



- A) Now when into their fenced holdes the knaves are entred in, / To smite and knocke the cattell do'wne, the hangmen doe beginne; / One plucketh off the Oxes cote, which he even now did weare, / Another, lacking pannes, to boyle the fleshe his hide prepare.
- B) And Fryer Smelfeast sneaking in, doth prease amongst the best; / Who play'th in Romish toyes the *Ape* by counterfetting *Paul*, / For which they doe award him then, the highest roome of all. / Who being set, because the cheere is deemed little worth / Except the same be intermixt and lac'de with Irish myrth.
- C) These theeves attend upon the fire for serving up the feast.
- D) Both *Barde* and Harper is preparde, which by their cunning art / Doe strike and cheare up all the gestic with comfort at the hart.

Even an apparently 'artistic' example, like John Derricke's *Image of Ireland, with a Discovery of Woodkern* (1578), a long verse epistle followed by a woodcut and doggerel verse portrayal of Sir Henry Sidney's three-year campaign against the O'Neills (1575-8), addressed the issue of poetry and cultural resistance. Derricke's *Discovery* provides a narrative of the Irish Woodkern from their 'bodrags' (ritual cattle-raids) to the entertainment of the 'Bard and Harper' before The MacSweeney. Derricke writes: 'Both Barde and Harper is preparde, which by their cunning art, / Doe strike and cheare up all the gestic with comfort at the hart'. The 'comfort' to which the Bards lend themselves continues: 'And when with myrth and belly cheere, they are sufficed well, / Marke what ensueth, a playne discourse of Irish sleights I tell' (Plate 4). The progression seems to lead logically from the activities of the bard and harper to the 'spoyling and destroying of her grace's loyall men'. For Derricke, the Irish poets are the inciters of rebellion, and the means between the Irish nobility and popular resistance. Derricke's own descriptions of the bard and harpers's 'cunning art' is contrasted to his 'plain discourse' of the Irish 'sleights', or plots and deceptions.

– David Gardiner 'O How Unlike Unto Orpheus': *The Poetics of Colonization*  
[\[www.hull.ac.uk/renforum/v4no2/gardiner.htm\]](http://www.hull.ac.uk/renforum/v4no2/gardiner.htm)

John Derricke, *Image of Ireland, with a Discovery of Woodkerne* (1578)

## An Irish feast

Well, Beeves are knocked doune, the Butchers plaie their parte,  
Who take eche one the intrails forthe, the Liver with the Harte;  
And beyng breathyng newe, th'unwashen Puddyngs thei  
Upon the coales or embers hotte, for want of Gredyron laie.  
And scarce not halfe enough, (draffe serveth well for Hogges),  
Thei take them up and fall thereto, like rav'nyng hongrie Doggs,  
Devouryng gutte and limme, no parte doth come amisse,  
Whose lippes & chappes with blood doe swim, most true reporte is this.  
As for the greatest Karne, thei have the cheefest stuffe,  
Though durtie tripes and offalls like please underknaves enoufe.  
Whereof thei parte doe roste, and other some thei boile:  
Thus what betwene the sodde and roste, fearce hunger thei assoile.  
No table there is spread, thei have no courtlike guise,  
The yearth sometimes standes them in steede whereon their victuall lyes.  
Their Coushens are of Strawe of Rushes or of Haye:  
Made banckesetwise with withies, their tailles to underlaie.  
Their Platters are of wood, by cunnyng Turners made,  
But not of Peauter, (credite me), as is our Englishe trade.  
Now ere the Lorde sitts doune with concubine or wife,  
(Whereof he often makes exchaunge in compasse of his life),  
Before he takes his rome, a Frier doeth beginne  
To blesse the Rebell with his wife, the place and theeves therein;  
Whiche when he blessed hath, in highest place of all,  
The Cheeftaine then this traitrous knave, like honest man, doeth stall.  
And next his Surgion he doth sette at Friar's side,  
And then himself his rome enjoyth adorned with his Bride.  
(In fine) the hellishe route like luckie fellowes mette,  
Doe sit them doune on strawe or grounde, their victualles for to gette...

