another phrase uniquely attested in the copy of Anocht sgoilid na sgola found in BOCD is marked by semantic anomaly.

(ii) II.18

\[\text{Dom ulmhughadh nior dâl lais mo bheithe adháigh ‘na égmáis: bheithe àonóidhche na égmáis C gur lèig sé ar an énlaithe inn, mé a n-éanbhoidh re hO nUiginn.}\]

This quatrain, in which the poet depicts his instruction by his brother, was rendered by Bergin, as transmitted in YGF, as follows ‘For my train­

\[\text{ing he would not have me one night away from him. Till he loosed me}\]

against the birds, I was ever in one hut with

\[\text{which I recognise after his loss; I empty hut before me, thou was not}\]

want to have a neighbour’. The address to the hut in the third line as in

\[\text{GD is confirmed by the second person verbal form nior chleachtabhair}\]

The reading of BOCD which replaces the vocative particle of the other manuscripts with the article may have been influenced by the absence of address in the first couplet, but seems to indicate that the quatrain was not fully understood.

Another case of apparent miscomprehension occurs in the apologue

\[\text{based on the tale Bruiden Da Choca alluded to above. The relevant qua­}\]

train refers to Meadbh’s anger on seeing Cormac Con Loingeas and his followers leaving Cruachain for Ulster whereupon she commands the

\[\text{Maines to attack them:}\]

(v) VIII.37

\[\text{Lionnais fuath ga bhfaicisín sin Meadbh inghean Eochach Fheidhgh[sic];}\]

\[\text{glór Meadbhá ris na Mainibh maithibh C slógh na hEamhna d’ionnsoighidh.}\]

The unmetrical reading of BOCD (maithibh ‘nobles’) suggests that the

\[\text{scribe may not have understood the reference to the characters named}\]

Maine or that rather than refer to specific characters he preferred to

\[\text{allude more generally to Meadbh’s army.}\]

Further instances of defective readings in BOCD include ‘ag cáíoneadh máosa cumuinn’ for ‘ag aithne m’aois cumuinn (II.13b),

\[\text{text it provides other than to assume the form stands for a genitive which}\]

is of course unmetrical.\(^{55}\)

A reading in the poem beginning Anocht sgoilid na sgola is also

\[\text{suggestive of misunderstanding in BOCD:}\]

(iv) II.29

\[\text{Iomhain both dhianhair dhàna aithin d’éis a theasdála: a bhith fholamhsa ar mh’aghaidh, an bhoith C : a bhoith D comharsa nior chleachtabhair. q. om. YF}\]

Bergin rendered the quatrains as follows: ‘Dear is the mystic hut of poesy,

\[\text{which is roughly synonymous with the phrase}\]

of the other manuscripts.

A further instance of corruption shared by BOCD with the earlier

\[\text{manuscript Q is found in the religious poem Cia ghabhas m’annain ré ais}.\]

(iii) IV.12

\[\text{Is é shaolim dom shaoradh a dhochar on droch-shaoghal (adochar Y) acht a mhéad do ftuiling d’ulc créad ima bhfuighinn fúrtacht \(b\) ar dhochar an drochsháoghal C : ardecraíth an drochshaogar Q}\]

The corruption appears to lie in a misunderstanding of the first couplet. The sound text as preserved in Y was translated by McKenna as ‘His suffering from the cruel world will save me’. Although different, the readings of C and Q show a similar miscomprehension of the couplet which might be rendered as ‘I think he (i.e. St Dominic) will save me from the hardship(s) of the cruel world’. Although BOCD reads a nominative

\[\text{normal form –saoghal, there seems to be no other way of interpreting the}\]

\[\text{54For the faults anocht and caoiche see IGT V.6. 8 and GGBM 2531–3, 3613–20. A comparable instance occurs in do-ghéabha ó chéch a geimhna (chomhall C) in fhicheadh ri Cé ar chumann (IX.32bd); see further comment on this quatrains p. 161 below.}\]

\[\text{55An interpretation ‘I think the cruel world will save me from hardship’ is of course grammatically possible, but can hardly be contextually permissible. It also seems unlikely}\]

\[\text{that on contains a Middle Irish variant form of the preposition a (viz. \(\partial\)), for which see}\]

‘grós as urusa dad mhád’ for ‘grós as urusa dh’fhiaidh’ (II.25d), ‘tug tíre fa fhuil mhogha / ár an mhuigh murlomha’ for ‘tug Íotha fa fhuil Mogha / ar léinne’ (VI.17cd), and ‘le cur techta attadh liosfa’ for ‘le car sneachta a dtaadh liosfa’ (IX.12d).

