

Varia 1. Proclitic *mis*. 2. *fírad*. 3. Further to
In Coire Érmae, ‘The Caldron of Poesy’.



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Celtica 35 (2023), 66–77

DOI: 10.58480/SCS-4n92w-cr8gk

DIAS

Institiúid Ard-Léinn | Dublin Institute for
Bhaile Átha Cliath | Advanced Studies



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VARIA

1. Proclitic *mis*. 2. *fírad*. 3. Further to *In Coire Éarmae*, ‘The Caldron of Poesy’.

1. PROCLITIC MIS

WHILE THE PEJORATIVE prefix and preverb *mí-* is a very well attested form,¹ the existence of an alternative form *mis* has been disputed. Pedersen (VKG ii, 10, 298) derived *mí-* prefixed to nouns, as in *mígním* ‘misdeed’, and the preverbal form in *mit n-imret* ‘that they deceive him’, *MI*. 74b22, from **mis*, and cited *miscuis* ‘hatred, dislike’, as the sole form with the *-s* preserved.² Meyer (1912: 793–4, §9), referring to Pedersen, cited the example of *missimbert* in *Tochmarc Emire* (discussed below), which he had taken as a noun meaning ‘foul play’, as an instance of the preservation of *mis-* before a vowel; he subsequently (Meyer 1913: 182) noted Marstrander’s explanation of it as a later extension of the form before consonants, and added the form *misceird* from *O’Dav*. 392.³ O’Rahilly (1942: 158–9) proposed as additional evidence for an original **mis* his derivation of *mifir* ‘dispirited, faint-hearted’ and *mifre* ‘dejection’ from **mis-viri-* ‘unmanly’ and **mis-viriā* ‘unmanliness’, respectively.⁴ Furthermore the existence of a preverbal form *mis* was taken for granted by D. A. Binchy, as will be seen when we come to the final example in this paper.

On the other hand, Thurneysen, *GOI* §365.2, stated that ‘there is no by-form *mis-*, as has sometimes been assumed; *miscuis* “hate” is not a compound of *cais* ..., for the adjective *miscsech* presupposes an original palatal vowel in the second syllable’. The objection no longer stands. Thurneysen invoked the rule that the quality of the initial consonant determined the quality of a consonant group resulting from syncope, and while this still holds as the general rule, it has since been shown that when the final consonant was a palatalised *s* the group was palatalised, no matter what the quality of the initial consonant (or consonants) was.⁵ Elsewhere in *GOI* (§§384 and 411), Thurneysen cited the example from *Tochmarc Emire* and analysed the form as *mí-ss-imbirt*, that is *mí-* with a 3 pl. Class A infixed pronoun and the 3 sg. preterite of *imm-beir*, and translated ‘he abused them’.

¹ See *DIL* s.v. *mí-*.

² The form *míerbartmar*, *MI*. 56b26, referred to in VKG ii, 298, is for *remi érbartmar* ‘whom we have mentioned’, as noted in the Addenda and Corrigenda to *Thes* i, and in the supplement thereto (Stokes 1910: 17).

³ For the latter form see example (5) below.

⁴ At the same time, he said of Meyers’s analysis of *missimbert*: ‘but this is a word of very doubtful authenticity and is known only from two of the MS. texts of *Tochmarc Emire* (RC xi, 446 b, ZCP iii, 248 z; a variant is *inis a mbātur*). O’Clerys *misimirt .i. droichimirt* is doubtless derived from one of these texts’. These are the two examples given in *DIL* s.v. *misimbert*, where, following O’Clery and Meyer, the form is classified as a noun.

⁵ See Breatnach (2005: 146–9) and Griffith (2016: 44–6).

In his edition and translation of the earliest⁶ version of *Tochmarc Emire* from Rawlinson B512 Meyer (1890: 446–7) had:

*Fochairt iarom allaili m-beasti n-vathmair amail leoman, dudfich
 7 nad dingne erchoad do. 7 missimbert na maccrada conidtibset.
 Die cetharmad lai scarais an beist fris.*

‘Then he encountered some dreadful beast like a lion, which fought with him, but did him no harm. And the foul play of the youths, who laughed at him. On the fourth day the beast parted from him.’