*/recte basketwise*

...Now when their gutts be full, then comes the pastyme in:  
The Barde and Harper mellodie unto them doe beginne.  
This Barde he doeth report the noble conquestes done,<sup>1</sup>  
And eke in Rimes shewes forth at large their glorie thereby wonne.<sup>2</sup>  
Thus he at randome ronnet, he pricks the Rebels on,  
And shewes by such externall deeds their honour lyes upon,  
The more to stirre them up to prosecute their ill,  
What greate renowne their fathers gotte, they shew by Rimyng skill...<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Barde and a Rimer is all one.

<sup>2</sup> The Barde by his Rimes hath as great force emongst Woodkarne to perswade, as the elloquent oration of a learned Oratour emongst the civill people.

<sup>3</sup> The pollicie of the Barde to encense the Rebelles to doe mischefe, by repeating their forfathers actes. O craftie Appostle as holy as a Devill.

# To a Harp

Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh cct.

A chláirsíoch Chnuic Í Chosgair  
chuirios súan ar síorrosgaibh,  
a nuallánach bhinn bhlasda,  
ghrinn fhuaránach fhorasda.

A chlár buadha as bláith mínlearg,  
a mhonghárach mhéirfhirdhearg,  
a cheóladhach do chealg sinn,  
a dhearg leómhanach láinbhinn.

A bhréagadh éoin a healta,  
a fhionnfhuaradh aigionta,  
a dhonn bhionnfhoclach bhallach,  
lonn iongantach iodhlannach.

A leighios gach laoiach ghonta,  
a shógh brégha bantrachta,  
a eól gnáthach ós goirmlinn,  
a cheól fáthach foghairbhinn.

A bháthadh gach croinn dhiúil,  
a chrann taitneamhach taidhiúir,  
a chomhnaidhi eidir chloinn gCoinn,  
a chroinn donnbhuidhi dhíoghainn.

A aoinleannán na n-eólach,  
a chorrach bhláith bhinncheólach,  
a rélta chorera ós cionn síodh,  
a mhionn ochta na n-airdríogh.

A sgatha binne boga,  
a chláirsíoch dhonn diarmada,  
a chruth gan fhúath ó fheadhain,  
a ghuth cúach a gcéiteamhain.

Ní chúala ceól mar do chronn,  
tar éis Túaithi Dé Danann;  
a chraobh dhonnloghach dhata,  
chaomh fhorbharach allata.

A fhúaim trágha ré toinn cciúin,  
a chrann fosgadhghlan fírchiúil,  
fleadha ‘gá n-ól it fhochair,  
a ghlór eala ós fhionnshrothaibh.

A núall ban sídhe a Síth Lir,  
‘s gan ceól do chor at aighidh,  
ód threóir as téidbhinn gach teach,  
a chéidrinne cheóil na gcláirsíoch.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bergin gives an additional 12 stanzas, but points out that the original poem ended here; see textual note.

O harp of Cnoc Í Chosgair that bringest sleep  
to eyes long wakeful, thou of the sweet and  
delicate moan, pleasant, refreshing, grave.

O choice instrument of the smooth, gentle  
curve, thou that criest under red fingers,  
musician that hast enchanted us, red harp,  
high-souled,<sup>2</sup> perfect in melody.

Thou that lurest the bird from the flock, that  
coolest the heart, brown, sweet-speaking  
speckled one, fervent, wondrous, passionate.

Thou healer of every wounded warrior, charm  
that beguilest women, familiar guide over the  
dark water, music mystic and sweet.

Thou silencer of all instruments of music,  
shining, tuneful instrument, thou dweller  
among the Children of Conn, thou stout dark-  
yellow tree.