With few exceptions the mistakes in (a)–(e) above are only attested in BOCD. It is noteworthy, however, that each form in (d) is shared with other manuscripts thus bearing witness to a particular line of textual transmission.

In addition to the mistakes noted above, attention should be drawn to an assortment of some twenty corrections the scribe made in the course of his work. Some of these involve deleting a letter written in error by placing a point beneath it such as ‘dan’ (VIII.7a), and ‘anerr catha chorcr a ccrich mhainneach’ (VI.30b).56

The scribe also introduces a few corrections preceded by the abbreviation I or nó. So he writes ‘da mbe ná’ oide fasachta’ (II.8d) where his initial reading na would create a hypermetric line and his correction agrees with the other manuscripts. Further instances include ‘fuair derca asadachain’ Y (IV.26d) where the reading differs slightly from the other copies (faair derca asadachain Y: fuair derca asindochaissin Q) and ‘coig cedfada na cruiuné’ (I.19b) where the correction agrees with the other manuscripts (colla: catorra).57 A last instance is worthy of note: in the line da [sic] mbeaht ’n-a éanar aguinn, BOCD has ‘aguinn 1 edairain’, the alternative reading being unique.58

56The term marbhadh occurs in Poem VIII.5d and 6a (gen.); the phrase earr catha occurs in Poem VI.26b. (In the latter instance McKenna reads i-eair catha ad-chuna i n-aide based on A (an earr) and F (aneairr) understanding the phrase as ‘after all its battles’ with reference to the banner (neiteas) mentioned in q. 25; it seems preferable, however, to read an earr catha (unrrr catha Y; anerr catha C) since the line as edited by McKenna is syntactically awkward and the nominative phrase an earr (chorcr, uaine) occurs elsewhere (30b, 33d; compare also the vocative in 31b.).

57McKenna inexplicably reads this line as Cíog chadadhada [sic] mo choll although all manuscripts read ‘na col[y]a’.

58For a fuller account of scribal corrections made by Aodh Ó Dochartaigh see the contribution by Pidraigh Ó Macháin in this volume.

These corrections, although few in number, serve as a corrective to a view of the scribe as careless. The latter instances also suggest that he may have drawn on more than one copy of the texts he transcribed.

4. Sound variants and superior readings
In addition to the errors examined above, BOCD presents a large number of readings that constitute sound variants in the context of overall transmission. These variants are either uniquely attested in BOCD or shared with other copies, but not all have a claim to be the lectio difficilior. Many of the variants cannot be considered substantive as they do not adversely affect the metre or the sense of the text. Often they represent recognized variant usages or forms such as samhailta é agus n’oigheidh (lem C; V.7d) or dìod féin do bheith id bhreithighd (dhiot C; VII.14c). Other cases involve variation between first singular and first plural forms as in mòs tu ar n-aithne nír fhágthaí (maithne CF: mhaithni A; VI.32d). Besides this variation of grammatical person the following example entails variance between the past and present subjunctive:

(i) V.21cd

tobhaim is nach anaim air anam C
dí geanaíonn d’éoileamh fíoicilí ccanam C

A number of more significant variants are also found in BOCD and the focus of the remainder of this section will be on these.

The first instance comes in a poem of reconciliation to Uilleag Búrc:

(ii) V.17ab

Déana ret éigeas n-aithmidh
cumann tar na conmhaighthiabh
do chumanna ré conmhaighthiabh C

The text in Y on which McKenna’s edition is based was translated by the editor as follows: ‘Be friends with the poet thou knowest rather than with strange ones’. The text of BOCD is also perfectly sound, however, the sense is more or less the same, although with a slightly different nuance whereby it is suggested that Uilleag should act towards the poet he knows in the same way he does towards strangers.

