

Ríagail na Manach Líath ‘The Rule of the Grey Monks’: A late mediaeval fabrication



Liam Breatnach

Celtica 32 (2020), 77–100

DOI: 10.58480/SCS-guzqs-ngeav

DIAS

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



© School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

This work is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

RÍAGAIL NA MANACH LIATH ‘THE RULE OF THE GREY MONKS’:
A LATE MEDIAEVAL FABRICATION

ABSTRACT

In this paper it is shown that the text which goes under the name of *Riagail na Manach Liath* is not in fact an early rule, but rather a collection of heterogeneous verses, and it is argued that they were put together and supplied with the title by the fifteenth-century learned scribe Uilliam Mac an Leagha. Each of the ten verses is edited separately, with a translation and notes.

The texts printed by John Strachan (1905) under the title ‘Two monastic rules’ are in the form of a diplomatic edition, with a number of comments and suggested emendations in footnotes, but without a translation.¹ The only copies are in section A of RIA MS 23 P 3 (1242); the text with which this paper is concerned is on fol. 13vb37–14ra22, and the other, with the MS heading *Riagail Chīarāin ann sō* ‘The Rule of Ciarán here below’, takes up the whole of the first column of fol. 14v.

The contents of Section A are for the most part religious texts, with copies of *Félire Óengusso*, *Apgitir Chrábaid*, homilies, etc., and on folios 13–14va, an acephalous copy of *Riagail Ailbi*, and a copy of *Riagail in Choimded*, preceding the text edited here, and copies of *Taibret duit a coibsená*, *Riagail Chormaí maic Cuilennáin*, and *Riagail Chīaráin*, following it. Of this latter group, the copies of *Riagail na Manach Liath*, *Riagail Chīaráin*, and *Taibret duit a coibsená* are unique to this MS.² The other three MS copies of *Riagail Ailbi* supply the title,³ and one thing that the rest of this group of texts in MS 23 P 3 have in common is that, apart from *Taibret duit a coibsená*, they are all supplied with a title in the MS, in all cases beginning with *Riagail*.⁴ In this paper I will show that, whatever about the other texts, the so-called *Riagail na Manach Liath* can under no circumstances be regarded as a rule.

It is presented in the MS as follows:⁵

Riagail namanach liath and so

- [1] Corann liath lethet baisi. rolas oclosgud drisi. nípa romór
inmaisi. cen ní drosacht ind loisi.

¹References to ‘Strachan’ below are to this edition together with the footnotes.

²*Taibret duit a coibsená* has not been edited; for editions of the others see below p. 80.

³See O'Neill (1907: 95).

⁴It is abbreviated *Riag-* in every instance.

⁵I number the verses and italicise all abbreviations. Punctuation and word-division are as in the MS. Ligatured *æ* is expanded as *ae*.

- [2] Atlochur. do mac dé uasal amra. ocrois combachuil núí.
beith atai cín labra
- [3] Cuma limsa ní donbith. acht ropeleircighi rop clith. iscuma
lem gidh bé dhe. acht rop clith ropeleirchidhe
- [4] Techt doniarmەرghi mór saeth. loiscis ingaeth modhá nó.
munbad omun fiadhat find. gid bind incloc nithiagh dó
- [5] Adham samson solum rí. romersat a mbanairlí. gidhbé
contuasi frimná. genguasacht ní ernama
- [6] Diam do dermat deogh dobás. ní fotha gaís gnim dotháir.
pater terc dacach oclaigh naim. mairg ricfad uaim ifirn áin.
- [7] Clogán bind. inacothraim osnach glind. isi toil arfiaghad
find. uathad brathar fo aen cuing
- [8] Oralathur suil darcach. atbeir liter aidhchein fein bid
aparrtus fer gin gradh. gid fer gu ngrad bid apein
- [9] Mairec dana bás bith diultad. mairec nach orraim a liatha
miscuis gach buirb atinchosc. beridh sleamain afhiacha
- [10] Naclecht insirfeall sádhail. is nert dílenn gadighbail. bidh
aneim isna nellaib. feghaidh sein arna sinaib.