Meyer took *missimbert* to contain the verbal noun of *imm-beir*, but made no comment on why *maccrada*, which can only be a nom. or acc. pl., should be translated as a genitive singular.⁷ There can be no doubt that Thurneysen was correct in taking *imbirt* as a 3 sg. preterite, and not a verbal noun.⁸

While Thurneysen took *miss* to be a combination of pejorative *mí-* and a proleptic 3 pl. Class A infixed pronoun, on the basis of the examples discussed in what follows, and since a pronoun is not needed here, *miss* can be taken as consisting solely of the preverb. I would then normalise and translate the relevant passage as:⁹

(1) *amail léoman, dud-fíd 7 nád digni airchót dó, 7 mis imbirt na
 maccrada conid-tibset*

‘like a lion, which showed him the way and did him no harm, and it abused the youths who mocked him’.

Preverbal *mis* occurs twice in *Bretha Nemed Toísech*.¹⁰ The first example is in the passage in *CIH* 2216.40–2217.7, concerned with offences committed by animals,¹¹ namely in the question and answer sequence *Co bemis mana bedis misbemis*, *CIH* 2217.5, which can be normalised and translated as:

⁶As convincingly demonstrated by Toner (1998).

⁷Furthermore, the combination with the verbal noun is well attested as *mímbert*, and in the examples listed in *DIL* M 122.54–62 the pejorative prefix always has the form *mí*, never *mis*.

⁸The passage in question is also found in four of the MS copies of the later, expanded, recension. In *RIA* MS 23 N 10, p. 124.4, the reading is *7 misimbirt na macrada ann*, not *inis imbirt na macrada* as in Edel (1980: 126), who translated the misreading as ‘die Spielinsel der Knaben’, thus treating two forms which cannot be genitives as though they were such. The version in *BL* MS Harley 5280 deviates somewhat, with *7 i missimbert na maucruide and*, Meyer (1901: 248 §63). The copies in *RIA* MS D iv 2 and *BL* MS Egerton 92 deviate significantly from the rest, the former having *7 inis i mbátar na macrada and*, Van Hamel (1933: 47 §63), and the latter the almost identical *7 inis i mbatur na macrada ann*, 25Rax; for an explanation of the origin of this reading see Ó Concheanainn (1996: 108 n. 80).

⁹Thurneysen (*GOI* §693) took *dudfich* as an error for the 3 sg. pret. of *do-fét* ‘leads’ (with a 3 sg. masc. Class C infixed pronoun). In the light of Carney’s demonstration (1964: 116 n. 69) of the existence of a separate verb *do-fét* ‘shows’, and Schumacher’s (2004: 667) arguments that the *ī*-preterite stem *fíd-* belongs with compounds of *-fét* rather than of *-fet*, I take it rather as an error for the 3 sg. preterite of *do-fét*, meaning ‘guided, directed, showed the way’. The last word in the cited text is the 3 pl. pret. of *con-tibi* ‘mocks’, etc., again with a 3 sg. masc. Class C infixed pronoun. It is not a form of *tibid* ‘laughs’ as maintained by Ó Concheanainn (1996: 110).

¹⁰For this text see *Companion*, 188–91.

¹¹A background to this and the preceding passage (*CIH* 2216.25–39), on the same topic, is supplied by the first of the ‘stories from the law-tracts’, edited and translated by Dillon (1932: 43–4, 52).

(2) *Co bemis, mani betis? Mis bemis.*

‘How would we be if they [viz. animals] did not exist? We would be badly off’.

Here it precedes a 1 pl. form of the substantive verb, and it cannot be construed as containing an infixed pronoun.

The second example is found in the passage in *CIH* 2224.1–28 concerned with the moral integrity and learning of poets. The sentence in which it occurs presents one of several analogies for the idea of a contaminated part corrupting the whole. The reading in the sole complete copy of the text is *misimbeir searb somblas*, *CIH* 2224.12, and it is also cited in three digests,¹² viz. *misimbir serbh somblas*, *CIH* 1929.31 (Digest C 18), *miisimer searb somblasta*, *CIH* 1139.24 (Digest A 1), *misimber serb somblasta*, *CIH* 1379.20 (Digest B 52). Taking *somblasta* in the last two as a deviation from the original, I would normalise and translate as:

(3) *mis imbir serb somlas*

‘a bitter thing spoils pleasant taste’.

