

Varia Hibernica



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**DIAS**

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## VARIA HIBERNICA

1. The syntax of *at-bail* ‘dies, perishes’. 2. *ettae*, 3pl. rel. of *ithid* ‘eats’. 3. *desruith*, *desruithithir*. 4. *bríad* ‘residue’ in *Bérta na Filed*. 5. *maoi* in *Bérta na Filed*.

### 1. THE SYNTAX OF *AT-BAIL* ‘DIES, PERISHES’<sup>1</sup>

AMONGST the OIr glosses on *Córus Bésgnai* is *ata-baill a n-aurdliged in fine n-ērlama mā cian bedi cen saigid a ndūthaig .i. mā ro-sā rudhrad* ‘their inherent right perishes from the kin of the patron saint if they let a long period of time elapse without seeking their hereditary right, i.e. if it reaches an undue lapse of time’, edited and translated in Breatnach (2017: 276–7 §92).<sup>2</sup> In a note on this (p. 283), I commented that the use of the accusative, doubly marked with a pronoun and a noun object, was noteworthy, and I will now provide a fuller account of the syntax of *at-bail*, and supply additional examples of this particular usage, where the subject of the verb expresses what is lost and the person who undergoes the loss is made the object of the verb.

As noted in *GOI* §423, forms of *at-bail* and its suppletive preterite *at-bath* are normally, but not always, accompanied by an 3sg. neut. infixed pronoun. Examples there referred to include *int í fora tuit-som immurgu at-bail-side* ‘he, however, on whom it falls, he perishes’, *Wb.* 4d15, and *amal arind-chrin dá 7 asind-bail* ‘as smoke perishes and dies’, *ML.* 57a10, and, exceptionally without the pronoun, *arnā epíltis oc opair semper* ‘that they might not die by being at work always’, *ML.* 121d16.

As these examples show, it can take both animate and inanimate subjects, and in the case of the latter the meanings range from ‘perishes’ to, in legal usage, ‘lapses, is forfeit’. Furthermore, the verb can be construed with objects other than the 3sg. neuter infixed pronoun, as will be seen below.

*DIL* cites examples where the cause of death or perishing of is indicated with the preposition *di*, e.g. *mani eple dē* ‘if he dies not of it’, *Sg.* 181a5, and *fo bithin at-bathatar dend aīne-sin sruithi* ‘because old men died of that fast’, Gwynn and Purton (1911: 156.5).<sup>3</sup>

Examples are also cited where the cause of death or perishing of both animate and inanimate subjects is indicated either by the ‘acc. or dat.’, e.g.

<sup>1</sup>In what follows, the position of the length-mark and macron is normalised in citations, and macrons, punctuation, and occasionally a different word-division are introduced in citations. Editorial additions are in square brackets. My thanks are due to the editors of *Celtica* and an anonymous reader for a number of improvements, while all remaining shortcomings are my responsibility.

<sup>2</sup>The gloss (= *CIH* 904.28) is part of an extensive Old Irish glossing of *Senchas Már* (*OGSM*), for which see *Companion*, 338–46.

<sup>3</sup>To the examples in *DIL* can be added one from the OIr glossing of *Senchas Már*, viz. *ci abela-som immurgu dā fācbāil a chailce*, *CIH* 924.5, translated ‘though it should die from leaving behind its sting’, Charles-Edwards and Kelly (1983: 67 §29 gl. e).

*at-bēlam gorte* ‘we will die of want’, Greene and Kelly (1976: 60–1.1556), and *ni epēla faill ná ésliss* ‘he will not die from neglect or contempt’, Van Hamel (1933: 7.23). An additional example, with an inanimate subject, is *Ní apail íriu ainfaíthius* ‘Land does not lapse from inadvertence’ McLeod (1992: 186–7).

The hesitation in *DIL* as to whether *at-bail* takes the accusative or dative is of course due to the fact that in none of the examples cited do we have a case form of the noun which is unambiguously one or the other. However, two examples not previously taken into account allow us to decide between the two possibilities. The first is the form with an infixed pronoun in verse 27 of *Anmchairdes Mancháin Léith*,<sup>4</sup> the two MS copies of which read:

Diumus frithbruithe indriha donahuimlib dobeir rath foimned  
digal doen dogni inat aingil itabath, 23 N 10, p. 90.4–6.

Diummuss frithbruidhe ind righ. dona humlaib doberath  
foimnedh diogal doen dogni. inad aingil adigbath, B. IV. 2,  
fol. 140r19–20.

The best way to account for the variant readings of the final word is to posit an original *adid-bath*, with *adid-* to *ita* in N through loss of final *-d*, and to *adig* in B through confusion of lenited *d* and *g*. Accordingly I would restore and translate as:

Díummus frithbrúitheo ind Ríg  
— dona huimlib do-berr rath —  
foimned dígail dóen do-gní,  
indid aingel adid-bath.

‘Pride, whereby God is rejected<sup>5</sup> — to the humble grace is given  
— let the human who practises it beware of punishment, seeing  
that an angel<sup>6</sup> perished because of it.’

The last line can be translated more literally as ‘since it is an angel who perished because of it’, and *adid-bath* can be analysed as the 3sg. relative preterite form with a class C 3sg. masc. infixed pronoun,<sup>7</sup> referring to *díummus*, as the object of the verb indicating cause.

<sup>4</sup>Ed. from the copies in RIA MSS 23 N 10, pp. 89–90 and B IV 2, fols 139r–140r by Meyer (1910: 310–12). Meyer prints v. 27 as it stands in 23 N 10.

<sup>5</sup>Lit. ‘pride of rejecting of the King’.

<sup>6</sup>That is, Lucifer.

<sup>7</sup>Note that the form of the preverb is *ad-*, not *as-*; for confusion of these preverbs see *GOI* §§822 and 834. The anonymous reader refers to the discussion in Russell (1988: 120–1) and suggests that since the British cognates, e.g. *W aballu* ‘to perish, die’, continue *\*ad-ball-* with the preverb *ad-*, two compounds, one with *\*exs-*, the other with *\*ad-*, might have existed at a prehistoric stage of the languages, so that the OIr forms with *ad-* would be instances of continuity rather than innovation.

One might expect *adid-mbath*, but for the suppression of nasalisation between two consonants see Thurneysen (1905: 1–19), Quin (1979–80) and Roma (2020). Uhlich (2020: 196 n. 6) cites an apposite pair of examples with the 3sg. masc. class C pronoun: *ind hūall rod ngab-som* ‘the pride that had seized him’, *MI*. 61a1, beside *hūand ūaill rod gab* ‘by the pride that had seized him’, *MI*. 49a3.

In the second example, the pronoun object indicating cause is fronted and preceded by the copula in a cleft sentence. This is in a passage which probably belongs to *Bretha for Conslechteaib*, tract 30 of *Senchas Már*:<sup>8</sup> *neoch má at-bala, ní laimther fortuch nó aurtuch bid ed ad-balad*<sup>9</sup> ‘such that if she dies, no one dares to confirm or rebut that it is that which she died of.’<sup>10</sup>

In both of these instances with the pronoun, the cause is indicated by the object of the verb, and accordingly we can conclude that cause was indicated by the accusative case of a noun, not the dative.

*DIL* cites only one example of a sentence where what perishes or is lost is the subject of the verb and the person who suffers the loss is also expressed, from a MidIr gloss in Digest B32,<sup>11</sup> viz. *ad-bathadar tresin n-iumarbus uile thorad Parrthuis ar Ádam; ad-bathadar ar Aongus a thire, CIH 1317.39*, ‘all of the fruits of Paradise were lost to Adam because of the transgression; his lands were lost to Óengus’.<sup>12</sup> To this example of the use of the preposition *ar* before the person suffering the loss (*ar Ádam ... ar Aongus*) can be added an OIr example from tract 14 of *Senchas Már*, viz. *Cis n-é téora haimsera inid apail a torad ar cach flaith* ‘What are the three occasions when his fruits perish from every lord’.<sup>13</sup>

The above augmented account of the syntax of *at-bail* as described in the standard reference works can be summarised as follows. The verb usually contains a 3sg. neuter pronoun, the subject can be animate or inanimate, the cause of death or loss can form the object of *at-bail* (in which case a pronoun other than the 3sg. neuter can be used), or be preceded by the preposition *de*, and to express ‘X is lost to Y’, ‘X perishes from Y’ the syntagm *at-bail X ar Y* can be used.

A previously unnoticed alternative to this last syntagm, however, is the OIr example with which this paper opens, where what perishes or is lost is the subject of the verb, and the person suffering the loss is the direct object; that is, the syntagm *ad-bail X (nom.) Y (acc.)* ‘X is lost to Y’. The main purpose of this note is both to supply some further examples, and to show how recognition of the existence of the syntagm can help in the interpretation of OIr texts.