A further sound reading which is unique to BOCD occurs in an elegy on Uilleag Búrc where the poet depicts the Northern Half as defenceless after his patron’s death.
The edition is based on the text of Y, A and F which all agree. McKenna translates as follows: ‘Strong now is your foe, dead your leader’. The reading of BOCD presents a similar sentiment but again with a slightly different nuance; it may be rendered as ‘your enemy has power over you after his (i.e. the patron’s) death’.

Another instance occurs in the poet’s moving elegy on Tadhg Ó Conchobhair where he claims that his is no feigned grief affected for reward but derives from a genuine warmth felt by the poet and patron for one another:

(iv) VIII.18

Ónóir [sic] ar eagla náire
do-chím nach cáis láthadhíre;
an mhuint tabhhaigh ní bhí ar bun
ní tabhair i acht le huamhan. faghtair C

The reading of BOCD goes against Y and F in this case and is unmetrical as it stands. However, a simple emendation to faghtair remedies the metrical difficulty and may suggest that this reading has some claim to validity. Nevertheless, the form tabhair (pres. ind. pass. of do-bheir) is somewhat unusual in being identical to the dependant third singular present indicative and second singular imperative forms of the verb do-bheir; faghtair (or faghtbh) may therefore have been substituted at some stage in the course of transmission as a more recognizable passive form and should possibly be considered the lectio facilior.

A further case of sound variants in BOCD is found in a eulogy addressed to Niall Óg Ó Néill:

(v) IX.6Aa

Fear dan dluigh cáin an chóigidh
Fer ga bfuil cáin gach cúigidh C (q. om. F)

Here the sense of BOCD is somewhat different in referring to the tribute of every province rather than that of Ulster alone.60 It seems likely however that the relatively rare word dluigh is the lectio difficilior and that ‘ga bfuil’ represents simplification of an unfamiliar phrase.

In the same composition the poet praises his patron’s indifference to the weather when engaging in martial action. In the course of this BOCD presents a markedly different, but vaguely synonymous, reading to that found in the other copies:

(vi) IX.33ab

Le sín n-nóir i n-a aghaidh Lé sín fhúair mar do fluirigh C
do sín a dhuaidh ó Thoirigh

The expression recorded in BOCD (‘As he waited for cold weather (?)’) seems both stylistically and syntactically awkward, however, when compared with that of YFK which McKenna rendered as ‘Facing the cold storm he comes [sic] South from Toraidh’.

Another variant in BOCD differs substantially from the reading of the other copies; this occurs in a section of the elegy on Ulleag Búrc in which the poet gives details of the deceased’s caithreim:

(vii) VI.30

Tug eitil ag iarruidh creach Téid lá oile diarraidh crech C
an earr chorcha i gcrich Maineach;
tug eitil i Moigh Maine rug C
soir i fa eitibh Osraighe.61

The edition is based on the common text of YAF and was translated by McKenna as follows: ‘That purple banner in its search of plunder swooped on the land of Maine [sic], it flew over Magh Maine and thence eastward on the borders of Osraighe’. The quatrain as preserved in these manuscripts is ornamented by the metrical device known as breacadh (eitil : eitil : eitibh) and the repetition of the phrase tug eitil may represent a deliberate stylistic figure that serves to emphasize the word play on eitil ‘flying’ and eitibh ‘lit. feathers’ perceptible in this

60While C has goch for on in this example, we may note that in another poem C reads a possessive adjective where the other copies read goch: amhlaidh buds fleara goch tiche (ar nitche C) (IV.28c).

61McKenna incorrectly gives the reading of BOCD in line a as ‘eile’. In line c Y and C read ‘a’, A reads ‘o’ and F reads ‘o’; this suggests that the preposition a ‘from’ is intended in YC rather than i as construed by McKenna. Note also the corrected mistake in line b in BOCD referred to above (p. 154).
quatrain. The reading of BOCD is also metrically sound and it is possible that the repetition of YAF arose through homoeochron in a common exemplar. Nevertheless, the text of BOCD seems somewhat banal in comparison to that recorded in the other copies of the poem, and although BOCD reads rug in line 6, it may be that its reading in line a arose to avoid repetition of the phrase tug eitil which may have been considered otiose at some stage of transmission.