No infixed pronoun is required, and *mis* certainly does not contain a 3 sg. masc. pronoun, which would be required if a proleptic pronoun were to be used.

Two reasonably certain examples in *Bretha Nemed Dédenach* appear side by side in an extract from the fragmentarily preserved opening section of the text, which seems to have been mainly, if not exclusively, concerned with satire.¹³ This is one of a number of entries in a glossary explaining passages from *Bretha Nemed Dédenach* headed *A Bretha Neime Dēidhinach sō*,¹⁴ and is edited by Binchy as: *Tomhnadh .i. baramail, ut est .i. dian .t. cach i ndiaidh ar.ii.e, is do doronadh. 7 misdeine 7 mistomnathar. corp, CIH* 603.21, ‘*Tomhnadh*, i.e. “surmise”, as in *.i. dian ... mistomnathar* [in the] main text’. I would restore and translate as:

(4) *.i. diand tomnad cach i ndiad araili is dó do-rónad 7 mis déni 7 mis tomnatar.*

‘that is, if each person after the other thought that it is for him that it was composed, and he composes it wrongly and they surmise wrongly’.¹⁵

Given the broader context referred to, this probably refers to a satire which on the one hand has been badly composed by the author, and on the other hand is wrongly interpreted by a number of people as being aimed at them.

¹²For digests see *Companion*, Chapter 6.

¹³See *Companion*, 186–7.

¹⁴See *Companion*, 28.

¹⁵I take *dian* to be for *día* with a Class C neuter infixed pronoun, anticipating the clause beginning *is dó* ..., and emend *tomnathar* to plural *tomnatar*, as it refers back to *cach*.

Less certain is a series of possible examples towards the end of the passage beginning *Cia háithemh éó?* ‘What is the sharpest of points?’,¹⁶ in *CIH* 1119.17–26:¹⁷ *airde mór mófochal, mairg imis-seichither, mairg imis-dlomthar, mairg imis-cing ceird, ceird bhraith, mairg imis-dligh míosgaith. Cia háithemh, CIH* 1119.24–6. For the third of the phrases beginning with *mairg* we have the following entry in *O’Dav.* 392: *Ceird .i. cēimniugud nō cing. mairg mis ceird .i. mairg dīa cēimniter in ceird-sin, CIH* 1480.24, translated by Stokes (1904: 259) as ‘*ceird*, i.e. a stepping or walking, ut est “alas for the evil step”! i.e. alas if that step be stept!’.¹⁸ While it does supply the reading *mis* instead of *imis*, the citation is obviously defective in omitting the word *cing*; nevertheless the fact that *cēimniter* in the gloss is only explicable as an echo of *cing* indicates that the form of the citation when it was originally glossed would have been *mairg mis cing ceird*. At the same time, the reading of the continuous copy of the text appears to contain an instance of dittography, and I tentatively suggest that the original reading was:

(5) *mairg mis cing ceird brait*

‘woe to anyone who wrongly progresses through art with plundering’.¹⁹

For *imis* being substituted for *mis*, one can compare the variant *imiss-* for *mis-* in example (1) from *Tochmarc Emire* discussed above. Furthermore, as no compounds **imm-seichethar*, **imm-dloma*, or **imm-dlig* are otherwise attested, it is possible that in the other three phrases beginning with *mairg* the text originally had *mis* followed by the respective simple verbs, but as I cannot offer a satisfactory interpretation of the passage as a whole, I leave them aside.

The next example is found in the OIr text on stolen horses edited by Meyer (1912b: 103–4), under the heading ‘Urteilsspruch wegen entwendeter und beschädigter Pferde’.²⁰ The relevant sentence is printed there (104.4) as *ancid sreba ar oircelaib mis glūaisit co lu athar*,²¹ and I have edited and translated this as:

¹⁶This sentence is cited twice in O’Davoren’s Glossary, namely *cia aitheamh éó, CIH* 1495.18 (*O’Dav.* 770), and *cia aithem eo, CIH* 1467.22 (*O’Dav.* 40 (1)). I would normalise as *Cia háithemh éó?*, taking *éo* as gpl. For the use of a superlative followed by a genitive see *DIL* s.v. *dech* A3b. To the examples there cited can be added *Cid as dech ban, LL* 46414 (*Senbríathra Fíthail*), translated ‘What is the best of women?’, Smith (1928: 56).