<sup>8</sup>See *Companion*, 301.

<sup>9</sup>Normalised from *neoch ma dbala ní laimter fortuch no urrtuch bidh eadh ad-balat*, the MS text of H 3. 18 p. 280, omitting the glosses and correcting the text as printed in *CIH* 807.2–3. I previously (Breatnach, 1996: 16) normalised the last word as *at-balad*, but as a pronoun is already expressed by *ed*, it should probably be normalised as *ad-balad*; the alternative *at-balad* would only be possible if the *at-* had become petrified, and had no pronominal force. For *-bal-* instead of *-bel-* in the subjunctive, cf. *MÁ 'T-BALAD*, *CIH* 2244.34, ‘if it perishes’.

<sup>10</sup>For further details, and for an edition and translation of all of the passage from which this example is taken see Breatnach (1996: 16).

<sup>11</sup>See *Companion*, 58.

<sup>12</sup>*DIL* cites only the last clause. The last syllable of *Parrthuis* is written in MS with the *us*-compendium, and I so expand, rather than *Parrthus* as in *CIH*.

<sup>13</sup>Normalised from *Cisne .iii. haimsera inad apail a torad ar cach flaith*, *CIH* 231.15. The passage which this sentence begins is edited and translated in Breatnach (2010: 114).

The marginal verse in TCD MS H 2. 12 fol. 3v inf. is edited and translated in Culverwell (1913, 134) as:<sup>14</sup>

Maith ar maith —  
ni hed notbeir de bithflaith;  
fo fri olc — nitebela —  
cen mair cach aen dodgena.

‘Good in return for good is not what shall bring you to the eternal kingdom, [but] good in return for evil — well for him who shall do it — he shall not die (?)’.

There is an inferior copy of this verse in BL MS Additional 30512, fol. 32v, which nevertheless has essentially the same verbal form in the third line: *co frith holc níd ebela*.<sup>15</sup> Culverwell’s translation, accompanied by a query, will not really fit, whereas if we take *fō fri olc* as the subject of *nīt ebēla*, and the infixed pronoun in the verbal complex as marking the person undergoing the loss, and translate ‘it will not be a loss to you’, this will make perfect sense in the context of the quatrain as a whole.

The end of the well-known passage on contracts in the opening tract of *Senchas Már* was edited and translated in Breatnach (2011: 6–7 §10) as: *amail ad-rodad Ádam inna derbdíupairt: at-bath in bith uile ar óenuball*. ‘as Adam had been held to his obvious unequal bargain: the whole world perished for a single apple’. The translation was based on assuming that *at-bath* contains the 3sg. neuter pronoun, but in the light of the examples here, one could just as well take *at-bath* to be for *at-mbath*, with a masc. pronoun.<sup>16</sup> Semantics are decisive; it makes much better sense to do so, and translate ‘the whole world perished from him’, that is, ‘he lost the whole world for a single apple’. After all, it is not that the world actually perished, but rather Adam’s dominion over the world.

A further example is in *Berrad Airechta*, viz. *ni apaill nech ni ar nos*, *CIH* 599.22. In his edition, Thurneysen (1928: 30 §80) printed *ni apaill nech niarnos*, with a footnote suggesting emending to *na nī arnas*. In accordance with this emendation he translated ‘Nichts erstirbt, das “gebunden” worden ist’, and Stacey (1986: 227) rendered it as ‘Nothing that has been bound is extinguished’. The sentence is cited with a gloss in Digest B 22 as *ni apail nech ni ar nos .i. nochán eiplenn nī ó neoch ara nōs inndligtec*, *CIH* 1310.37, ‘nī ... i.e. nothing perishes from anyone because of their unlawful customary procedure’.<sup>17</sup>

The MS readings of all three instances of the sentence, as well as the gloss, indicate that the original had *ar nōs*. Thurneysen’s proposed emendation of *nech*

<sup>14</sup>Apart from the form in question here, the linguistic evidence, especially the verbal forms with pronouns *not beir* and *dod-gēna*, points to a date in the OIr period. The metre is *deibide scaílte ngairit*, with the rare inversion of *rinn ocus ardrinn* in the second couplet, for which see Meyer (1913: 10–11) and Mac Cana (1972: 117 n. 2).

<sup>15</sup>For the verses in both MSS, see Breatnach (2020: 82, 84).

<sup>16</sup>For the suppression of nasalisation see fn. 7 above.

<sup>17</sup>The same citation with the same gloss recurs in Digest C 35 at *CIH* 1939.22.

*nī ar nos* to *na ní ar-nas* (with the pass. sg. pret. of *ar-naisc*) is quite radical. In any case, the sentence as it stands will make good sense, if, in the light of the above examples, *nī* ‘anything’ is construed as the subject and *nech* ‘anyone’ as the object, indicating the person suffering the loss, and *ar* is construed as introducing the word indicating the cause. I take the point of the sentence to be that no one can be disadvantaged for having followed what had been the normal customary procedure, when it turns out that it had not been in accordance with the law and needs to be revised, and would read and translate as: *Ní apaill nech ní ar nós* ‘Nothing is lost to anyone because of [following] a customary procedure’.

*DIL* cites the line *manid epled ní airi* from §3 of *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*, and translates ‘though nothing of it should perish’, with a query.<sup>18</sup> This line is in the fourth verse of a dialogue poem of nine verses between Mac Da Thó and his wife, and to appreciate the context it will be useful to cite the third and fourth verses as edited by Thurneysen (1935: 3–4):

[In fer:] As-bert Cremthann Nia Náir:  
ni tardda do rúin do mnäib,  
rūn mnā ní maith con-celar,  
maīn ar mug ni aithenar.

[In ben:] Cid fri mnaī at-bertha-so  
manid epled ní airi  
ní na<d> tét do menma-so,  
tēti menma neich aili.

For the first of these, spoken by Mac Da Thó, see Ní Chróinín (1941), who translated ‘Cremthann Nia Náir said: do not give your secret to women; a woman’s secret is not well hidden; wealth expended on a slave is not required.’<sup>19</sup>

From among the various translations of verse 4, two can be cited as fairly representative, viz. that by Thurneysen (1901: 3) as: ‘Auch dem Weibe magst du’s sagen, kann dadurch nichts schlimmer werden. Was du selber nicht ersinnst, fällt gar oft dem andern ein’, and that by Charles-Edwards (2005: 3) as: ‘Although you might utter it to a woman, if nothing should perish as a result, that which your mind does not reach, someone else’s mind gets there’. These and other interpretations are based on reading *manid*, with a 3sg. neuter pronoun, and present the woman as raising no objections to the first-rate misogyny of verse 3, and reassuring Mac Da Thó that it will do no harm to consult her, and that she might even come up with a solution that he had overlooked.<sup>20</sup>

I wish to propose a different interpretation. To begin with metrical issues, in his notes on the text, Thurneysen (1935: 25) commented on the last word of the

<sup>18</sup>Thurneysen (1935: 4).

<sup>19</sup>For the last line, see also Breatnach (2015: 112).

<sup>20</sup>Cf. also: ‘Though you tell it to a woman, no ruin results; what your mind cannot grasp another’s can’, Bitel (1996: 38), and ‘Why would you speak to a woman if something would go wrong as a result. That which your mind cannot penetrate someone else’s mind can’, Toner (2010: 268).

first line: ‘One would expect the conditional *at-bértha-so*, but the rhyme with *do menma-so* seems to point to the past subjunctive *at-bertha-so*. This would only be so if the metre were *aí freislige*, where end-rhyme occurs not only between lines *b* and *d*, but also between *a* and *c*. The metre in this poem is so irregular, however, that the only metrical criteria that can be safely invoked are syllable count and the principal end-rhyme. The metre in the other verses varies between *deibide* (e.g. v. 2) and a very loose form of *rannaigeacht* where, for the last word of the line, only the syllable count of the end-rhymes is fixed (e.g. v. 6). In the verse in question here, the essential end-rhyme is supplied by the finals of *b* and *d*, and even with trisyllabic finals in *a* and *c*, there is no compelling reason for insisting that they should rhyme. Furthermore, as the syntax requires the conditional, with a long *é* in *-bér-*, as Thurneysen acknowledged, this would rule out entirely the possibility of rhyme between *a* and *c*.