Other instances of sound variants involve the substitution of one synonym for another as in the poem beginning Mór mo chuid do chumhaidh Taidhg:

(viii) VIII.29ab

Bás eile a ionnshamhail soin
fuair mac rioghd don fhéin Utaigh  freimh C

BOCD substitutes the word freimh for fion which is found in the other two copies of the poem, but in fact both readings are metrically sound and have an equal claim to preserving the original; the reading of Y and F provides alliteration with the final word Utaigh, whereas the reading of BOCD alliterates with preceding rioghd.

A comparable instance occurs elsewhere in the same poem:

(ix) VIII.34

“Bheith i gCruachain nír chóir dhuit
d'éis Chonchubhair; a Chormaic:
siol Rudhraide thall a-tá  clann C, IGT III, ex. 817 v.l.
gut urnaidhe ón tann theasdh.”

Here BOCD is in agreement with the copy of IGT III found in RIA MS E iv 1 (possibly written in the seventeenth century) which reads clann in place of the synonymous siol found in all other copies of the text. Unlike the previous example, however, the reading clann introduces a metrical fault into the couplet and should therefore be considered inferior. The fault, known as ruathach, arises from the fact that tann rhymes with clann and thall. It is all the more noteworthy then that BOCD shares this reading with a copy of the Grammatical Tracts as this clearly shows that the scribe was drawing on a different line of textual transmission.

A further case in which we see the scribe of BOCD drawing on another line of transmission is found in the poem beginning Aithin mé do trí eide

The quatrain found in YQ forms part of the brief retelling of the crucifixion scene with reference to Mary and John the Apostle (qq. 16-17; John 19:26-7); whereas that found in BC forms part of the entreaty for spiritual aid made in the poem (trans! Taidh. D II, 239 (Poem 34.22d n.)). It may be objected that the references to Mary in q. 18 more naturally follow on from q. 16-17, but a case could be made for the quatrain in BC intervening. On the relationship of B to C see pp. 133-4 above.
Another instance occurs in the poem beginning Mairg danab soirbh an saoghal:

(xii) VII.26a

Guidh an Righ do rún chroidhe muin Q

Here the sixteenth-century manuscript Q has the roughly synonymous reading muin which nevertheless fails to provide alliteration and goes against all other copies of the poem including BOCD.64

A number of hypo- and hypermetric lines found in one or more copies of the poems are not reflected in BOCD. In the first example Y inadvertently omits the past tense marker do leaving the line a syllable short:

(xiv) VI.42c

creadh nach tiobhradh mar do thuill?
cred nach thibhradh murtuill Y [† 6]

A further case involves an extrametrical possessive adjective found in Y:65

(xv) IX.32d

ní fheallann ri Cé ar chumann
nifheallann ri ce aracumand Y [† 8] (meallann K)

Two final instances from Y involve forms taken by prepositions in combination with the relative particle. The variants adopted in Y, and shared with K in example (xvii), create metrically unsound lines:

(xvi) III.1c

lénanimídighenn orainn Y [† 7]66
le nímhgoiron oran T : lé a nimhgoiron orainn D :
tre animagidenn orinn B : té animagidheann oruinn C

64See examples of the phrases rín croidhe and do mhin chroidhe in DIL R 121.36–8, and M 186.76–7.
65K is very faded at this point, but may agree with Y in reading a possessive adjective.
66McKenna printed the text of Y in his edition without noticing the line is hypermetric.

A few other instances of hypo- or hypermetrification arise from reduced forms of the conjunction agus which is omitted outright in some copies:

(xviii) IV.20d

is ní d’a ord ‘n-a-fhochair sni da ord na fochair Q [† 6]

Cf. also ‘s ní déanadh sé ort uabhar (is na déanadh sé ort uabhar Q [† 8]); ‘s m’oais a Dhé ar ndál thioram (ismaéis adhe arndul toram Y [† 7]; is BD; as T);68 and is bearta riogh do rinne (bertha righ do rinne Q [† 6]) (VII.4d; III.7b; VII.10b).

Further unmetrical readings found in manuscripts written earlier than BOCD occur as a result of homoeoteleuton:

(xix) VIII

Gé bheart tráth ar tí ar ndúin Ge beith trath ar tí ar tregaidh Q
do chí dhísh as nach éidir
fala Dhé ar tí mo thréagaidh fala dhé ar ti artregaidh Q [† 6]
gur mhéaduigh mé i ar éigin.