¹⁷Corresponding to Gwynn (1942: 25.5–16); see also his note on p. 222.

¹⁸In his edition Stokes printed *misceird* as a single word.

¹⁹Lit. ‘who climbs art’. What is in question is the principle that a poet must be morally upright; see, for example, §6 of *Uraicecht na Ríar*, and the mention there of *idnae inracuis ar gait 7 brait 7 indligiud* ‘purity consisting of being innocent of theft and plunder and illegality’, Breatnach (1987: 104–5). A reader suggests the possibility of confusion with *mos-* ‘soon, quickly’, but I cannot see it as applying to this case.

²⁰The sole copy is in RIA MS 23 N 10, pp. 54–5. It is re-edited with translation and notes in Breatnach (forthcoming).

²¹Note that for Meyer’s *ancid*, the MS has *arcid*.

(6) *ar cid sreba ar oircélaib mis glúaisét co luätar*

‘and even streams pouring from flumes, they badly move [the millwheel] until they are directed’.

What is in question here is the turning of the wheel of a horizontal watermill, and the point being made is that the flow of water from the flume or chute needs to be directed by a human in order to be effective.²²

Numerous examples with verbs in Old, Middle and Early Modern Irish are cited in *DIL* s.v. *mí-* III, and in the later examples *mí-* appears to be mostly, if not always, in close composition with the verb, for example, *michóimétaid ar sabóti-ne* ‘he neglects our sabbaths’, Atkinson (1887: 113, 360 l. 2587), and *marbhaid 7 míochóirighid*, Bergin (1931: 37.1083), ‘they kill and maltreat’.

The examples cited from OIr sources include three preceded by the negative *ní*, viz. *ní mí-aipir*, *MI*. 56d16, ‘he does not speak badly’, *ní michlothaigfetar*, *MI*. 143c3, ‘they will not be dishonoured’, and, from *Apgitir Chrábaid*, *Cetharda nādcón tecmaing do neuch charas Dīa ... nī mīthomnadar ō neuch*, Hull (1968: 72 §21), ‘The four things that do not happen to anyone who loves God: ... he is not to think ill of anyone’.²³

One example also contains a 3 sg. masc infixed pronoun, viz. *mit n-imret* ‘that they deceive him’, *MI*. 74b22. It is the only unambiguous such instance I know of, and the pronoun belongs to Class B.²⁴

There are three examples in OIr sources of verbs in independent position where the form of the prefix is *mí-*, namely *ar cech duine mídúthrastar dam* ‘against every one who shall wish me ill’, *Thes* ii, 356.19, in Patrick’s Hymn, and *mithadbait*, *mitharfaid* ‘thou shewest badly, thou hast shewn badly’, Stokes (1905: 16 §16), from *Immacallam in dá Thúarad*.

The remaining OIr example of *mis* in *DIL* is one of two in the OIr recension of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, both of which occur in difficult passages. The first of these is edited and translated in O’Rahilly (1976: 124, 237, ll. 4123–4) as:

(7) *‘Is bésad,’ ol Fergus, ‘do cach graig remitét láir, rotgata rotbrata, rotfeither a moín hi tóin mná misrairleastair.’*

‘“That is what usually happens,” said Fergus, “to a herd of horses led by a mare. Their substance is taken and carried off and guarded as they follow a woman who has misled them.”’

The editor has made some changes to the MS readings without adequate discussion. No indication is given that the *rod* in *rodbrata rodfeither*, as in the MS and Strachan and O’Keeffe (1912: 122.3647), has been altered to *rot*, and while the

²²See further Breatnach (forthcoming).

²³Taking *nī mīthomnadar* as the deponent jussive subjunctive, rather than a 3 sg. passive indicative, as Hull did with ‘he is not thought ill of by anyone’. Otherwise the translation is that of Hull.

