

Beatha agus buanna Phádraic Uí Chonaire

The life and literary legacy of

Pádraic Ó Conaire

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Óige

Rugadh Pádraic Ó Conaire, nó Patrick Joseph Conroy, mar a glaoth air, do Thomas agus Kate Conroy i gcathair na Gaillimhe ar 28ú Feabhra 1882. Labharadh Béarla leis sa bhaile, ach bhí alán, cainteoirí Gaeilge mórthimpeall air agus é ag fás aníos.

Bhí sé tar éis bogadh go teach nua ar a laghad 6 h-uaire faoin am a shroich sé ocht mbliana déag d'aois, agus bhí alán fulaingthe aige ina óige. Fuair a athair bás nuair a bhí sé 5 nó 6 bliain d'aois, agus fuair a mháthair bás nuair a bhí sé a dódhéag. Tár éis bás a mháthar, thóg muintir a athar é, agus labharaídis Béarla sa bhaile. Labhair alán daoine mórthimpeall ar Ó Conaire Gaeilge, agus ba í an Ghaeilge an t-ábhar ab fhearr a bhí aige ar scoil. Thuig sé gur tugadh níos mó tábhachta agus measa don mBéarla ná don nGaeilge.

Blianta Londan, 1900-1915

Nuair a d'fhág Ó Conaire an scoil, chuaigh sé ag obair don státseirbhís i Londain. Thosnaigh sé ag obair don Roinn Oideachais mar "boy copyist" sa bhliain 1900. Ba é seo an grád ba ísle a bhí sa státseirbhís ag an am. Fuair sé post níos fearr, mar chléireach cúnata, i 1901. Phós sé Mary McManus agus bhí ceathrar leanbh acu.

Nuair a bhí Ó Conaire i Londain, bhí sé an-pháirteach in athbheochan na Gaeilge. Bunaíodh Conradh na Gaeilge ann in 1896. Dhiúltaigh sé aon rud a scríobh as Béarla nó a scéalta a aistriú go Béarla, cé go mbeadh níos mó daoine á léamh dá mbeidís as Béarla, agus thuillfeadh sé níos mó airgid dá bharr sin.

Bhí Conradh na Gaeilge an-thábhachtach i saol Uí Chonaire, mar dhuine agus mar scríbhneoir. Ba é a cheangal leis an nGaeilge. Eagraíodh Oícheanta Seanchais, agus ba ag ócáid dar leithéid a léirigh sé an chéad ghearrscéal a scríobh sé, *An t-Iascaire agus an file*, i 1901. Foilsíodh é mí níos déanaí sa nuachtán, *An Claidheamh Soluis*. Chuaigh sé chuig na hOícheanta Seanchais seo go rialta agus léirigh ann a smaointe agus a scéalta. Faoi 1902, bhí ardmheas ar Ó Conaire mar léachtóir ag na hOícheanta Seanchais. Thosnaigh sé ag múineadh Gaeilge san oíche, agus luadh é mar eiseamláir do mhúinteoirí eile. D'úsáid sé an modh múinteoireachta teangan Berlitz, an modh is fearr a bhí ann.

Thosnaigh Ó Conaire ag scríobh drámaí, agus bhuaigh sé cúpla duais Oireachtais dá chuid scríbhneoireachta. Bhí cáil air in Éirinn dá chuid scríbhneoireachta agus i Londain mar léachtóir agus múinteoir. Scríobh sé altanna do nuachtáin go rialta chomh maith.



Filleadh ar Éirinn

I 1915, chaill Ó Conaire a phost sa státseirbhís i Londain. Ní raibh Conradh na Gaeilge ag foilsiú a nuachtáin mhíosúil, *An t-Éireannach*, a thuilleadh, agus tháinig laghdú ar an líon duine a bhí ag freastal ar na ranganna Gaeilge. Ní raibh mórán dá dhomhan Gaelach fágtha i Londain, agus theastaigh ó Ó Conaire an domhan sin a chur ar bun in Éirinn. D'fhill sé ar Éirinn i 1915, agus d'fhág sé Mary agus a chlann ina dhiaidh.