In addition to all of these considerations, it is not even certain that the original had a trisyllabic ending in the first line at all. For the *at-bertha-so* of Thurneysen’s edition, the MS readings are *atberthasu*, LL 13053, *atberthasa*, H 3. 18, p. 744, and *atbertha so*, Harley 5280, 50r. In the last of these, the *so* appears to be separate from *atbertha*, and certainly has an *-o* as opposed to the *-u* and *-a* of the other readings. On the basis of this reading I would restore *at-bértha só*, and the variants could be explained as due to seeing a rhyme with the final of the third line. In the proposed reading, *só* ‘this’ would refer unambiguously to the contents of verse 3, but even in the alternative *at-bértha-su* ‘you would say it’ the referend of the infixed pronoun could be the same.

For *manid epled* in the second line, the variant readings are *manit eplad* in H 3. 18 and *manid ebledh* in Harley 5280, while LL, with *mani thesbad*, has substituted another verb.<sup>21</sup> On the basis of the first two variants a 2sg. infixed pronoun *-t-* can just as well be restored as the 3sg. neuter *-d-* of Thurneysen’s edition, and the examples given above of the syntagm *ad-bail X (nom.) Y (acc.)* ‘X is lost to Y’ show how this can make good sense; indeed, in my view, *manit* will make far better sense than *manid*. Accordingly, I would restore and translate as:

Cid fri mnaí at-bértha só,  
manit epled ní airi;  
ní nád tét do menma-su,  
téti menma neich aili.

‘Even to a woman you would say this,  
unless you might lose something by it;  
the thing which you pay no heed to,  
another person does pay heed to.’

This interpretation leaves us with a more robust response to verse 3. That is, you would utter these misogynistic notions even to a woman. The only thing that concerns you is any damage done to yourself — what the woman feels about it is

<sup>21</sup>The 3sg. past subjunctive of either OIr *do-esta* or MidIr *tesbaid* ‘is lacking’.

immaterial. You might hold your tongue with another woman, but you think you can say what you like to your wife. The second couplet is probably deliberately ambiguous, the equivalent both of ‘what you are insensitive to, another is not’ and ‘the solution that you cannot think of, another can’.

## 2. *ETTAE*, 3PL. REL. OF *ITHID* ‘EATS’.

One indication that *ithid* is a strong verb in OIr is the fact that the 3pl. present indicative form was *ethait*.<sup>22</sup> Although no 3pl. absolute form is attested in the Old Irish Glosses, or, apparently, in OIr texts transmitted in later MSS, we can safely conclude that it was *ethait* in OIr. Not only is this form quite well attested in MidIr,<sup>23</sup> where it could hardly have replaced the only putative alternative *\*ithit*, but it is further confirmed for OIr by the forms to be discussed here, namely of the corresponding 3pl. relative, no examples of which are registered in *DIL*.

With regular syncope and delenition, the expected relative form will be *et-tae*, and this is attested, although indirectly, in two OIr texts which survive only in later copies. The first is in the Old Irish Penitential:

*Nech ithes feoil etti coin no biasta ... pendid cethorchait n-aidci for  
usciu 7 bargin*

‘Anyone who eats flesh which dogs or beasts have been eating ...  
does penance for forty nights on bread and water.’<sup>24</sup>

Probably on the assumption that the 3pl. absolute form in OIr was *\*ithit*, Gwynn (1914: 146 n. 4) suggested reading *itte*. While unstressed final short vowels are regularly confused in MSS after the OIr period, this is not the case with stressed vowels, and accordingly, with only minor emendation, to either *ette* or *ettae*, required, the MS form attests the expected OIr 3pl. relative.

The second attestation is in *De Origine Scotiae Linguae*, usually referred to as O’Mulconry’s Glossary.<sup>25</sup> In the first edition of this text, Stokes (1900: 257) edited §463 as *Ethad 7 etham ab edo, dicitur enim etam ní etham tabron arindí ethaid oine (?) 7 eti a torad*. Whatever about the first part of this entry, a simple re-division of *ethaid oine* as *ethai doine* allows one to make good sense of the final clause, and in the recent edition by Moran, the entry is edited and translated as:<sup>26</sup>

*Ethad 7 etham ab aedo dicitur enim et[h]am ní etham tabron, arindí  
ethai doine 7 éti a t[h]orad.*

<sup>22</sup>Cf. McCone (1991: 4–5) and Schumacher (2004: 377–80).

<sup>23</sup>E.g. *ethait* ‘they eat’, *CIH* 200.11. Further examples can be found in *DIL* s.v. *ithid*.

<sup>24</sup>Gwynn (1914: 146–7 §3). In translating ‘which dogs or beasts have been eating’, Gwynn took the meaning to be any flesh which has already been partly eaten by animals. The anonymous reader questions whether the present indicative in Old Irish can bear this interpretation, noting that one would more readily translate ‘which dogs or beasts eat’ and take as referring to flesh which animals rather than humans consume.

<sup>25</sup>For the title, see Moran (2019: 13–15).

<sup>26</sup>Moran (2019: 191).

‘*Ethad* (?) and *etham* (?), is so-called from [Lat.] *edo* “I eat” (?), for it is said: *etham ní etham tabron* (?), because of the fact that people and cattle eat its fruit.’

Erroneous lenition of *t* is not uncommon in the MS copy in which this entry is found,<sup>27</sup> and another instance in a 3pl. relative form is *berthae trenfir* ‘which warriors carry’, §410.<sup>28</sup> A relative clause is regular after *arindí* in OIr (*GOI* §503), and allowing also for the later confusion of unstressed final short vowels, we can then confidently take MS *ethai* to be for OIr *ettae*, the relative 3pl. pres. indicative of *ithid*.

### 3. *DESRUITH, DESRUITHITHIR*

Entry 436 in the YBL copy of *Sanas Cormaic* is as follows in Meyer’s edition: *Dessruith .i. dé-fo diultad .i. nī sruith. Nō dessruith .i. brithem, unde dicitur a mBrethaib Neimeth: desrith fial filidh.*<sup>29</sup>

The first part of this entry is cited in *DIL* under the headword *desruith* ‘mean, insignificant, petty, ignoble’, and the second part is cited, as the sole example, under the headword *desruith*, where it is classified as a noun, and for which the meaning ‘judge’ is suggested, with a query. There is no explicit comment on the fact that they appear together in *CormY* 436, and the problem of how a word which is introduced with the same spelling, *dessruith*, on both occasions could mean both ‘insignificant’ and ‘judge’ is apparently avoided by assigning them to separate headwords, one with, and the other without a lenited *-s-*.

In this note I intend to show that the postulated form with lenited *-s-* can be dispensed with, and that the forms of the fairly well-attested adjective, and of the rare derivative verb are in fact *desruith* and *desruithithir*, respectively, with an unlenited *s*.

To begin with, however, the word explained as ‘judge’ can be set aside as a separate word, having no connection with the adjective *desruith*. The second part of the entry in *Sanas Cormaic* is found in only two of the MS copies thereof. The corresponding entry in the Book of Uí Maine has simply *Desruith .i. de fo diultud .i. nī sruith*,<sup>30</sup> and similarly that in the Leabhar Breac reads *Deshruith .i. dišruith .i. nī sruith*.<sup>31</sup> The only other copy with the fuller entry is that in TCD MS H 2. 15B (1317), and this has a significant variant reading in the second part: *Desruith .i. de fo diultad .i. nī sruith. no deisrith .i. breithem, unde dicitur: a mBrethaib Nemedh deisrith fial filid.*<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup>The second section of the composite TCD MS H 2. 16 (1318), the Yellow Book of Lecan; see Moran (2019: 16–18).

<sup>28</sup>Moran (2019: 182 §410); for OIr *bertae trénfir*.

<sup>29</sup>Meyer (1912: 36).

<sup>30</sup>Meyer (1919: 305).

<sup>31</sup>Stokes (1862: 16). This is on p. 266 of the MS, with the first instance written with *s* + suprascript *spiritus asper*, and the second with *s* + suprascript dot.

<sup>32</sup>H 2. 15B, p. 97 col. c.

This leaves us with two separate lemmata, *desruith* and *deisrith*, and furthermore, while the second part of the entry in YBL begins *Nō dessruith .i. brithem*, the citation there has *desrith*. Accordingly, the isolated *dessruith* of YBL must be an error, and the version in H 2. 15B is superior.

As for the citation itself, it is taken from a passage in *Bretha Nemed Dédenach*, concerning persons in the service of a king who are free from liability for offences committed by members of their kin:<sup>33</sup>

*Cis duirn díolmhuine dlighther i riaruibh rígh? Drúth, ara,  
arrchogadh, dercaidh, dailemh, deoghbaire, desrigh fial file,  
CIH 1118.2–3.*<sup>34</sup>

‘Who are the unattached retainers who ought to be<sup>35</sup> in the service of a king? A jester, charioteer, a huntsman (?),<sup>36</sup> watchman, dispenser, cupbearer, noble right-hand man (viz. judge), poet.’