²⁴Cf. *GOI* §411. Strachan (1903: 68n.) commented: ‘Isolated and peculiar is *mitnimret* ... if it be not an error for *mí-n-imret*’, and Stokes (1910: 21), with reference to Strachan’s note, suggested a further alternative *mí-dn-imret*, with a Class C infixed pronoun. I can see no compelling reason for not accepting the form as it stands with a Class B pronoun (cf. *GOI* §413).

alteration of *immoín* to a *moín* is signalled in a footnote,²⁵ no reason is given for doing so. The sequence of three verbal forms *rotgata rodbrata rodfeither* contains problems which, as far as I know, have never been addressed. Is the *-d-* / *-t-* a functioning infixed pronoun, and if so is a 3 sg. neut. or masc. Class C form *-d-* or a 2 sg. form *-t-* to be read? Another possibility would be the Class C form *-d-* with a different function; see, for example, *GOI* §§422, 886. The seemingly passive form *rodfeither* is not compatible with a third person object pronoun, whereas the seemingly active forms *rotgata rodbrata* would be, yet they are all translated as present tense passives, although, while this might be conceivable for *rodfeither*, *gata* and *brata* cannot be present tense passives, even if one is to ignore the infixes.²⁶

The final phrase, however, is not so problematical, consisting of *hi tóin mná* ‘behind a woman’ and *mis* prefixed to *ro* + the conjunct 3 sg. pret. of *airlithir*.²⁷ O’Rahilly supplied a 3 pl. pronoun in the translation, but the same form recurs in example (8) below where it clearly cannot be read as containing an infixed pronoun, and the phrase can accordingly be rendered ‘following a woman who has given bad counsel’.

The second example from the *Táin*, not in *DIL*, is in a short *roscad*, in the form of a first-person utterance by Fergus. It was first edited from the three MS copies by Binchy (1972: 34–6):

(8) *manibed buaid mná mis-rairlestar*

‘had not a woman’s triumph misdirected (me)’.²⁸

If a pronoun is to be supplied, it has to be a 1 sg. form, so that here no argument can be made for analysing what Binchy (1972: 37) refers to as ‘the old *pausa*-form *mis-*’ as consisting of *mí* + a 3 pl. Class A infixed pronoun.

This instance in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* is the only one discussed by Binchy, but taken together with the other examples discussed above, there can be no doubting the existence of a pretonic form *mis* ‘mis-, badly, not well’ used before verbs in OIr. Pending the discovery of further examples, the distribution of the two forms *mí-* and *mis-* can be set out as follows.

Before nouns the prefix is almost exclusively *mí-*. The one secure instance with *mis-* is *miscuis*, and *miscad* ‘curse’ could perhaps be added to this, but no convincing etymology has been proposed for it so far. As for *mifir*, if O’Rahilly’s etymology is correct (see above), it contained *mis-* at an earlier stage of the language.

For the OIr period there appears to have been a complementary distribution in the case of verbs, namely *mis* in independent position,²⁹ and *mí-* in dependent

²⁵The statement therein ‘only *im-* at line end legible Y’ is inaccurate; all of *immoín*, as in Strachan and O’Keeffe (1912: 122.3648) without comment, can be read.

²⁶There is no adequate treatment of these issues either in the most recent publication on the relevant passage (Meid 2021) or in any of the works he refers to.

²⁷This can be normalised as *mis rairlestar* in OIr.

²⁸Binchy (1972: 35). While O’Rahilly (1976: 33.1070) gave the text of *LU*, *manip ed búaid mná misralastar*, in her translation (p. 155) she followed Binchy, with due acknowledgement in a note on p. 257.

²⁹That is, where the verb is not preceded by a conjunct particle.

position. The sole example with an infixed pronoun indicates that it followed the pattern of preverbs, such as *as*, which took Class B. This pattern can be illustrated with the 3 sg. present of *imm-beir* ‘plies, uses’ etc.:

mis imbir, ní mímbir; mit n-imbir.

The vowel in *mis* was probably short, going by *miscuis*, and there can be no doubt about the long vowel in stressed *mí-*. As for the form with the infixed pronoun, I assume as with *mis* that it had a short vowel.

By the Middle Irish period this distribution had broken down, and *mí-* was generalised. The three forms *mídúthrastar*, *míthadbait* and *míthārfaid*, noted above, point to this development as having already begun in the OIr period.

The distribution of *mis/mí* mapped out above for OIr, as well as of some of the prefixed forms mentioned in *GOI* §384, shows that the characterisation in *GOI* §37 of deuterotonic and prototonic alteration in finite verbal forms as applying only to verbs compounded with prepositions needs to be revised.