SCRIBE

The scribe was Uilliam Mac an Leagha, described by Flower (1926: 470), in his account of British Library MS Additional 30512, also written by Mac an Leagha, as ‘one of the most prolific scribes of the second half of the 15th century’. He goes on to say that ‘he wrote a MS. now in the King’s Inns, Dublin, in 1463 (cf. S.H. O’Grady, *Silv. Gad.*, ii. p. vii); R. I. A. MS. 23. P. 3 in 1467 ... part of the Paris MS. Celt. I in 1473 ... part of T. C. D., H. 2. 7; and Add. 11809 and Eg. 91 (the last three undated)’.⁶

Regarding the supposed MS in the King’s Inns Library written in 1463, de Brún (1972: xvii n 58) states ‘there is no such manuscript now in the collection ... The only item among these manuscripts that might be in Mac an Leagha’s hand is the loose leaf inserted in MS 10 which belongs in RIA 23 O 4’.

As for the date of TCD MS H 2. 7 (1298), Mac an Leagha is the scribe of that part of the MS which contains *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*, ed. Quin (1939). The editor shows that this version is based on the first edition of Caxton’s *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, printed at Bruges probably in 1474, and argues that Uilliam Mac an Leagha was not only the scribe, but also the translator of *Stair Ercuil* (and of a number of other texts).⁷

He wrote our MS in 1470 ‘in the house of Oedh Occ († 1491 AU) Magraith unnsa Mélaigh Moir ar Sliabh Dile (a border district between Tipperary and Kilkenny)’.⁸ For discussion of the work of Uilliam Mac an Leagha as translator

⁶See also Ní Shéaghdha (1967: 57–9), on NLI MS G 9.

⁷Quin (1939, xiv–xxiv, xxxviii–xl); see *Clavis* §1271.

⁸*RIA Cat.* p. 3435. For the location of Mólach Mór, and for the date 1470 (rather than 1467, as in *RIA Cat.*), see Walsh (2003: 287, 467).

and author see, more recently, Breeze (1987: 117–19), Byrne (2016 and 2019), Poppe (2017) and the works referred to therein.

TITLE AND CONTENTS

The verses are headed *Riagail na Manach Líath and sō* ‘The Rule of the Grey Monks here below’ in the MS,⁹ and this ‘rule’ has been regularly included in discussions of rules and poems of advice, most recently by the present writer (Breatnach 2008: 1–2). Strachan did not discuss the subject matter of the verses, and it is listed without comment under the heading ‘miscellaneous monastic rules’ in Kenney (1929: 474). As far as I know, the first discussion of the text is in Follett (2006: 150).¹⁰ While he took the verses to be a single poem, he did raise the important point of the problem with the MS title, namely that since the term *manaig líatha* ‘Grey Monks’ refers to the Cistercians, it cannot be earlier than the twelfth century. He notes that the adjective *líath* ‘grey’ appears twice in the verses, singular *líath* in verse I and plural *líatha* in verse IX, and concludes that ‘perhaps the title was added by a copyist who mistook this line as a reference to Cistercians’.

Ó Corráin, *Clavis* 821 §636, took a more sceptical view, and it is worth citing his comments in full:

Not a rule, but a sarcastic poem (10 st.) by a sardonic and lazy monk: ‘It is so hard to go to matins, the wind stings my ears, though sweet the bell, I come not there, did I not the fair Lord fear’. He is acerbic about those in orders – they go to hell, while the unordained go to paradise. He is a misogynist: Adam, Samson and Solomon were deluded by women as will anyone who listens to them. But he likes the monastic life of ease.

These verses were included in a series of seminars I conducted in the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies in 2015–2016 on unedited early Irish rules, and with a close reading of the text, not only did it become clear that it was of a very different nature to the rules, but also that it did not hold together as a single poem. In other words, what we have in the so-called ‘Rule of the Grey Monks’ is not a single composition, but an assembly of originally separate verses passed off as a rule.¹¹ I set out below my arguments in support of this view.

Apart from the problems with the title, as already discussed, and the subject-matter, discussed below, there is the question of the incompatibility of both the metrics and the language of the individual verses.

⁹The first word is abbreviated *riag-* in the MS, and Strachan expanded as *riagul*. Since, as will become apparent, the title must be a late fabrication, the abbreviation is to be expanded to the later nsg. form with pal. final *-l*), rather than the OIr form *riagul*.