As it not only makes good sense but also allows us to account for how the variant arose, *desrigh* qualifies as the superior reading. It is a compound of *des* ‘right’ and *rig* ‘forearm’, in synecdoche meaning ‘right-hand man’, and qualified by *fial*, in effect ‘judge’. For the judge being seated beside the king, and thus his ‘right-hand man’, see Kelly (1988: 52) and the text edited and translated in Breatnach (1990: 8). Beside the compound *desrig*,<sup>37</sup> there is a derivative of similar shape and meaning, *deisred* ‘right hand’, and, significantly, two of the examples cited in *DIL* s.v. have a variant reading *de(a)srig*. The *-th* in the variants *desrith*, *deisrith*, in *Sanas Cormaic* can be explained as due to the influence of the near synonym *deisred*, and the word in question in *Bretha Nemed Dédenach* has nothing to do with *desruith* ‘insignificant’.

As for this adjective, the spelling in the first part of CormY 436, cited above, with a double *-ss-*, clearly indicates an unlenited *s*. Orthography is not always diagnostic, however. Thus in v. 12a of the poem beginning *A Marbáin, a díthruabaig*, viz. *mennután díamair desruid*, ‘Little hidden humble abode’,<sup>38</sup> the spelling in the sole MS copy is ambiguous, and the word makes neither rhyme nor *úaimne* (consonance). Nevertheless, it may be noted that both here and in his glossary (p. 261), where he translates ‘humble, lowly’, Murphy prints a form with unlenited *s*.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup>See Kelly (1988: 13, 179–80); it is headed *Daoine gan cion inbhleogain* ‘Persons without vicarious liability’.

<sup>34</sup>With *fial* of CIH 1118.3 corrected to *fial*; there is no dot over the *f* in the MS, and Gwynn (1942: 23.6) read *fial*. In a restored text, however, lenition will have to be supplied, as *fial* qualifies the fem. noun *rig*.

<sup>35</sup>The variant in O’Dav. 584, *cis duirnn dílmáine file i riaruibh rígh?*, CIH 1487.38, has *file* ‘who are’.

<sup>36</sup>The rare word *archocaid* is elsewhere used of a hunting dog (see Kelly, 1997: 118–19); as all the other terms in this list refer to humans, I take it that, unless something has dropped out here, it had the neutral meaning ‘hunter’, and could refer to either hounds or humans.

<sup>37</sup>Another, but non-figurative, example of the compound is *ina brut osa desrigh*, O’Rahilly (1961: 144.4560), ‘in his cloak above his right forearm’.

<sup>38</sup>Murphy (1956: 10–11). I cite from the most recent, although partial, edition of the poem. For earlier editions and translations see Murphy (1956: 177–8).

<sup>39</sup>As well as with a voiced final consonant, in keeping with the MS spelling.

Similarly, the orthography is ambiguous in an example not included in *DIL*, viz. from the OIr Glossing of *Senchas Már*, in an explanation of the phrase *Cilar etha scēo blechta*, *CIH* 877.25, ‘Biased equating of corn with milk’. The context is a fictional case, introduced as follows:

in tan fo-gellsatt Ulaid um tīr .xxx.aid cumal do breith leo ar aon-boin i n-aimsir nāuna māire doth[a]-āinig. Con-[d]iachtatar danō comarbai in tīri iār dain in tīr-sin. Fo-gellsad Tūathal Techtmar n-imbi, *CIH* 877.17.

‘when the Ulstermen sought arbitration concerning land to the value of 30 *cumals* being given by them in exchange for a single cow in the time of a great famine which had come to them. The heirs to the land then sought that land after some time. They submitted the case to Tūathal Techtmar for adjudication.’

The relevant sentence is:

.i. ro cudrumaidhset breithemain iter ith 7 mblicht .i. nī desruithe leo mblicht na bō fo-releangar anmain in mōrfeisir oldās ith in tīre mōir iār dain cīa fo-lō sōn sochaide, *CIH* 877.25.<sup>40</sup>

‘i.e., judges equalised between corn and milk, i.e. they do not regard the milk of the one cow which maintained the life of the seven men as being more unimportant than the corn of the large land area in due course, however many it may support’.<sup>41</sup>

In the next example, on the other hand, a MS spelling serves as a criterion for establishing the form. It is found in *Cethairslicht Athgabálae*, tract 2 of *Senchas Már*. The readings of the copies of the relevant passage are:<sup>42</sup>

fethem fo mia feicheman frisi-aice agrudh, nadbi dossruithiu sein raith na fiadhnaisi na forus na fechem frisia tuidhbenar fuadach comde forus fasc, *CIH* 418.3–33.

nabi desraighthi sin raith na fiadhu na forus na feichumuin frisi tuibinur fuadach cuimdi forus fasc, *CIH* 1454.24.

Feicheamnuibh fo miad. feicheman (?) fris.a. a., *CIH* 1718.31.

fechem fris-aice accra, *CIH* 899.4.<sup>43</sup>

The variants *dossruithiu* and *desraighthi* point to an original *dessruithiu*, and the whole passage can be restored and translated as:

<sup>40</sup>Parallelism with *fo-lō* shows that *fo-releangar* stands for a form of the 3sg. perf. of *fo-loing*, probably *fo-róelangair*. *DIL* s.v. *fo-loing* lists a number of examples of the 3sg. perf. of this verb with the deponent ending *-air* under the heading of ‘spurious formations’; this can be added to them and the qualification ‘spurious’ can be removed.

<sup>41</sup>Lit. ‘although that may support a multitude’.

<sup>42</sup>The first is from a continuous copy of the tract, and the others are glossed extracts.

<sup>43</sup>This last extract is from the OIr Glossing of *Senchas Már*, and it is glossed .i. *curap comgrād do fuidiu fer ad-gair*, *CIH* 899.5, which can be translated ‘i.e. that the man who is suing be of the same grade as that one’, with *fuidiu* a slip for *suidiu*.

fethem fo m'ad f'etheman fris-aici acrae, n'adbi dessruithiu sin r'áith  
ná f'iadnaise ná forus ná fethem frisa tuidmenar fúatach comded  
forus fásc.

'A representative<sup>44</sup> in accordance with the rank of the representative whom he expects to sue, and no lower in rank is the paying-surety nor the witness nor the [owner of the] station, nor the representative to whom is attached [responsibility for] the removed cattle, with regard to impounding, stationing, announcement.'

What is in question here is the requirement that all those involved in the process of distraint besides the plaintiff and defendant should be at least of the same rank, and that the amount at issue should not be beyond their means.<sup>45</sup>

The spellings with double *s* noted above would be enough to show that the OIr adjective *dessruith* had an unlenited *s*, but in addition we have a rhyming example which settles the matter conclusively. This, example 5, of the nom. plural, is in verse in *Fingal Rónáin*:

Munter Mael[e] Fothartaig  
cet lim cenptís desruithe;  
nī maith ro gabsat oc fir  
do-ficed a n-esbuide.

'The men of Mael-Fothartaig, I allow that they were not insignificant; not well they stood by a man who would come when they needed him (Lit. who would come to their wants).'<sup>46</sup>

That this is a rhyming example is inexplicably passed over in *DIL*, where only the first couplet is cited. The *-sb-* in *esbuide*, where the spelling with *s* can only stand for unlenited *s*, confirms that the cluster *-sr-* in its rhyming partner *desruithe* also has an unlenited *s*.

As for the derivative verb, the headword *desruithid* 'degrades, diminishes', is doubly erroneous.<sup>47</sup> As it is a denominative verb from *dessruith*, the *s* cannot be lenited, and this is confirmed by one of the spellings (*dessruithidar*, *CIH* 234.4) of the form in a passage in tract 14 of *Senchas Már*, *Di Astud Chirt*

<sup>44</sup>For *fethem* 'guardian; representative, advocate' etc., and confusion between it and *f'ethem* 'party to a contract' etc. in later MSS, see Binchy (1976).

<sup>45</sup>This is made clear in the glosses and commentary, as, for example, in the gloss on *n'adbi dossruithiu sein r'áith*: *.i. n'abí d'iruidhi nō n'abí derēolai nā sin in r'áith. .i. gurab r'áith dāma ló enech, CIH* 418.34, 'i.e. that the paying-surety is not more lowly or not baser than that, i.e. that he be a paying-surety whose honour-price matches it (viz. the sum at issue in the dispute)'. The corresponding gloss in *CIH* 1454.26 reads *.i. n'abí d'sruithi nō n'abí derōile nā sin in r'áith nā in f'iadnaise nā fechem*. 'i.e. that the paying-surety or the witness or the representative is not more lowly or not baser than that'.