(xx) III.8ab

Guais damh mé do mhealladh
is gar é is is longar as gar dham isisiongar T

The O’Gara Manuscript (F) also records a large number of unique errors. In the first instance the insertion of the article an by the scribe results in a hypermetric line but is understandable since the absence of the article before a noun defined by a relative clause is unusual: 69

(xxii) VIII.5a

Céadfhocal do chanas ris
An céadfhocal do chanas ris F [† 8]

67McKenna printed the text of Y in his edition without noticing the line is hypometric.
68YBDT all read a hypermetric line in this instance. The reduced form ‘s in McKenna’s edition is an emendation which may be syntactically preferable to the reading of BOCD (maois adhe ar ndul toram).
69See GOI § 471 and DIL I, 188.86–189.25.
BOCD shares the superior reading with Y against F's hypometric readings in the following final examples which also fail to provide alliteration and rhyme:

(xxxii) VIII.27a

Do réidhgh rí Ó Meadhba (righ C)  
Do chuir rí ó meadhba F [† 6]

(xxxii) VIII.45cd

tug eihhir Ó Néill a-noir  tug oighir o neill mhóir F [† 6]  
a ngeimhín ón fhéin Ultóigh

5. Constitution of text
A brief word on the textual make-up of the poems as transmitted in BOCD is appropriate to complete our picture of the manuscript. A number of quatrains omitted from other copies of the poems are preserved in BOCD. The most valuable case occurs in the poem beginning Fada an ráitheise romham (V) where three quatrains (38–40) giving details of the patron's caithréim are omitted in Y and are preserved solely in BOCD, the only other copy of the poem. Further instances of preservation are shared with other copies.70 BOCD also omits text in several places. Thus quatrains 6 of the poem beginning Cia ghabhas m' annain ré ais (IV) is omitted there. The scribe leaves space for a line of the poem beginning Maírg danab soarbh an saoghal (VII.34d and the final quatrains of the elegy Mór mo chuid do chumhaidh Taidhg are also omitted (VIII.47cd–51).71 In the latter instance the scribe wrote only thirteen lines on the folio leaving the rest blank. This suggests that these omissions arose owing to the state of the exemplar used by the scribe and that he left blank spaces at the time of transcription in the hope that he would be able to return and complete the copy on another occasion.

Finally a small number of transpositions may also be noted. In the poem Fada an ráitheise romham two quatrains beginning with the word Tugais have been transposed in BOCD (V.35, 37) as have two couplets in another poem (IV.26cd, 27cd). Furthermore, the order of quatrains 11 and 12 in the elegy beginning Mór mo chuid do chumhaidh Taidhg (VIII)

is inverted in BOCD and this order agrees with Y against F.72 The order of quatrains in the poem Anocht sgoilid na sgola also differs in BOCD where it goes against all other copies in reading 29 (q. om. YF), 27, 28.

It is difficult to come to an overall conclusion about the textual quality of BOCD in a preliminary study of this nature. We may note that the copies of the poems examined for the present study were made at a remove of some two hundred years after the time of original composition. Furthermore relatively little work has been carried out to date concerning the sources available to and used by the scribe when compiling the manuscript on the Continent.73 While one cannot help suspecting the scribe of a certain degree of ineptitude where multiple copies of the poems are extant and the errors of BOCD stand alone, we have encountered numerous instances where the scribe was drawing on a different line of textual transmission than that evidenced in the readings of other copies and so it is difficult to assess the extent of scribal responsibility for the textual errors observed.