¹⁰The translation offered in Ó Maidín (1996: 49–52) is for the most part far removed from the Irish text, and will not be referred to again.

¹¹No individual verse, then, is a forgery.

The text consists of ten verses, and two significant metrical anomalies are the lack of a *dúnad*, and the variation in metre from verse to verse. The metres used are *deibide* and *rannaigeacht*, with more than one variety of each. Verse I is in *deibide nguilbnech*, verses III and V are in regular *deibide*, while verse VII is in *deibide scailte ngairit*. On the other hand, verses IV, VI and VIII are in *rannaigeacht mór*, verse X is in *rannaigeacht bec*, and verse II is in *rannaigeacht gairit recomarcach*. As it stands, the metre of verse IX is an irregular form of *rannaigeacht* ($7^3 7^2 7^2 7^2$), but if the variant versions are closer to the original (see notes), this pattern results from the re-making of a verse in *ai freislige* ($7^3 7^2 7^3 7^2$).

In most verses only the basic requirements of syllable-count and end-rhyme are consistently met. Verse X, however, stands out from the others because of its elaborate metrical scheme, with end-rhyme between *b* and *d* (*dígail* : *sinaib*), the finals of *a* and *c* (*sádail*, *néllaib*) making *úaitne* (consonance) with these, all the remaining stressed words in *b* rhyming with words in *a* (*nert* : *clecht* and *díleinn* : *sírfell*), *aicill*-rhyme between *c* and *d* (*néllaib* : *fégaid*), and the remaining stressed word in *d*, *sein*, rhyming with *neim* in *c*. In the other verses, internal rhymes are absent, alliteration is sporadic, and of those in *rannaigeacht*, only II (with *nuí* : *tuí*) and IV (in both couplets, with *sáeth* : *gáeth* and *find* : *bind*) have *aicill*-rhyme.¹²

There is also considerable linguistic variation between the verses. While a late date might be compatible with some of the verses, it is certainly not so with all of them. Indeed the level of linguistic variation in the verses is so great that it is impossible to be persuaded that they could all belong to the same period. Thus, for example, verses with diagnostic OIr forms are: II with deponent *Ad-tlochur*, and disyllabic *nuí* and *tuí*, and V with deuterotonic *con-túaisi*. On the other hand, verses with clear indicators of a later date are: VIII with monosyllabic *bíd*, in lines 3 and 4, and X with *gá dígail* (OIr *oca*), monosyllabic *bíd*, dpl. of article in *isna néllaib*, *arna sinaib*, and the demonstrative *sein* (fixed by rhyme with *neim*).

Then there is the question of the subject-matter. A number of early poems of advice which appear to be intended for a general audience have come down to us; many of them have the word *riagail* 'rule' in the title, and some are as early as the Old Irish period. See, for example, *Riagail in Choimded*,¹³ *Riagail Chormaíc maic Cuilennáin*,¹⁴ *Riagail Ailbi*,¹⁵ *Anmchairdes Mancháin Léith*¹⁶ and *A chuirp, not chaith fri crábud*.¹⁷ On the other hand, although the poem *Cinnus atá do thinnrem* is specifically addressed to a student, Máel Brigte,

¹²I do not count the repetition of *bíd*, *fer* and *grád* in the fourth line of verse VIII as rhymes with *bíd*, *fer* and *grád* in the third line.

¹³Edited with translation and notes in Strachan (1904), with addenda in Strachan (1905c). See *Clavis* §633. The title is as in RIA MS 23 P 3 (above p. 72), and the only other of the four MS copies which has a title is Brussels Bibliothèque Royale MS 5100–4, with *Riagail Comhgaill Bendchair ind so*; see Strachan (1904, 192; 1905c, 59).

¹⁴Edited with translation and notes in Strachan (1905b). See *Clavis* §637.

¹⁵Edited with translation and notes in O'Neill (1907). See *Clavis* §632.

¹⁶Edited Meyer (1910, 310–12). See *Clavis* §867a.

¹⁷Edited Meyer (1908: 264–6).

it is still fairly typical of the genre of verse rules or poems of advice.¹⁸ These all take the form of either addresses in the second person, or exhortations in the third person imperative. Taken together, however, our ten verses do not conform to either of these patterns. They form neither an address nor an exhortation, and none of the first four verses can by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as part of a poem of advice. Verses II, III and IV are introspective, and even more striking is verse I, which, in its ridiculing of a cleric's appearance, belongs with the genre of satirical verse.