2. FÍRAD

In Breatnach (1981: 68–9), §12 of the ‘Caldron of Poesy’ was edited and translated as follows:

Fáilte déodae, immurgu, tórumae ind raith déodai dochum in Choiri Éрмаi³⁰ conid n-impoí fōen, conid de biit fáidi déodai 7 dóendai 7 tráchtairi raith 7 frithgnamo imale, conid iarum labrait inna labarthu raith 7 do-gniat inna firtu, condait fásaige 7 bretha a mbríathar, condait desimrecht do cach cobrai. Acht is anechtair ata-tairberat inna hí-siu in coire cíasu medón fo-fertar.

‘Divine joy, moreover, is the coming of divine grace to the Cauldron of Éрмаe, so that it converts it into the upright position, and as a result there are people who are both divine and secular prophets and commentators both on matters of grace and of (secular) learning, and they then utter godly utterances and perform miracles, and their words are maxims and judgements, and they are an example for all speech. But it is from outside that these make the cauldron upright, although they are produced internally.’

The reading of the MS is certainly *firta*, but while success in performing miracles might be conceived of as giving greater authority to what a person might say or write, I came to see it as more and more of a problem that a text on scholarly ability should have made any connection between scholarship and miracle-working, as this text seemed to do. Some years after the edition was

³⁰Read Éрмаe, for which see section 3 below. Other changes which should now be made are *de* to *dé* and *imale* to *immalé* (see Breatnach 2003), and *inna hí-siu* to *inna hí síu* (see Breatnach 2020: 136–7).

published, the late Rolf Baumgarten suggested to me that by making a further slight emendation,³¹ namely substituting a lenited *-th-* for the unlenited *-t-* of the MS, and reading *fírthu*, the text would make far better sense.

The meanings given in *DIL* s.v. for the finite verb *fíraid* are (a) ‘realizes, fulfils’, many of the examples referring to fulfilment of prophecies, and (b) ‘confirms, proves’. Similarly, for the verbal noun *fírad* the meanings given are (a) ‘realizing, fulfilling’, and (b) ‘confirming, corroborating’. Some additions can be made to the collections in *DIL*, such as the MÍr *guth Feideilmthe ro fírad*, ‘Feidilmid’s prophecy has been fulfilled’, O’Brien (1952: 163, 168 v. 28), and the OÍr *nīm thī bās for fecht ro fírtar mo thecht*, in the prayer for long life given as an example of *cētnad n-āisi* in MV II §98, and translated as ‘Death shall not come to me on an expedition, may my journey be carried to the end!’ in Meyer (1917: 20 §2).³²

However, the closest parallel I have so far come across is in *Bretha Nemed Toísech*, namely in the passage *Caomtechtaid rurech do co rinntibh cana cert ara mor fodma dis dithach da folad firtar lamara mathclud co nedaid aru rigdelb rosc*, *CIH* 2213.14, which is normalised and translated in Breatnach (1989: 18, 19 §22) as:

Coímtechtaid Ruirech do Chorinntib con-acert ara mór fodmaitis díthechtae folad.

Fírtair la Maram athchlúd co n-étade ara Ríg delbrosc.

“‘The Companion of the Great King’ had adjudicated to the Corinthians that they should greatly suffer unjust considerations.

It is confirmed by “the Mariner” that he had found a reversal of the precept of their King’.

This is part of a longer passage from Book 42 of the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* which was rendered into the convoluted *roscad* style of OÍr,³³ so that the translation is markedly different from that of the original on which it is based:

Paulus ad Corinthios: Quare non magis injuriam accipitis? Quare non fraudem patimini? Sed vos injuriam facitis et fraudatis et hoc fratribus.

Pelagius: Ac si diceret, cum inlatam injuriam secundum praeceptum evangelii et Domini exemplo patienter sustinere debueratis, vos e contrario non solum non suffertis, sed etiam non facientibus inrogatis.

‘*Paul to the Corinthians*: Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not suffer being defrauded? But in fact you do wrong and defraud, and that to your brethren.

³¹In addition to normalising the final *-a* to *-u*.

³²Note also the translations ‘may I not die on my journey, may my return be ensured to me’ in Greene and O’Connor (1967: 35), and ‘may death not come to me upon the road, may my journey be confirmed’ in Carey (1998: 137).