<sup>46</sup>Greene (1955: 10.229–32); translated by Meyer (1892: 392).

<sup>47</sup>In passing it may be noted that the headword *d'sruthaigidir* for the similar-looking but unrelated compound formed from *dí* + *sruth*, rendering Latin *derivare*, does not accurately represent the attested forms. The correct headword is *dí-sruthaigedar*, as in *LEIA*; a compound rather than a simple verb will account for all the attested forms, as shown by Griffith (2020: 255–6).

7 *Dligid*, which recurs in tract 1, the Introduction to *Senchas Már*.<sup>48</sup> I cite the restored text and translation from the latter:<sup>49</sup>

Ataat cethéora sabaid túaithe noda desruithetar i mbeaib: rí  
gúbrethach, epscop tuisledach, fili díupartach, aire esindric.

‘There are four eminences of a kingdom who debase themselves  
through petty things: a falsely-judging king, a stumbling bishop, a  
fraudulent poet, an unworthy noble.’

Furthermore, the (reflexive) infixed pronoun which precedes the verbal form (in all copies) means that it must be construed as a deponent verb, not a passive, and accordingly the headword should be corrected to *desruithithir*.<sup>50</sup>

There remains one example where there has been uncertainty as to whether we have to do with the adjective or the derived verb. *DIL*, citing from Stokes’ edition of O’Davoren’s Glossary, entered it under the adjective, whereas in Binchy’s subsequent edition of *O’Dav*. it is interpreted as a verb: *Desruith .i. derēoil, ut est discipul na desruither deruscaib .i. nochan derōili nā sin in ní derb-cinnter don deiscipal*, *CIH* 1489.35. This is §639 in Stokes’ edition, and the only difference between the two editions is that Stokes expanded the word in question as *desruithiu*.<sup>51</sup>

The citation is from an OIr text on the seven grades of ecclesiastical scholars, fuller extracts from which constitute the passage beginning *Secht ngrāid ecna*, ‘Seven grades of ecclesiastical scholar’, edited in *CIH* 2101.1–13.<sup>52</sup> The corresponding reading there is *discipul nā desruither doroscaib*, *CIH* 2101.3.<sup>53</sup> In this case *desruither* is written out in full, but if it is to be taken as a verbal form, it would be as passive sg., and the sentence could be restored as: *discipul nād desruitter deroscaib* ‘the disciple who is not made lower by examinations’

In the scheme in this text, the four lowest grades (beginning with the lowest) are the *cóectach* ‘person of fifties (viz. one who knows the psalms)’, *foglaintid* ‘learner’, *discipul* ‘disciple’ and *staraige* ‘historian’, and the sentence as restored would simply be saying in a roundabout way that a higher grade is conferred on the *discipul* after proving himself in examination.

The same applies to the alternative possibility, viz. *discipul nād desruithiu deroscaib* ‘the disciple who is not lower with regard to examinations’. Restoring the comparative adjective requires assuming that the reading *desruither* is the result of an erroneous expansion of a suspension-stroke.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the

<sup>48</sup>None of the other spellings contradict this. The full set of MS readings for the verbal form is, firstly as it occurs in tract 1, *noda desruithetar*, *CIH* 352.10, *nodo desruidhter*, *CIH* 1897.13, and secondly as it occurs in tract 14, *nodo dessruithidar*, *CIH* 234.4, *noda desraidhter*, *CIH* 1225.7, and *noda esraidhter*, *CIH* 1011.4.

<sup>49</sup>Breatnach (2011: 6–7 §11).

<sup>50</sup>The possibility that the headword should instead be *desruithigidir* is suggested with a query, but this is not supported by the attested forms.

<sup>51</sup>Stokes (1904: 300).

<sup>52</sup>It is unlikely to represent a complete text, and it is not always easy to distinguish the OIr original from later glosses.

<sup>53</sup>I have substituted the expansion *discipul* for *descad* (with a query) in *CIH*.

<sup>54</sup>Even this requires emendation, to *desruitter*, because of the delenition resulting from the combination of *desruith-* and the ending *-ther*.

fact that this text has what is unambiguously a comparative adjective in the description of the next highest grade, *oirnidiu sin staraige* ‘the historian is more eminent than that one’,<sup>55</sup> is an argument in favour of reading a comparative *desruithiu* here also.

In the glosses on the third example (see fn. 45) above the adjective is glossed with a compound of *dí* + *sruith*, viz. *dísruith*; while the spelling of *dísruithi* is ambiguous, that of *dīruidhi* clearly shows that the *s* has been lenited. This of course has a different prefix *dī-*, and is entirely separate from *dessruith*. The compound *dísruith* is not registered in *DIL*; a further example, outside the context of glossing *dessruith*, is *nō dītsruithe in māithir inā ’nt aithir*, *CIH* 1729.27, ‘or the mother is of lower status than the father’.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, whereas all the other copies of the entry in *Sanas Cormaic* explain *dessruith* with a phrase which can be normalised as *de fo díultud* ‘de serving to make negative’ the copy in the *Leabhar Breac* substitutes the glossing form *dísruith*, and the erroneous lenition in the headword *Deshruith*, found in that MS alone, can be explained as due to influence from the lenited *-s-* in the word that glosses it.

As to the etymology of *desruith*, it is possibly an early compound of *sruith* ‘venerable’ and the prefix *de-*. If the initial *s-* of *sruith* derives from *st-* (see *LEIA* s.v. *sruith*), then the negative would have an intervocalic *-str-*. While original intervocalic *-st-* resulted in *-s-* in OIr, intervocalic *-str-* may have remained (*GOI* §§155, 194, 217).<sup>57</sup> This would mean that a compound of *sruith* with *de-* should have resulted in *\*destruith*, or *\*destruid*. Nevertheless, the etymology could be retained, if it were assumed that the negative was re-formed on the model of the positive *sruith*; certainly the frequent spelling as *desruith*, with final *-th*, attests to the influence of the base-form on the derivative.

#### 4. BRÍATH, BRÍAD ‘REMNANT, RESIDUE’ IN *BÉRLA NA FILED*

*DIL* s.v. *briad* cites three examples, suggesting that the meaning is ‘appar[ently] judging, verdict’.

The first example given is in v. 15 of the poem beginning *A chuirp, not chaith fri crábud*:<sup>58</sup>

Mairg lingis lēim in leth-sain,  
mairg cingis in rēim rod-sain,  
mairg bīas isin mbrīaidh mbrisc-sin;  
ro miscnidh Līaig in loc-sain.

*DIL* adds the comment ‘i.e. doomed to Hell’, and also cites the relevant line under *brisc*, there translating ‘under that critical verdict (of Hell)’. This and

<sup>55</sup>Normalised from *oirnide sin stair*, *CIH* 2101.4, and the citation *ornidh sin staruidhe*, *CIH* 1518.24 (*O’Dav.* 1302).

<sup>56</sup>In commentary on tract 2a of *SM*. The *-ts-* is a not uncommon representation of lenited *s* in this text; cf., for example, *aigin tslān*, *CIH* 1742.4, ‘complete restitution’.

<sup>57</sup>As the anonymous reader points out, however, referring to the discussion in Schrijver (1995: 453–5), both the etymology of *sruith* and the outcome of *-str-* are uncertain.

<sup>58</sup>Ed. Meyer (1908: 264–6). I normalise word-division, punctuation and capitalisation; see *DIL* s.v. *l liaig* for its being used ‘of God or Christ’.

the preceding stanza certainly concern Hell,<sup>59</sup> but it makes far better sense to simply take *briaidh* here as the dsgr. of *bréo* ‘fire’, and I would translate the verse accordingly as: ‘Woe to him who takes a leap in that direction, woe to him who goes on that rash journey, woe to him who will be in that crackling fire; the Saviour has hated that place.’

A word meaning ‘judgement, verdict’ will not work syntactically (‘in that judgement’?) or contextually (*brisc* ‘brittle’ etc. is hardly a suitable epithet for ‘judgement’). But more than all that, this poem is written in the normal literary Irish of its time,<sup>60</sup> whereas *bríad* is a word belonging to the highly artificial variety of Irish known as *Bérta na Fíled*,<sup>61</sup> and it had the meaning ‘remnant, residue’, not ‘judgement’, as I will now go on to show.