Thou favourite of the learned, restless smooth  
one, sweetly musical, red star over elfmounds,  
breast-jewel of the High Kings.

O sweet and gentle flowers! O brown harp of  
Diarmaid, O shape dear to every company,  
thou voice of the cuckoos in May.

I have heard of no music like thy structure  
after the Tuatha Dé Danann, O branch dark  
and fine, lovely, fair, \_\_\_\_\_,<sup>3</sup> glorious.

O sound of the beach against the gentle wave,  
shadowy tree of true melody, feasts are  
consumed beside thee, O voice of the swan on  
bright streams.

O cry of fairy women from the mound of Lear,  
no music can match thine; under thy guidance  
every house is sweet-stringed, thou pinnacle of  
harp-music.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps ‘tawny,’ lit. ‘lion-like.’ <sup>3</sup> *forbharach* is strange to me; the variant *formnadhach* may mean ‘broad-shouldered.’

[This poem] is written in praise of a beautiful harp. The owner may have been Diarmaid, son of Donnchadh Mág Eochagáin, Lord of Cenél Fiachach, in Westmeath. Diarmaid, who died in 1392, succeeded his brother Fearghal in 1382. As the poet... died in 1387, the last quatrain,<sup>4</sup> referring to the owner by his official title, would point to a date 1382 to 1387. Cnoc Í Chosgair is no doubt the modern Knockycosker, in the barony of Moycashel (the ancient Cenél Fiachach), though the Four Masters write Cnoc Í Chosgraigh.

The text is from A IV 3 [p. 671 f.] (R.I.A.); the first ten quatrains are also found in the O'Conor Don's Book, [fo. 14a] and as §10 has an appropriate *dínadh*, it is evident that the original poem ended here. ... All the remaining quatrains except §20 have the requisite close, and are supplementary. In these the poet identifies the harp with the famous instruments of ancient romance, recalling their names, for in old days musical instruments, weapons, etc., had proper names, as ships have now.

<sup>4</sup> I.e. §22, not included here.

Poem, translation, textual note and footnotes 2 and 3 from Osborn Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*. Dublin (1970), 66-69 and 241-242.

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# A Palmer's Greeting

Muireadhach Albanach cct.

Tomhais cia mise, a Mhurchaidh;  
maith do dhúthchas deaghurchair;  
do chinn t'athair ar aithne  
ar na cathaibh córaighthe.

Cá healadha fhoghnas damh?  
tomhais, mása thú Murchadh;  
eirg is iarfaigh d'Ú Dhálaigh,  
a dheirg lianchair leannánaigh.

Tomhais damh cá baile i mbím,  
a fhir nach uis re hairdrígh;  
tomhais a dtúirim i dtigh,  
a sholais chúilfhinn chneisghil.

Tomhais cá hainm fhuil ormsa,  
a chuilén saor súlghormsa;  
a ghille mhín sholais sheing,  
tomhais cá tír as dtigim.

Tigim, a fholt fleasgach fiar,  
tar Muir dtaobhsholas dToirrian;  
atú ag tiomcholl an domhain,  
a chnú d'fhionncholl fhoghamhair.

Muireadhach Albanach mh'ainm,  
a ghille náraigh neamhghairbh;  
gairid Clann Bhloid inn ré n-ais,  
dar linn, gidh giod do-ghénmais.

Falmaire agus fear dána  
labhras réd ghnúis ghealmhálla;  
tabhair ní dhamhsa ar mo dhuain,  
is almsa í i n-énuair.

Donnchadh Cairbreach is Clann Táil  
do-ní ar dtarmann 's ar dtógbháil;  
tusa mac athar is fhearr,  
a shlat d'achadh na hÉireann.

...<sup>1</sup>

A Mhurchaidh mheic Bhriain í Bhriain,  
a chrann fineamhna a finnChliaigh,  
a gcuire d'armaibh tar nais,  
duine ar talmhain ní thomhais.