Níor éirigh go ró-mháith leis nuair a d'fhill Ó Conaire ar Éirinn. Stop Conradh na Gaeilge de bheith ag foilsiú i 1915 de bharr fadhbanna airgeadais, agus chiallaigh sé seo go raibh 9 bhfoilsitheoirí difriúla ag Ó Conaire idir 1916 agus 1927. Chuir an t-Athair Peadar Ua Laoghaire i gcoinne 2 leabhar de chuid Uí Chonaire ar chúiseanna mórálachta. Bhí na leabhair seo ar mhionchlár chúrsa an Mhaithreánaigh, agus nuair a baineadh iad de bharr ghearáin an Athar Peadar Ua Laoghaire, cuireadh isteach ar phóca Uí Chonaire. Bhí Ó Conaire ag ól go trom chomh maith ó d'fhill sé ó Shasana.

D'fhoilsigh Conradh na Gaeilge 5 leabhar de chuid Uí Chonaire roimh filleadh dó ar Éirinn, agus bhí an chuid is fearr dá scríbhneoireacht déanta aige i Londain faoi 1915. Eisceacht is ea *Seacht mbua an éirí amach*, a foilsíodh i 1918.

Fuair Ó Conaire bás i 1928, agus níor tugadh mar sheoladh ar theastas a bháis ach "Salthill, Co. Galway". "Journalist" an tslí bheatha a bhí luaite leis.

Foinsí

Riggs, P. (1994). *Pádraic Ó Conaire Deoraí*. Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar Tta.

Early life

Pádraic Ó Conaire, or Patrick Joseph Conroy, as he was named, was born to Thomas and Kate Conroy in Galway City on 28 February 1882. English was spoken at home, but Pádraic was surrounded by Irish speakers growing up.

He had moved house at least 6 times by age 18, and had experienced great loss in his childhood. His father died when he was 5 or 6 years old, and his mother died when he was 12. After her death he was raised by his father's family, who were also English speaking. Many people around him spoke Irish and it was Ó Conaire's best subject at school. He understood that English was held in higher esteem than Irish.

London years, 1900-1915

When Ó Conaire left school he went to work for the civil service in London. He started as a "boy copyist" working for the Department of Education in 1900. This was the lowest grade in the civil service at the time. He was promoted to the permanent post of "junior clerk" in 1901. He married Mary McManus and they had four children.

When he was in London, Ó Conaire became very involved in the Gaelic revival. Conradh na Gaeilge was established in London in 1896. He refused to write anything in English or to have his stories translated, even though English

readership would have been larger and therefore more lucrative.

Conradh na Gaeilge played an important role in Ó Conaire's life, as a person and a writer. It was his link to Irish.

Social evenings were organised and this was where he presented his first short story, *An t-Iascaire agus an file*, in 1901. It was published a month later in the newspaper, *An Claidheamh Soluis*. He regularly attended these social evenings, where he presented his ideas and stories. By 1902, he was greatly respected as a lecturer at the social evenings. He began teaching Irish in the evenings and was a highly respected teacher. He used the Berlitz language teaching method, which was seen as the best approach to language teaching.

Ó Conaire began writing plays, and he won several "Oireachtas" prizes for his writing. He was well-known in Ireland for his writing and well-known in London as a lecturer and teacher. He was also writing articles regularly for newspapers.



Ó Conaire lena bhean Mary/ Ó Conaire with his wife Mary

Return to Ireland

In 1915, Ó Conaire lost his job in the civil service in London. Conradh na Gaeilge's monthly newspaper, *An t-Éireannach* was no longer being published, and the number of people attending classes had dropped. He keenly felt the loss of his Irish language surroundings and wanted to recreate them in Ireland. He returned to Ireland in 1915, leaving Mary and his children behind.