Although it is not made explicit in *DIL*, the interpretation offered there probably derives from the entry in O’Clery’s Glossary which is cited as the third example, viz. *brath .i. briad .i. fuigheall. 7 fuigheall on mbreithir brath*.<sup>62</sup> Even allowing for the two possible meanings of *fuigheall* (see below), this entry seems confused, and can be of little or no help in explicating the meaning of *bríad*.

The remaining example in *DIL* is in the second couplet of v. 14 of the heavily glossed poem of 15 verses in *Bérta na Fíled* beginning *Fē mo ese ol atú*,<sup>63</sup> where *briadh* is glossed *.i. fuigheall*.<sup>64</sup>

briadh molta Dhē ō nach fuil  
ní thuillit muir a braon, Meyer (1905: 487).<sup>65</sup>

The problem with the simple definition *fuighe(a)ll* in such late sources is that, without further qualification, it is ambiguous as to whether it means ‘remnant, etc.’ or ‘speech, etc.’. While the corresponding words were distinct in OIr, with *fuidell* for the former and *fuigell* for the latter, after the falling together of lenited *-d-* and *-g-* in the late MidIr and early EModIr period, they came to be identical in pronunciation, and in EModIr the spelling *fuigheall* is used for both.<sup>66</sup> The examples cited in *DIL* are difficult to interpret, and the editors opted for *fuigheall* in the meaning corresponding to that of OIr *fuigell*. However, the meaning of the following example from a previously unpublished marginal

<sup>59</sup>Cf. *Ifn denn, dōer an dūhrub*, v. 14a, ‘Vehement Hell, it is a hard wilderness’.

<sup>60</sup>I would date it to the MidIr period. Cf., for example, the loss of hiatus in *bīas* and in the rhyming words *mbriaidh* and *Līaig* in the verse cited.

<sup>61</sup>See Breatnach (2009: 113–14).

<sup>62</sup>Miller (1880: 375).

<sup>63</sup>Ed. Meyer (1905: 485–7). The honorand is named in v. 10c as *Muirceangal Ūa Domain Nūaill*, glossed *.i. Maghnus Ō Domnaill*. As he is referred to as the son of Aodh in v. 5a (*Lūan Deaā*, glossed *.i. mac, .i. Aodha*), he is almost certainly the well-known ruler of Tír Chonaill who died in 1563.

<sup>64</sup>For the glossing of such poems see Breatnach (2009: 113).

<sup>65</sup>The general tenor of this and the preceding verse is that the honorand has been praised so much that there is little left to be said. Cf. *cā can a cētal go gnāth? / ní tēt cūach lān tar a līon*, v. 13cd, ‘what is the point of continuing to sing of him? A full cup cannot hold more than its fill’. While 14d is metrically defective (a syllable short), it seems to be saying that showers (or seas?) do not get any bigger from one drop. I cannot see how 14c can refer to the Deity, and accordingly would read *briadh molta dhē ō nach fuil* ‘since, then, there is no residue left of praise’.

<sup>66</sup>Cf. *fuigheall (ō dhā chéill)*, *IGT* II §53.

verse is quite clear, and shows unambiguously that the meaning is in fact that of the word corresponding to OIr *fuidell*.

I know of two occurrences of this verse; one is in the lower margin of fol. 40v of RIA MS 23 Q 10, and the other in the lower margin of fol. 9v of BL MS Additional 30512. It is noteworthy that the glossing which typically accompanies verse composed in *Bérta na Fíled* is found even with this single marginal verse. The only significant differences between the two copies are in the word for ‘bird’ in the last line (*lampur* vs. *lempur*), the absence of the gloss on the first line in MS 23 Q 10, and the form of the word for ‘wren’ in the last gloss.<sup>67</sup> The subject-matter of the verse, complaining of inhospitality, is a common theme in satirical verse.<sup>68</sup>

In colt cruind  
*tucad* dond *filid* adluinn.  
 nī fáicfed bríath<sup>a</sup> dē ag dul  
 cid bec lampur<sup>b</sup> lenn odor.<sup>c</sup>  
<sup>a</sup> .i. fuigel <sup>b</sup> .i. ēn <sup>c</sup> .i. drēolān.  
 23 Q 10, 40v inf.

An colt cruinn.<sup>a</sup>  
*tucad* don *fhilid* adhluind.  
 nī fáicfed bríath<sup>b</sup> dé ic dul.  
 cidh bec lempur<sup>c</sup> lendodur<sup>d</sup>  
<sup>a</sup> .i. bíadh bec <sup>b</sup> .i. fuighld<sup>69 c</sup> <sup>c</sup> .i. ēn <sup>d</sup> .i. in draídlēan.  
 Additional 30512, 9v inf.

‘The miserly aliment [i.e. small amount of food] which was given to the ravenous poet — although Dun Cloak [i.e. a wren] is a small avian creature [i.e. bird], it would not leave behind any residue [i.e. leftovers] when departing.’

I suggest that *bríath* is the result of a complex play on words, being a truncated form of *bríathar* ‘word, speech, discourse’, with *bríath*, *bríad*, being the ‘remnant’ (*fuigheall*, OIr *fuidell*) of *bríathar* after removal of the last syllable.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, given the semantic development of OIr *fuigell* ‘judicial pronouncement’ etc. to *fuigheall* ‘speech’ in the later language, *bríath* could be characterised as the *fuigheall* (OIr *fuidell*) of a word meaning *fuigheall* (OIr *fuigell*).

<sup>67</sup>I supply macrons over long vowels, and all glosses are included in the translation. I follow 23 Q 10 in reading *lenn odor* as two words; in Additional 30512 they appear to be written as one word. With *lenn odor* one can compare *in donn beg* ‘the little brown one’ used of the wren in verse 7d of the poem *Einech uaisle iná cech dán*, Meyer (1913b), for which see Ó Cuív (1980: 50). For the other words used for the wren see Ó Cuív (1980: 55–9).

<sup>68</sup>Cf. McLaughlin (2008: 12–13).

<sup>69</sup>Sic.

<sup>70</sup>The form *bríad(h)* in two of the examples cited above, with voicing of the final consonant, is a further development.

5. MAOI IN *BÉRLA NA FILED*

Outside certain combinations with the 3rd person form *aí* / *áe*,<sup>71</sup> the genitive forms of the independent pronoun are already rare in OIr, and, as stated in *GOI* §443, ‘they are nearly always replaced by the preposition *la* (or *do*) with suffixed pronoun; e.g. *is limm-sa* “he is mine”’.<sup>72</sup>

Examples of the 1sg. form *muí* are found in the OIr glosses, as well as in some texts composed in the OIr period, but transmitted only in later MSS. In texts of the latter kind which are glossed, we regularly find *limm* in the gloss corresponding to *muí* of the main text. For example, the first line of v. 11 of *Amra Senáin*, *Moí mo rosc rígfótha* ‘Mine the royal basis of my eyes’, Breatnach (1989: 25–6), appears in the Leabhar Breac copy as *Moi mo rosc rigfótha*, with the gloss *rop lium mo radarc* ‘may my sight be mine’, Breatnach (1989: 11, 16). Another instance is *Tí .i. brat, ut est tí mo macáin muí .i. tigidh dhamh étach mo macáin muí .i. is lium hé*, *CIH* 954.12, ‘*Tí*, i.e. a cloak, as in *tí mo macáin muí* (“the cloak of my dear boy, mine”), i.e. let the clothing of my dear boy come to me; *muí*, i.e. it (or ‘he’?) is mine’.<sup>73</sup> Similarly the 3sg. masc. form of the conjugated preposition glosses *áe* ‘his’, as in the following line in *Amrae Coluimb Chille*: *HUILE BITH BA HAE HÉ .i. robo les-seom int ule bith*, *LU(A)* 610–11, ‘The whole world, it was his own’, i.e. the whole world was his’.<sup>74</sup>

The explanations in glosses such as these must be the starting point of the peculiar artificial use of *maoi* in *Bérta na Filed* to be examined here. Most of the examples I know of are taken from the sixteenth-century mainly legal MS of Domhnall Ó Duibh dá Bhoireann, which consists of British Library Egerton 88, as well as two sections which were separated from it in the second half of the eighteenth century, and are now Copenhagen MS 261B, and section four of RIA MS 23 Q 6.<sup>75</sup> Many of the scribal notes contain, to varying degrees, elements of *Bérta na Filed*, and the feature in question here is found in two of the notes in what is now Egerton 88, and in three of the notes in the Copenhagen MS; there are no instances in the scribal notes in the RIA MS.

The note at the end of fol. 89rc is edited and translated in O’Grady (1926, 136 no. 105) as:

Sin ó Domnall do budhéin ocus slán imlán duit a Maghnais ocus  
is ing m’aoi Sémus do beith go tim cidh tá an codh ann. olc do  
cunnum a Cormaic.