Ceadaigh dhamhsa dul dom thír,  
a Dhonnchaidh Chairbrigh chneismhín,  
i nAlbain bhfeadhaigh bhféraigh  
bhfleadhaigh n-ardaigh n-oilénaigh,  
mo ruaigh i nÉirinn tar mh'ais,  
ní huaid téighim, is tomhais.

Guess who I am, O Murchadh; thou art born to  
good casting; they father surpassed in  
discernment the marshalled battalions.

What craft befits me? Guess, if thou art  
Murchadh. Go and ask Ó Dálaigh,<sup>2</sup> O ruddy,  
kindly, friendly prince.

Guess for me in what home I dwell, O thou that  
art not humble towards a High King. Buess what  
I seek in a house, O bright, fair-haired, white-  
skinned!

Guess what name I bear, O gallant blue-eyed  
whelp! O smooth lad, bright and graceful, guess  
from what land I come.

I come, O curled and twisted hair, from over the  
bright-surfaced Mediterranean; I am going round  
the world, O nut of autumn's fair hazel.

Muireadhach Albanach is my name, O modest  
and gentle youth; the Race of Blod<sup>3</sup> call me to  
them,<sup>4</sup> methinks, though I should have committed  
theft.

A palmer and a poet speaks to thy bright and  
modest countenance; give me somewhat for my  
poetry – 'tis an alms at the same time.

It is Donnchadh Cairbreach and the Children of  
Tál that protect and exalt us; thou are the best  
father's son, O rod of Ireland's field.

...

O Murchadh, son of Brian Ó Briain, O vine from  
fair Cliu, the weapons thou flingest back no man  
on earth can guess.

Let me go to my own land, O smooth-skinned  
Donnchadh Cairbreach, to Scotland of the woods  
and the grass, of the feasts, the hills and the isles.  
I will visit Ireland again; not from thee do I  
depart – and guess!

<sup>1</sup> An additional 19 stanzas have been omitted here. <sup>2</sup> Perhaps the poet himself, for M.A. claims the title in [another poem]. Or it may mean 'descendant of Dálach (†870)', from whom the O'Donnells are called Clann Dálaigh, referring to the one who had banished him. <sup>3</sup> The O'Briens. <sup>4</sup> 'will receive me', CF.

During his exile Muireadhach Albanach visited the Holy Land. ... On his return he visited Ireland, and addressed [this] panegyric to Murchadh, son of Brian Dall, a descendant of Brian Bóramha through his son Donnchadh. Murchadh, surnamed *na n-each* ('of the steeds' ...) was akinsman of the famous Donnchadh Cairbreach, mentioned in §8, and addressed in the supplementary stanza [i.e. the six-line stanza given at the end of the extract included here]. The poet, who felt the need of patronage, does not spare his flattery, comparing Murchadh to the most famous characters in Irish mythology, history and romance. More interesting to the modern reader is the personal note. Muireadhach's new dignity gives him, if possible, a higher claim to consideration.

Poem, translation, textual note and footnotes 2-4 from Osborn Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*. Dublin (1970), 108-112 and 261-263.

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## To a Harp

Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh cct.

A *chláirsíoch Chnuic Í Chosgair*  
*chuirios súan* ar *síorrosgaibh*,  
a *nuallánach bhINN bhlasda*,  
*ghrINN fhuaránach fhorasda*.

A *chlár buadha as bláith mínlearg*,  
a *mhonghárach mhéirfhírdhearg*,  
a *cheóladhach do cheALG sinn*,  
a *dHEARG leómhanach láinbhinn*.

A *bhréagadh eóin a healta*,  
a *fhionnfhuaradh aigionta*,  
a *dhONN bhionnfhoclach bhallach*,  
*IONN iongantach iodhlannach*.

A *leighios gach laoich ghonta*,  
a *shógh brégtha bantrachta*,  
a *eól gnáthach ós goirmlinn*,  
a *cheól fáthach foghairbhinn*.