Furthermore, variants of verse IX appear in two other contexts, once as a marginal verse and once as verse 13 of the poem beginning *Fersaighecht an tempuil tall*; for details see the notes. The MS of the former is RIA MS D iv 2 (1223), dated in *RIA Cat.* to the 15th century, with a query. The MS of the latter is the 16th-century Laud 615 (Ó Cuív, 2001: 88). Carney (1940: 243–4) edited and translated three verses, corresponding to verses 3–5 of *Fersaighecht in tempuil tall*, which appear as a separate item with a prose introduction in UCD Franciscan MS A9. There they are represented as being spoken by the ghost of Mac Méig Uidhir in response to a question as to the effectiveness of prayers uttered in haste. Carney argued that these verses did not belong originally to the longer poem; if so, *Fersaighecht in tempuil tall* would itself be a compilation.¹⁹ If it is not, we could envisage the extraction of the verse *Mairg díanad bés bithdiultad* from *Fersaighecht in tempuil tall* as a marginal verse,²⁰ and the subsequent assimilation of the marginal verse into our compilation.

MARGINAL VERSES AND THE ROLE OF UILLIAM MAC AN LEAGHA

As for the person responsible for fabricating our rule, in all likelihood it was the scribe himself. I say this as there are two other instances in the hand of Uilliam Mac an Leagha of compilations of originally independent or marginal verses, although these two compilations differ somewhat in nature from the fabrication in question here.

The first of these is the collection in British Library Additional 30512, where most of the verses are marked with the *q*-like paragraph mark.²¹ It begins in the second column of folio 32v, takes up the rest of this column, then goes into the lower margin,²² and finishes with v. 8 on the upper margin of the next page (fol. 33r).

¹⁸Edited with translation and notes in Breatnach (2008); for parallels between this and the other poems mentioned see *ibid.*, 1.

¹⁹The three verses form one of the sections composed in *deibide* in a poem which shows a great deal of metrical variation. Verses 1, 2, 6, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20, and 22–34 are written in various forms of *rannaigecht*, verses 3–5, 7–11, 15, 16, and 18 are in *deibide*, and verse 13 is in *ai freislige*.

²⁰Instances of marginal verses excerpted from longer poems are: verse 25 of Smith (1994) in TCD MS the Yellow Book of Lecan, cols. 341–2 marg. inf., and verse 8 of Breatnach (2008) in TCD MS H 3. 17 (1336), cols. 150–1 marg. sup. I recently came across a further instance from the latter poem, viz. verse 12 in TCD MS H 4. 22 (1363) p. 47 marg. inf.

²¹Reproduced here with ¶; see Flower (1926: 470, 483).

²²At the beginning of the second couplet of v. 5.

1. Fil déde
arna caraimsi déde.
ní geibh edrum 7 écc.
hí flaith *ními* nim leige
2. Ni teidi
imcradi (?) indi co leicci.
arrofedar for dedi.
cengain legu rom leige
3. In *talam* nod melum-ne
ba romór noc charum-ne.
dotiaghum-ne tairisium.
doraga-sum tarainde
4. ¶Maith ar maith.
nod *beir* do-berid flaith
co frith holc níd ebela.
gein mair cech aen do-déna
5. ¶Fil trí ní
donach buidech mac Dé bí.
crabad maídhmech coicsiud serb.
éccnach duine madh indearb
6. ¶Mor ndruiss mór mbaoes mbaile.
mór coll celle mór mire.
uair is arcenn dul d’eccaibh.
beth a n-etoil *maic* Muire²³
7. ¶IS eol dam
in ní is dech dom anmain.
inomain fada mo thaeibh seng.
bec reng do breith fo thalmáin
8. ¶An ti csacus²⁴ trí feirg
ed at-beredh in cresin.
les a cheile ní deine.
adbhail a less fadeissin

There are two further verses in the lower margin of fol. 33r. For the sake of completeness, I supply the text and translation here, although they do not belong with the rest. Not only do they lack the paragraph mark found before

²³This copy of the verse found also in the Codex Boernerianus, 145, ed. *Thes* 2, 296, is noticed in Stokes (1910: 78).