<sup>71</sup>For example, *cach aí* ‘each of them’, *cechtar n-aí* ‘each of the two’; see *GOI* §444.

<sup>72</sup>Note also the observation in *GOI* §443 that the 2sg. form *túil/taí* is ‘not found in the Glosses and only rarely elsewhere’. For the replacement in the OIr period of the syntagm *is muí X* ‘X is mine’ by *is limm X* ‘X is mine’, see further Greene (1961).

<sup>73</sup>The citation is from *Bretha Nemed Dédenach*, and the only copy of the continuous text reads *doniocfa tiomthach mo mhacáin maoin*, *CIH* 1116.3, with *maoin* for *muí*. A fuller form of the citation, but without the gloss, appears in *O’Dav.* 1555 as *Tí .i. brat, ut est domicfa tí mo macáin muí*, *CIH* 1529.13.

<sup>74</sup>Cf. Bisagni (2019: 268–9).

<sup>75</sup>For further details see O’Sullivan (1999) and *Companion*, 6.

‘There’s from Donall for himself; and I defy you to your best, Manus. ‘t is a thing to talk of that *Séamus* is so slack though the drink is there. bad is the assistance you give me, Cormac!’

How O’Grady understood the syntax of what he printed as *is ing m’aoi* is uncertain, and I can neither relate his translation to it or make sense of it. Instead I propose that what we have here is *is ing maoi*, with *maoi*<sup>76</sup> substituted for *liom*, and thus equivalent to *is iongnadh liom* in normal language.<sup>77</sup> The relevant clause can then be punctuated and translated as *ocus is ing maoi Séamus do beith go tim cidh tá an codh ann* ‘and I am astonished that Séamas is weak, although the food is in him’.

The scribal note is otherwise characterised by artificial language, viz. *ing*, and *codh*,<sup>78</sup> but the use of *maoi* for *liom* is not simply the substitution of an archaic word for the current one, but also an extension from *liom* meaning ‘mine’ in sentences of the type *is liom an leabhar* ‘the book is mine’, to the entirely separate *liom* meaning ‘in my opinion’, in sentences of the type *is maith liom an leabhar* ‘I like the book’.<sup>79</sup> The syntax of the two types is quite different, and while interchange at an earlier stage of the language is quite possible between *moí* and *limm* in the first type (e.g. *is moí in leabar* and *is limm in leabar*),<sup>80</sup> such interchange is impossible in sentences of the second type. Long after *moí* had disappeared from the normal literary language, however, it was revived and applied to sentences of the second type in the artificial variety of language known as *Bérta na Filed*, as can be shown by further examples, which support my interpretation of the above scribal note.

The next is in another scribal note in the same MS, edited and translated in O’Grady (1926, 139 no. 113 v.) as:

A dia a Domnaill is fada co mbiadhthá ac scripneoracht dam ocus mé féin a féchain imertha ocus is lang m’ aoi co tigit in taos creatha as gach aird féile na croichi sunn.

My goodness, Donall, ‘tis long before you’d be scrivening for me, and I looking on at others playing [gambling]; and I think it all too long until the “shivering fellows” return from various quarters. The Festival of the Cross is here.’

Again, how O’Grady understood the syntax of *is lang m’aoi* is uncertain. While his translation, as it happens, can be retained, the only way to make sense of

<sup>76</sup>With the regular EModIr spelling of the diphthong, written *oí, uí* in OIr, as *aoi*, in final position.

<sup>77</sup>Although not in *DIL*, that *ing* was a *Bérta na Filed* equivalent of *ingnad*, probably indeed a truncated form thereof, can be seen from the instance of *ing* being glossed *ingnamh* in Hardiman (1831: 290.8). For the poem in which this instance is found see Breatnach (2009: 113 n. 24).

<sup>78</sup>I take this as the word registered in *DIL* s.v. *coth* ‘food, sustenance’.

<sup>79</sup>*DIL* s.v. *la*, VI (c) and V (g), respectively.

<sup>80</sup>Compare *á aii .i. comtis les* ‘His own, i.e. that they should be His’, *MI*. 92c10, noted in Greene (1961: 45–6).

the original is by reading *is lang maoi*, equivalent in *Bérta na Filed* to *is fada liom* ‘I think it all too long’.<sup>81</sup>

Three further previously unpublished examples are in the part of the MS which is now Copenhagen MS 261B. They are:<sup>82</sup>

Dob urusa dhamh-sa sgela dh’inísin dama fó mai. Cád hí an cealg a Maghnais? /pni bn3r, innarba ann soo, 1r marg. sup.

‘It would be easy for me to tell tales if I wished to. What is the deceit, o Maghnas? In the name of the Trinity,<sup>83</sup> expulsion<sup>84</sup> here below.

Is olc lium can fal agum 7 is mes maoí a ndein Domnall na gealg, 2ra marg. sup.

‘I dislike not having abundance, and I dislike more what deceitful Domnall is doing.’<sup>85</sup>

Is doilghi maoi gan cim ul– uim uel ollnus nuim<sup>86</sup> acainn 7 in fíon ac <...><sup>87</sup>, 5rb marg. inf.

‘I find it a cause of distress that we do not have a *cim ul– uim uel ollnus nuim* (goblet?), seeing that the wine is ...’

The first of these has an earlier orthography in *mai*, and another characteristic of *Bérta na Filed* is the use of the archaic word *fó* in place of *maith*. In the second, the contrast between the normal wording of the first of the parallel phrases, *Is olc lium*, and the artificial wording of the second, *is mes maoí* (= *is measa liom*)

<sup>81</sup>O’Grady (1926: 140) noted that there is a play on words in *aos creatha*. While he translated *creatha* as the gsg. of *crith* ‘trembling, quivering’ etc., it can also be taken as the gsg. of *creth* ‘craftsmanship; poetical art’ etc., and *aos creatha* will then be a *Bérta na Filed* term for ‘poets’.

<sup>82</sup>With capitalisation and punctuation supplied.

<sup>83</sup>Interpreting the cipher /pni bn3r to be for *in nomine an Trír*, with (i) *in nomine* shortened to *inom*, written backwards, *p* substituted for *o*, and the Ogham letter *m* substituted for the minuscule letter, and (ii) in *an Trír*, *b* substituted for *a*, and the arabic numeral substituted for *trí*. For Ogham letters in these notes, including two other examples of *m*, see O’Grady (1926: 109, 125, 141). The substitution of the letters which follow them in the alphabet for vowels is common in ciphers. Examples are plentiful in the legal text in TCD MS H 3. 18 (1337) pp. 197–202, decrypted in *CIH* 719.30–722.36.

<sup>84</sup>This last clause serves as a heading to the set of extracts with glosses and commentary from *Cáin Aicillne* (tract 6 of *Senchas Már*) on folios 1–2ra (*CIH* 2223.1–2238.15). The extracts concern contracts, and especially the impugning of contracts by a person’s kin or superiors, and *indarbæ* ‘expulsion’ is the term for the formal procedure for rejecting a fief offered by a lord.

<sup>85</sup>I tentatively take *fal* to be the rare word registered in *DIL* s.v. 3 *fál*. An alternative possibility is to take it as *1 fál* in the sense ‘bar (to rescission of a contract)’, given that the subject-matter of folios 2rb–2vb (*CIH* 2238.16–2240.20) is contracts, in particular rescission of contracts, and the word *fál* recurs a number of times there.

<sup>86</sup>This phrase derives from *Bretha Nemed Toisech*, corresponding to the latter half of *nascc deobuire dodaile fimm i crethir cim uim oll nos nuim*, *CIH* 2223.31, ‘the collar of a cupbearer who dispenses wine into a cup *cim uim olus nuim*’ and *cim uim olus nuim* is cited in *O’Dav.* 354, where *cim* is glossed *airget* ‘silver’, and in *O’Dav.* 1609, where *uim* is glossed *umha* ‘copper’. Without going into what exactly *cim uim olus nuim* means, it is likely that the author of this note took it to refer to a drinking-cup.

<sup>87</sup>The end of this note, extending to roughly six letter spaces, is badly stained.

is striking.<sup>88</sup> In the third *Is doilghi maoi* is the equivalent of *Is doilghe liom*, with the noun given in *DIL* s.v. *doilge* ‘trouble, distress’, etc.

I know of two further examples in scribal notes, both with *is cīan maī* ‘I think it all too long’. One is on the lower margin of fol. 7r of RIA MS MS C iii 2 (1236):

Aidhcei feil Sin Seon anocht ⁊ a Cathair Meic Nechtain<sup>89</sup> damh ⁊ is cian mai aniu ⁊ amáirech gan .b. ⁊ is decair dul air Sin Seon ⁊ c’aidhchi Myre ⁊ dar lium is inscripta Diarmaid Og ag fagbail a da bu ndarti oc ⁊ gan aithni a bert aige.