Things did not go well for him on his return to Ireland. Conradh na Gaeilge stopped publishing in 1915 due to financial problems, and this meant that he had to approach 9 different publishers between 1916 and 1927. An t-Athair Peadar Ua Laoghaire objected on moral grounds to two of his books, which were being studied for the Matriculation examination, and they were removed from the syllabus. This affected Ó Conaire financially. He was also drinking heavily since his return to Ireland.

He had done the best of his writing by 1915 before his return to Ireland with five of his books published by Conradh na Gaeilge. The exception is *Seacht mbua an éirí amach* published in 1918.

Ó Conaire died in 1928, and in the death notice, the only address that was given for him was "Salthill, Co. Galway" and "Journalist" was given as his profession.

References

Riggs, P. (1994). *Pádraic Ó Conaire Deoraí*. Dublin: An Clóchomhar Tta.



Foilsíodh an chéad scéal de chuid Uí Chonaire, *An t-iascaire agus an file, sa Claidheamh Soluis* i 1901. I 1904, bhuaigh sé duais an Oireachtais (£3) dá ghearrscéal *Páidín Mháire*, agus bhuaigh sé duais eile i 1909 dá scéal *Neill* (£4), agus do ficsean le *Deoraíocht* (£20). I 1918 bhuaigh sé duais eile don dráma *A chéad bhean* (£10). Glactar leis nár thuill sé ach £700 dá chuid oibre.

Deoraíocht (1910)

Tá *Deoraíocht* ar cheann dos na h-úrscéalta Gaeilge is spleodraí dá bhfuil ann. Deineann sé cur síos ar éachtanna fhear ón nGaillimh a théann ar imirce go Londain, áit a fhágtar cithréim air de bharr timpiste tráchta. Meafar is ea an gortú fisiciúil a léiríonn an tráma laistigh dó féin mar imirceach tuaithe i dtimpeallacht uirbeach.

An Chéad Chloch (1914)

Baineann na hocht scéalta seo, a scríobhadh don *Claidheamh Soluis* agus a foilsíodh i bhfoirm leabhair i 1914, le buntéamaí Uí Chonaire: grá tragóideach, éad, fealladh agus díláithriú. Ach is mór idir an domhan iontu agus saol dúchasach Uí Chonaire, saol Chonamara. Tá ceithre cinn dos na scéalta bunaithe ar eachtraí ón dTiomna Nua.

Scothscéalta (1956)

Tá deich ngearrscéalta a scríobh Ó Conaire agus a bhailigh Tomás de Bhaldraithe, sa chnuasach, *Scothscéalta*. Ceistíonn na scéalta sa bhailiúchán réamhthuirimí Éire na tuaithe chomh maith le léiriú steiréitipiciúil ghnáthduine. Díríonn na scéalta ar fhirinní uilíocha.

Ba é gearrscéal Uí Chonaire, *Masal beag dubh* inspioráid na h-aoire Idirlín ar an margadh peile. Luaigh *The Times*, *When Saturday Comes* (an irisleabhar peile) agus goal.com Bugdúv.



Ó Conaire's first story *An t-iascaire agus an File* was published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in 1901. In 1904 he won an Oireachtas Award (£3) for his short story *Páidín Mháire*, he won another in 1909 with the novella "*Neill*" (£4) and for fiction with *Deoraíocht* (£20). In 1918 he won another for the play *A Chéad Bhean* (prize £10). It is thought that he earned no more than £700 from his work.

Deoraíocht / Exile (1910)

Deoraíocht (Exile) is one of the most colourful and audacious Irish novels detailing the exploits of a Galwegian who emigrates to London and is maimed in a traffic accident. The physical injuries mirror the internal trauma he experiences as a rural emigrant in an urban setting.

An Chéad Chloch (1914)

These eight stories, written for *An Claidheamh Soluis* and published in book form in 1914 deal with Ó Conaire's recurring themes of tragic love, jealousy, betrayal and displacement but their settings are far from the author's native Connacht. Four stories give imaginative interpretations of incidents from the New Testament.