²⁴The reading in the corresponding H10 (see below) is *cūrsachas* ‘who rebukes’; *csacus* is at the very top of the page, and an *ur*-compendium has doubtless been lost due to trimming of the margin.

verses 4 to 8, but, whereas all the other verses stand alone, these two have to be read as a unit.²⁵

Na tréide.
etera mesa a nÉire.
ap 7 [a] tãnaise
lesclann oga mbeth gēre;

is dobrān re minīascach
seobacc re hēnaibh slēibhe.
catt re lochaid cú re muic.
ben mic is māthair chéile.

‘The three between whom²⁶ things are worst in Ireland: an abbot and his deputy, stepchildren where there is acrimony;

like an otter with small fish, a hawk with mountain birds, a cat with a mouse, a hound with a pig, are a son’s wife and a husband’s mother.’

Now, the collection above overlaps remarkably closely with a set of eleven marginal verses in section 9 of TCD MS H 2. 12 (1309), which were edited and translated by Beatrice Culverwell over a century ago.²⁷ The verses are distributed regularly over most of its eight folios, with one verse each in the lower margins of the recto and verso of folios 1–5, and the recto of folio 6.

All of the eight verses in the compilation in Additional 30512 appear as marginal verses in H 2. 12, with, however, a slight difference in order,²⁸ viz. A1 = H4, A2 = H5, A3 = H7, A4 = H6, A5 = H9, A6 = H8, A7 = H11, A8 = H10. The first three marginal verses in H, however, are not matched in A.

The shared verses are as follows in H:²⁹

4. 2v: Fil dēde
arná caraim-si tēti;
nī tic etram ocus éc,
do flaith neime nīm lēici.

²⁵The first line of the first verse signals three categories; two are given in the first verse, and the whole of the second verse is devoted to the third category. Nevertheless, the second verse was edited on its own in Meyer (1908: 268).

²⁶The form *etera* is the only attestation of the combination of the preposition *eter* with the relative particle and 3sg. pres. ind. of the copula that I know of; what exactly the form in OIr was is another matter, although it probably ended in *-d* (GOI §798).

²⁷Culverwell (1913).

²⁸A = the verses in the compilation in Additional 30512, and H = the marginal verses in H 2. 12.

²⁹For the most part I follow the text and translation in Culverwell (1913), but add hyphens and supply macrons over long vowels; any other differences are indicated in the footnotes.

‘There are two things on account of which I love not comfort: it does not come between me and death, it does not let me (pass) to heaven’s kingdom.’³⁰

5. 3r: Nī tēti
ime-rāider colēici;
ar ro-fetar fōr tēiti,
cinco lēici, rom lēici.

‘It is not comfort which is meditated upon meanwhile; for I know your comfort, though it leaves not off, it has left me.’

6. 3v: Maith ar maith –
nī hed not beir de bithflaith;
fō fri olc – nīt ebēla –
cēn mair cach āen dod-gēna.

‘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 – it will not be a loss to you.’³¹

7. 4r: In talam do-melam-ne
ba romór no caram-ne
do-tāegam-ne tairisim,
do-ragha-sam taruindi.

‘The earth which we wear away (by walking, etc.) – too much it will be that we shall love [it]: Now we go over it, [but the time will come when] it shall go over us [i.e. when we are in our graves].’

8. 4v: Mór drūs, mór mbāes, mór mire,
mór coll cēilli, mór mbaile:
ūair is aircenn dol d’écaib,
beth a n-ētoil mic Muire.

‘Great folly, great nonsense, great madness, great lack of reason [it is] – since going to death is certain – to be in (the) displeasure of Mary’s Son.’

9. 5r: Fil trī ní,
donāch buidech mac Dé bī:
crābud ūallach, coisced serb

³⁰Culverwell (1913, 134) has ‘trede (perhaps dede)’ in the first line, with the translation ‘three things (or two things)’. The MS has *dede*. Also she took *nī* in the third line differently, translating ‘anything which comes between me and death’.

³¹Culverwell (1913, 134) translated *nīt ebēla* as ‘he shall not die’, with a query.