A *bháthadh gach croinn dhiúil*,  
a *chrANN taitneamhach taidhiúir*,  
a *chomhnaidhi eidir chloINN gCoinn*,  
a *chroINN donnbhuidhi dhíoghainn*.

A *aoinleannán na n-eólach*,  
a *chorrach bhláith bhinncheólach*,  
a *rélta chorcra ós cIONN síodh*,  
a *mhIONN ochta* na *n-airdríogh*.

A *sgatha binne boga*,  
a *chláirsíoch dhonn diarmada*,  
a *CHRUTH gan fhúath ó fheadhain*,  
a *GHUTH cúach* a *gcéiteamhain*.

Ní *chúala ceól* mar do *chronn*,  
tar *éis Túaithi Dé Danann*;  
a *chraobh dhonnLOGHACH dhata*,  
*chaomh fhorbharach allata*.

A *fhúaim trágha ré toINN cciúin*,  
a *chrANN fógadhghlan firchiúil*,  
*fleadha ‘gá n-ól it fhochair*,  
a *ghlór eala ós fhionnshrothaibh*.

A *núall ban sídhe a Síth Lir*,  
*‘s gan ceÓL do chor at aighidh*,  
ód *threÓIR as téidbhinn gach teach*,  
a *chéidrinne cheÓIL* na *gcláirsíoch*.

## A Palmer's Greeting

Muireadhach Albanach cct.

Tomhais cia *mise*, a *Mhurchaidh*;  
maith do *dhúthchas deaghurchair*;  
do chinn t'*athair* ar *aithne*  
ar na *cathaibh córaighthe*.

Cá healadha *fhoghnas damh*?  
tomhais, *mása thú Murchadh*;  
EIRG is *iarfaigh* d'Ú *Dhálaigh*,  
a dheIRG *lianchair leannánaigh*.

Tomhais damh cá *baile i mbím*,  
a *fhir* nach *uis re hairdrígh*;  
TOMHAIS a *dtúirim* i *dtigh*,  
a shOLAIS *chúilfhinn chneisghil*.

Tomhais cá hainm *fhuil ormsa*,  
a *chuilÉN SAOR súlghormsa*;  
a ghille *mhín shOLAIS sheing*,  
TOMHAIS cá *tír as dtigim*.

Tigim, a fholt *fleasgach fiar*,  
tar Muir *dtaobhsholas dToirrian*;  
atÚ ag *tíomcholl an domhain*,  
a chnÚ d'*fhionncholl fhoghamhair*.

Muireadhach Albanach mh'*ainm*,  
a ghille *náraigh neamhghairbh*;  
gairid Clann BhLOID *inn* ré n-*ais*,  
dar *linn*, gidh *gIOD do-ghénmais*.

*Falmaire* agus *fear dána*  
labhras réd *ghnúis ghealmhálla*;  
tabhair ní *dhamhsa* ar mo *dhuain*,  
is *almsa í* i n-*énuair*.

Donnchadh Cairbreach is Clann *Táil*  
do-ní ar *dtarmann 's ar dtógbháil*;  
tusa MAC *athar* is *fhéarr*,  
a shLAT d'*achadh* na hÉireann.

A Mhurchaidh mheic *Bhriain í Bhriain*,  
a chrann *fineamhna a finnChliaigh*,  
a gcUIRE d'*armaibh* tar *nais*,  
DUINE ar *talmhain* ní *thomhais*.

Ceadaigh dhamhsa dul dom *thír*,  
a Dhonnchaidh *Chairbrigh chneismhín*,  
i nAlbain *bhfeadhaigh bhféraigh*  
*bhfleadhaigh n-ardaigh n-oilénaigh*,  
mo *ruaigh* i nÉIRINN tar *mh'ais*,  
ní *huaid tÉIGHIM*, is *tomhais*.