‘Tonight is the eve of the feast of St John, and I am in Cathair Meic Neachtain, and I think it all too long to be without ... (?) today and tomorrow, and it is difficult to endure it on [the feast of] St John and until the eve of [the feast of] Mary, and I think that it is worth noting that Diarmaid Óg is leaving his ... (?).<sup>90</sup>

The other is on the lower margin of p. 55 of RIA MS 23 Q 6 (1243):<sup>91</sup>

Sguirim budesta ⁊ i[s] sgithac mo fracc ⁊ is cian mai co tig m<o th-seisi> \.i. Aodagan/ <...> co mbeth ris om domnus agum in Satharn iar feil Michel <...> mo log ⁊ me am aonur.

‘I am stopping for now, and my hand is tired, and I think it all too long until my companion (i.e. Aodhagán) comes <...> that I may have news from my home. The Saturday after Michaelmas. <...> is my location and I am on my own’.

This is in section 5 of 23 Q 6, which consists of two leaves, pp. 53–4 and pp. 55–6, bound in the wrong order, containing part of *Immacallam in Dá Thúarad*<sup>92</sup>, and originally formed part of C iii 2.<sup>93</sup> It is not only in the same hand as the copy of the *Immacallam* in C iii 2, but fills exactly the lacuna in the latter between folios 10 and 11, and together they form a complete copy of the text.

As noted in O’Sullivan (1999: 283), Egerton 88,<sup>94</sup> ‘thanks to Standish Hayes O’Grady’s splendid work on the scribal inscriptions, has long been known to be the book of Domhnall mac Aodha Uí Dhuibhdábhoireann, a member of the minor legal family of Cahermacnaghten, County Clare, employed by O’Loughlin, lord of the Burren of County Clare’, although

<sup>88</sup>It is uncertain whether *mes* is a slip for *mesa*, or an artificial variant of it, although I have no other examples.

<sup>89</sup>Written .c.m–.n. in the MS.

<sup>90</sup>I leave two gaps in the translation, as it is not obvious either what .b. stands for, or what the sense of the end of the note is.

<sup>91</sup>Although *mo thseisi* is badly rubbed, the reading seems fairly certain. The suprascript gloss has *aod* with a faint suspension-stroke above the *d*. The version of this note in *RIA Cat.* p. 3446 has only *m[ ]* for *mo thseisi*, and silently omits *mai*, although the latter is perfectly clear in the MS. A number of other letters, indicated here by <...>, are so badly rubbed as to be completely illegible.

<sup>92</sup>Edited and translated by Stokes (1905).

<sup>93</sup>As Dr Alice Taylor-Griffiths has brought to my attention.

<sup>94</sup>Together with its two detached sections (above, p. 364).

‘much of the copying for Domhnall is noted to have been done at Park, the well-known Mac Aodhagáin school in north-east County Galway ... and some at the Ó Deoradháin law school at Ballyorley in County Wexford’ (O’Sullivan: 1999, 285). The other MS in which the scribal notes in question here are found was written some years earlier than Egerton 88,<sup>95</sup> but shares one place of writing with it, viz. Cathair Mhic Neachtain, as can be seen from the colophon at the end of the copy of *Immacallam in Dá Thúarad* in MS C iii 2, fo. 12vb, dated AD 1552:

Orait don té ro scribh in leabur-sa o thus co deiredh. A Cathair Meic Nechtain a farrad Ara na mBreó a tindsnad, ⁊ a forba a mBaile McClandcada a farrad mo goisde .i. Domhnall Og MacClanncada.<sup>96</sup> Mise Forandan qui scribsit sin do fein ⁊ da gach aon darub toil do Dia. ⁊ is i ais in Domini .i. 2. bliadain .x. ⁊ dá .xx.it ⁊ .u.c. ⁊ .0000. bliadan cusin Nodlaig so cugam. Caoicis ria Samuin odie.

Translated in Bisagni (2019: 11–12) as: ‘A prayer for the one who wrote this book from beginning to end. In Cathair Mhic Neachtain near Ara na mBreó<sup>97</sup> it was begun, and its completion [was] in Baile Mhic Fhlannchadha, near my patron, i.e. Domhnall Óg Mac Fhlannchadha. I am Forannán, who wrote this for himself and for every one whom God may please. And the age of the Lord is: twelve years and two twenties and five hundred and one thousand years [= AD 1552] up to next Christmas, today it is a fortnight before the 1st of November’.

Outside these scribal notes, I know of only one instance in a text written entirely in *Bérta na Filed*, viz. in v. 2d of *Fē mo ese ol atú*.<sup>98</sup> This line reads *is fur maoi gan dia fo mām*, and two words are glossed, viz. *fur* with *.i. olc*,<sup>99</sup> and *dia* with *.i. bheith*. On the basis of these the line can be translated as ‘I think it bad that I am not under his yoke’, or ‘I do not like not being under his yoke’.<sup>100</sup> If I am right in my assumption (footnote 63 above) that the honorand of this poem is Magnus Ó Domhnaill of Tír Chonaill, who died in 1563, this instance would

<sup>95</sup>The writing of Egerton 88 ‘stretched over seven years, from 1564 to 1570’, O’Sullivan (1999: 287).

<sup>96</sup>I so represent the MS reading, viz. *madcada* with an insertion-mark (inadvertently after instead of before the first *d*) referring to *cl* + double suspension-stroke in the margin; *RIA Cat.* p. 3422 has *Ma(d) Clanncada*, without comment.

<sup>97</sup>Parallelism with a *farrad mo goisde* (recte ‘in the company of my godfather’) suggests that this is rather a cryptic rendering of a personal name, and this is confirmed by the context in which *Ara na mBreó* recurs in the scribal note at the bottom of fol. 9r (*RIA Cat.* p. 3423). Accordingly translate: ‘in the company of the “Attendant of the Fires”’. The most likely candidate is *Aodhagán*, since the meaning of the poetic word *áed* ‘fire’ (with which the non-diminutive name *Áed* belongs) was fairly well known, being frequently given in glossaries (see *DIL* s.v.), and an *Aodhagán* is mentioned in the note on fol. 3v (*RIA Cat.* p. 3422) as well as in the note in 23 Q 6 cited above.

<sup>98</sup>See above p. 362.

<sup>99</sup>See *DIL* s.v. 2 *fúr* for this *Bérta na Filed* term.

<sup>100</sup>*DIL* cites this line s.v. 1 *maoi*, as the sole example of *maoi* ‘in Bérta na f. used for mé (nom.)’, but without comment as to what the line might then mean.

attest to a more widespread use of *ma(o)i* for *liom* than indicated by the fairly localised scribal notes.

The scribal notes in British Library Egerton 88 and RIA MS C iii 2, and those in other manuscripts of the period, such as RIA MS D v 2 (670) or TCD MSS H 3. 17 (1336) and H 3. 18 (1337) are an important source for the intellectual history of Ireland in the sixteenth century, and yet have mostly been ignored. Thus, hardly any of them are printed in the catalogue of TCD MSS,<sup>101</sup> and while the catalogue of RIA MSS usually cites scribal notes, it does not always cite all of them,<sup>102</sup> and in failing to mention any one at all of the many scribal notes in D v 2, it creates the impression that there are none in that MS.<sup>103</sup> The only serious attempt at editing and interpreting any of them is that by O'Grady,<sup>104</sup> but the task is complicated by difficulties of style, including ciphers and abstruse vocabulary. This note on *maoi* has sought to clear away one of these difficulties.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Companion | Liam Breatnach, <i>A Companion to the Corpus Iuris Hibernici</i> , Early Irish Law Series 5 (Dublin, 2005).                                                                                                                        |
| CormY     | Meyer (1912)                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| O'Dav.    | Stokes (1904).                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| RIA Cat.  | T. F. O'Rahilly, K. Mulchrone, M. E. Byrne, J. H. Delargy, E. FitzPatrick, L. Duncan, W. Wulf, G. Murphy, A. I. Pearson and T. Ó Concheanainn, <i>Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy</i> (Dublin, 1926–70). |

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<sup>101</sup> Abbott and Gwynn (1921).

<sup>102</sup> For example, the note at the end of fol. 12ra in C iii 2 is omitted from the description in *RIA Cat.* pp. 3421–4, and there are some serious errors in those that are included.

<sup>103</sup> O'Rahilly et al. (1926–70).

<sup>104</sup> O'Grady (1926: 109–41).

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