Scothscéalta (1956)

Scothscéalta contains ten short stories written by Ó Conaire and gathered by Tomás de Bhaldraithe. The stories in the collection challenge preconceptions of rural Ireland as well as stereotypical representations of the little man and of women, highlighting instead surprising and universal truths.

Ó Conaire's short story *M'Asal Beag Dubh* was the inspiration for an internet based satire on the football transfer market. Bugdúv was mentioned by *The Times*, *When Saturday Comes* and on goal.com.



Seacht mbua an éirí amach

Foilsíodh leabhar Phádraic Uí Chonaire, *Seacht mbua an éirí amach*, i 1918. Is cnuasach gearrscéalta é seo, agus tá ceangal ag gach ceann acu le Éirí Amach na Cásca. Bhí aithne ag Ó Conaire ar roinnt mhaith dos na daoine a bhí páirteach san Éirí Amach; bhí sé mór le Michael Collins i Londain, agus bhí sé ar scoil le Éamonn de Valera. Theastaigh uaidh páirt a ghlacadh leo ar Luan Cásca 1916, ach bhí sé i bpríosún i nDoire ag an am. Dhiúltaigh sé Béarla a labhairt ann; Gaeilge amháin a labhair sé, agus bhí amhras ann gur spaire Gearmánach é agus gabhadh é. Ba é *Seacht mbua an éirí amach* an rud a thug Ó Conaire don Éirí Amach, mar chomhartha ómóis dá chairde agus mar leithscéal dóibh toisc nach raibh sé páirteach leo.



Seacht mbua an éirí amach

Pádraic Ó Conaire's book *Seacht mbua an éirí amach* was published in 1918. A collection of seven short stories, each is linked to the 1916 Rising. Ó Conaire knew several of the main participants in the Rising; he knew Michael Collins in London, and he was at school with Éamonn de Valera. He would have liked to have joined them at Easter 1916, but he was in prison in Derry at the time. He refused to speak English there, speaking only Irish, and was arrested under suspicion of being a German spy. *Seacht mbua an éirí amach* was Ó Conaire's contribution to the 1916 Rising, as a mark of respect to his friends and an apology to them for his absence.

Ceoltóirí

Níl an ceangal le Éirí Amach 1916 ró-shoiléir sa scéal seo go dtí an deireadh, nuair a spreagtar duine dos na príomh-charachtair chun dul ag troid sa "seanchath nach stopfaidh go mbeidh Éire ag Éireannaigh".

Díoltas

Eireaball leis an scéal *Ceoltóirí* is ea *Díoltas*. Féachtar le díoltas a imirt ar cheannaire Airm Shasana mar go bhfuair mac an scéalaí bás dá bharr i rith Éirí Amach 1916.

Beirt bhan misniúil

Tá gné pearsanta den Éirí Amach sa scéal seo chomh maith. Léirítear an éifeacht ar mhuintir na ndaoine a maraíodh. Sa scéal seo, tá máthair agus leannán fhear a fuair bás san Éirí Amach ag iarraidh a bhás a cheilt ar a chéile.

Anam an easpaig

Tá sé ar intinn ag easpag sa gart a smachtú toisc go raibh sé ag soláthar armlóin do na hÓglaigh, ach tagann athrú aigne air faoin staid polaitíochta tar éis dó Baile Átha Cliath a fheiscint trí thine i rith an Éirí Amach.