BOCD is first and foremost a patron's book. The care taken in the organization of the manuscript by grouping poems according to family or theme attests to Aodh Ó Dochartaigh's capacity as a thoughtful anthologist. Certainly the text is flawed in places, but we have encountered a large number of sound variants, superior readings and scribal corrections in addition to the errors, a great number of which do not materially alter the sense of the text. If the textual quality of BOCD is sometimes inferior it should perhaps be considered a sign of the times. Professor Pádraig Ó Macháin has recently noted that "The hiatus caused by the downfall of traditional learning meant that, while Irish manuscripts may have been readily available at home and abroad, guidance and tuition for those eager to transcribe them accurately were not."74 This led to a proliferation of scribal apologies for the possible inaccuracy of texts. Aodh Ó Dochartaigh goes some way to apologizing when, as reported by Pádraig Ó Macháin elsewhere in this volume, he remarks that he has reproduced his transcript of the poem Cliú nach caithtear cliú Muire faithfully or perhaps in a slightly worse state than that of his exemplar (do sgríobhus do réir nus fisars, nó níosa mhesa). To judge by the evidence assembled for this study, I do not think it would be too great an injustice to rank him

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70These are: Poem II.6 (om. F); 29 (om. YF); Poem VI.8 (om. A); 41, 43–4 (om. AF); Poem VII.25, 30 (om. I); Poem VIII.21, 42, 51 (om. F); Poem IX.6, 6A (om. F).
71McKenna (Aithil, D 1, 21) mistakenly reports that qq. 48–51 only are missing in
BOCD.
72McKenna's edition follows the order of F. The editor noted the order of quatrains 11 and 12 in BOCD, but failed to note that this agrees with Y.
73See now however the important studies by Pádraig A. Breathnach and Caoimhín Breathnach elsewhere in this volume.
74Ó Macháin, 'Bardic poetry in the Academy's collection', 61.
along with, but in many ways superior to, other scribes who apologize more profusely than he. 75

Poems discussed 76

(I) Aithin mé dot oide a Eoin, ed. DDé Poem I.
Copies: *Y col. 131; Q 10r; B 77v; C 112r.
Citations: q. 13cd = BST 209.14; q. 19cd = BST 221.19, 43b.6.

(II) Anocht sgoailld na sgola, ed. IBP Poem 38.
Copies: *Y 169; G 5v; *C 371r; F 179; *D 5 (qq. 26-30).
Citations: q. 5cd = IGT II, ex. 1768; q. 6cd = IGT II, ex. 315 = IGT III, ex. 128; q. 7cd = IGT IV, ex. 1028; q. 11 = IGT III, ex. 472; q. 22cd = IGT II, ex. 2105; q. 24cd = IGT III, ex. 820.

(III) Ait sin ar slighidh, ed. DDé Poem VIII.
Copies: *Y 142; T 24; B 68v; C 114v; D 141 (qq. 1-18).
Citations: q. 14 = IGT II, ex. 633.

(IV) Cia ghabhas m'anmain re ais, ed. DDé Poem IV.
Copies: *Y 135; C 112v; Q 10v.
Citations: q. 15 = BST 233.20-21/16a.13; q. 18cd = BST 197.23, 10b.47; q. 23cd = IGT II, ex. 871.

(V) Fada an raitheise romham, ed. Aithd. D Poem 40.
Copies: *Y 162; *C 342v.
Citations: q. 5cd = IGT II, ex. 428; q. 20cd = IGT II, ex. 475; q. 28cd = IGT II, ex. 1419; q. 32cd = IGT II, ex. 1790; q. 43cd = BST 221.20, 43b.5.

Copies: *Y 160; *C 352v; *A 722; *F 139.
Citations: q. 2ab = IGT II, ex. 1429; q. 16cd = IGT II, ex. 904.

(VII) Maigh danab soirbh an saoghal, ed. DDé Poem VII.
Copies: *Y 140; Q 14v; C 113v; I 65 (qq. 24cd, 26–9, 31-6).

75 I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Pádraig A. Bretnach and Dr Caomhín Bretnach for their comments on a draft of this essay.

76 For a list of sigla employed here see p. 133 above. An asterisk indicates that the relevant manuscript copy was consulted for the edition. Citations from the Grammatical Tracts are taken from McManus ('Irish grammatical and syntactical tracts' and 'IGT citations') and de Brun, 'Additional identifications'.

77 There is a copy of F in British Library (Egerton 111). Since this manuscript has no value as an independent witness it has not been thought necessary to refer to it here. Note, however, that McKenna lists the Egerton copy of Poem VIII as one of the manuscripts used for the edition, although F is also listed.

78 The page reference is incorrectly given as 314a by Hyde 'Book of the O'Conor Don'.