³³See Breatnach (1984: 447–52).

Pelagius: It is as though he were saying, when you should have patiently borne wrong inflicted on you according to the precept of the Gospel and in keeping with the example of the Lord, you on the contrary not only do not suffer, but also you inflict (wrong) on those who do not do (wrong).³⁴

These two sentences, a citation from Scripture followed by a piece of exegesis on it, supply an unambiguous context where a form of the verb *firaid* is used to describe the work of the commentator. While further examples would be welcome, this does provide good support for Baumgarten's interpretation. I would now implement it and suggest translating *7 do-gniat inna firthu* as 'and they produce the corroborations', that is, commentaries confirming the truth of Scripture.

3. FURTHER TO *IN COIRE ÉRMAE*, 'THE CALDRON OF POESY'

In the edition, I normalised the name of the second cauldron to *Coire Érmai*, since the form of the question in §14, *Cid inermái*, led me to conclude that the second element in the name, written *coire erma* in the MS (§4, etc., see note on p. 82), could not be the gsg. of *érimm*. When it subsequently became clear that the neuter article could be used to mark a cited form, no matter what its gender or case was, I revised my opinion (Breatnach 1990: 100–101), and would now restore *Coire Érmae*, with the gsg. of *érimm*. As noted in Breatnach (1981: 52), of the three cauldrons postulated in the text, this receives the most attention, and, although it is attested only once, the original title may well have been *In Coire Érmae*.

In a paper published some years ago, Mulligan (2009) looked beyond grammatical and metrical texts for the conceptual background to the idea of the three cauldrons which is central to the text,³⁵ and since it appeared in a journal dealing with matters at some remove from our field, I felt it is worth drawing attention to it here.³⁶ Drawing on discussions of human reproduction in early medieval medical texts, she argues that the underlying concept in *In Coire Érmae* is best explained by reference to what they have to say on the workings of the uterus. Thus, for example, on p. 497 she states:

Medieval anatomical texts provide a context in which the uterus is clearly linked to a cauldron or cooking vessel. The uterus (and sometimes the woman herself) was referred to as *vas*, denoting "jar" or "vessel," and the uterus was seen as a "receptacle for semen," shaped like an "upside-down vase." Conceptualization of the womb as a vat or cauldron is perhaps most clearly evident in visual representations. A series of images of the fetus-in-utero

³⁴Wasserschleben (1885: 162 4b–c); the translation is as in Breatnach (1984: 449).

³⁵Mention may also be made of the paper by Corthals (2013–14), where the text is examined in the light of 'assumptions about the structure of the human mind and the role of education, which ultimately reach back to the beginnings of Greek learning' (p. 74).

³⁶I owe my knowledge of it to Dr Elizabeth Boyle of Maynooth University.

first appeared in the *Gynaecia*, a Latin translation of Soranus' Greek tract on gynecology made by Muscio (or Mustio) in about 500 C.E. In at least twenty manuscript versions of Muscio's widely circulated redaction of the text, the uterus is depicted as an upside-down, cauldron-like vessel completely dissociated from the body.

And on p. 503 she concludes her arguments with:

In summary CP [= The Caldron of Poesy] is a very early text in which the internalized corporeal cauldrons that shift about in the body and produce verbalized knowledge and verse can most clearly be understood in terms of the poetic womb ... when seen in the light of contemporary medieval medical discourse on reproduction that depicts and describes the womb as a cooking vessel that can wander and shift about, there is a certain reproductive logic that credits reading the poetic cauldron, which resides in the body, as a productive "poet's womb".

Mulligan has made a convincing case, and as a consequence I would now revise my edition of MS *saerbrud imberbthar bunad cach sofis* in lines 85–6 to:³⁷

sóerbrú i mberbthar
bunad cach sofis

'a noble womb in which is cooked
the basis of all knowledge'.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Companion* Liam Breatnach, *A Companion to the Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, Early Irish Law Series 5 (Dublin, 2005).
O'Dav. Stokes (1904).

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³⁷My edition has *sóerbrud* 'a noble brew', whereas Henry (1979–80: 126.27) read *Saerbru(d)* 'the noble womb'. This instance can be added to the list of spellings with a redundant final spirant which I gave on p. 56. For the idea of cooking see Mulligan (2009: 495, 499–500).

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