Bé an tsiopa seandachta

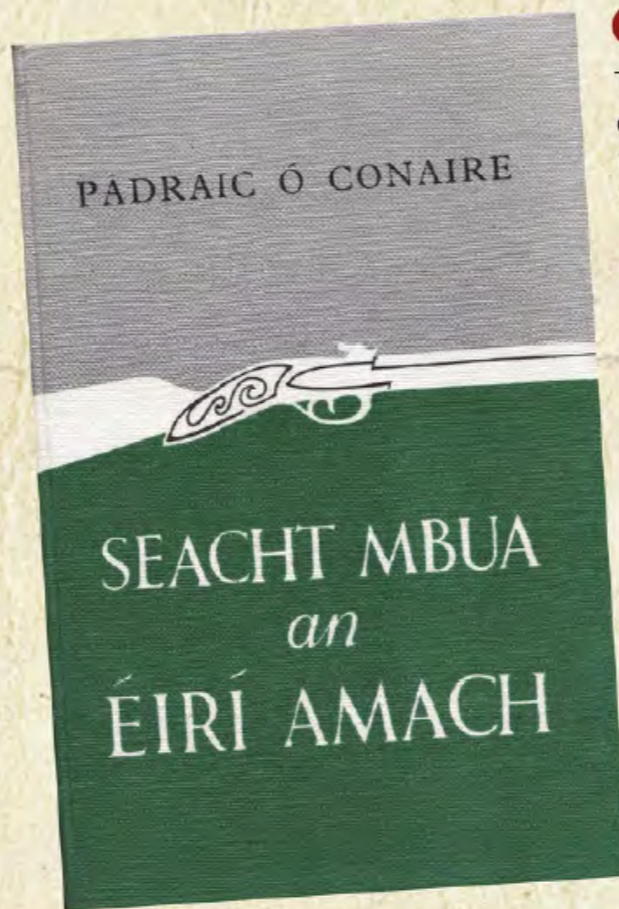
Is scéal grá é seo. Deineann bean atá ag obair i siopa seandachta iarracht cosaint a thabhairt do cheannairceach 1916 mar go bhfuil bleachtair ag faire air agus á leanúint.

Rún an fhir mhóir

Tá fear cúisithe ar dhúnmharú a mhná, ach tá rún aige a bhaineann le ceannaire Éirí Amach 1916. Sa scéal seo chomh maith, ní fheictear an ceangal leis an Éirí Amach go dtí an deireadh.

M'fhile caol dubh

Seo ceann dos na scéalta is fearr atá scríofa ag Ó Conaire. Bhí Ó Conaire fé anáil an zeitgeist céanna agus a bhí scríbhneoirí eile an ré sin mar Robert Louis Stevenson agus James Joyce. Is bean í reacaire an scéil seo – bean atá braon dá fear céile agus atá meallta ag "m'fhile caol dubh". Tógtha ó amhrán traidisiúnta, *An buachaill caol dubh*, níl sa bhfile, mar dhea, ach leagan idéalach dá fear céile, a bhfuil drochmheas aici air. Is Doppelgänger iad an file agus an fear céile. Maraítear an fear céile san Éirí Amach agus é ag iarraidh an file a shábháil.



Ceoltóirí

The link to the 1916 Rising is unclear in this story until the end, when one of the main characters is inspired to join those fighting in an "old war that will not stop until Ireland is owned by Irish people".

Díoltas

This story is a continuation of *Ceoltóirí*. Revenge is sought on the commanding officer of the English army, who caused the death of the narrator's son during the 1916 Rising.

Beirt bhan misniúil

Once more personalising the 1916 Rising by describing its effect on the families of the deceased, this story involves the mother and fiancée of a man who died in the Rising. Both women try to conceal his death from each other.

Anam an easpaig

A bishop who plans to discipline a priest for providing ammunition to militant nationalists changes his mind about the political situation after seeing Dublin in flames during the 1916 Rising.

Bé an tsiopa seandachta

This is a love story. A woman working in an antique shop attempts to protect a 1916 rebel who is being watched and followed by a detective.

Rún an fhir mhóir

A man accused of killing his wife holds a secret associated with the leader of the 1916 Rising. In this story also, the connection with the 1916 Rising does not become apparent until the end.

M'fhile caol dubh

This is one of Ó Conaire's best works. Influenced by the same zeitgeist as his contemporary James Joyce, and Robert Louis Stevenson, from a slightly older era, it is narrated by a woman, bored with her husband, who is seduced by "my dark slender poet". Derived from the folk song, *An buachaill caol dubh*, the so-called poet is merely an idealised version of her despised husband. Poet and husband are Doppelgänger. The husband is killed in the Rising while trying to save the poet.