‘There are three things with which the Son of the Living God is not pleased; vainglorious piety, bitter rebuking’³²

10. 5v: An tī cūsachas tri feirg
edh as-berat in cresin:–
‘les a cēile nī dēni
at-baill a les fodesin.’

‘He who rebukes in wrath – it is this the pious say [of him]: “his fellow’s profit he works not, his own profit perishes”.’

11. 6r: Is éol dam
a nn-í is dech dom anmain:
mo nōin fota, mo taīb seng,
bec, reng, do beith a talmain.

‘I know the thing that is best for my soul: –[throughout] my long evening, my slender side, small and thin to be in earth [i.e. in the grave].’

The first three verses in H are not matched in A; they are:

1. 1r inf: An ba maiden, an ba fuin,
an ba for tír nó for muir;
acht ro-fetar rachat d’éc
– mór an bét – ní fetar cuin.

‘Be it morning, be it sunset, be it on land, be it on sea (I know not); but I know that I shall go to death – great the deed – I know not when.’³³

2. 1v: Cairdes fría Caitir Fína –
airdles don tí do-géna
in nem ocus an talam,
is é taradh fo-gēba.

‘Friendship with Catherine, a great advantage for the one who enters into it; heaven and earth is the profit they will have.’³⁴

³²Culverwell (1913: 135) supplied the missing fourth line, *ēcnach duine, mād inderb*, from the copy of this verse in RIA MS An Leabhar Breac 225 marg. inf. and translated ‘slandering of a person if it be untrue’.

³³This is a frequently recurring marginal verse; I have thus far noted copies in RIA MS An Leabhar Breac, 172 marg. inf., RIA MS The Book of Uí Maine, 77R (136) marg. inf., TCD MS H 2. 16 (1318), YBL(6), coll. 293–4 marg. inf., BL MS Harley 5280, 46V inf., and Oxford Bodleian Laud 610, 115R marg. inf.

³⁴My interpretation of the first line differs from that in Culverwell (1913: 133); for the form of the name of Saint Catherine see Ó Cuív (1986: 166).

3. 2r: Is éol damh
 ní do ícfad an slúag-sa:
 serc meic Dé, ocus a omhan,
 miscais don doman trúadh-sa.

'I know a thing that would save this host: – love of God's Son, and
 fear of him – hatred of this pitiful world.'

The main text of section 9 of MS H 2. 12 is a copy of part of the prose version of *Saltair na Rann*,³⁵ written by Tadg Úa Rígbardáin in 1474, a date which would fit with the floruit of Uilliam Mac an Leagha. At first sight, it might appear that A was taken from H. If, however, Flower (1926: 471) was correct in his tentative suggestion that 'Add. 30512 would be identical with the Leabur na carraigi given with Laud Misc. 610 in ransom for Edmond Butler in 1462, although there is nothing in the MS. itself to make this identification certain', the verses in A could not have been taken from H. Nevertheless, it was no more than a suggestion, and his arguments were rejected by O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan (1971: 144–6). But even if A was not written before 1462, there still remains the major difficulty that the last line of verse number 9 is missing in H, but present in the corresponding A5. Although one could argue that it was supplied in A from another source – as indeed was done by Culverwell – this might be stretching the argument a bit too far.

What is certain, however, is that the verses in H cannot have been taken from the compilation as it stands in A, given a number of clearly superior readings in H, for example, *téti* 'comfort', H4 (line *b*), but *déde*, A1,³⁶ and *fō fri olc* 'good in return for evil', H6 (line *c*), but *co frith holc*, A4.³⁷

The best way then to account for the close connection between A and H might be to take it that both derive from a third source. Whether we postulate this to have been a set of marginal verses in another MS, or a compilation of such verses already in existence, we are still left with an incontrovertible instance of a close relationship between a set of marginal verses and a compilation.

In the second case, Mac an Leagha went a step further, and brought a number of verses together, but did not mark them with the paragraph mark, and thus presented them as forming a single poem. This is the compilation of four verses on folio 34vb of Additional 30512, the same MS in which the compilation just discussed is found. It was edited without a translation by Meyer (1913),³⁸ and I supply text and translation below.³⁹

³⁵See McNamara (1975: 18).

³⁶The latter reading is a repetition of the end-word of line *a*.

³⁷My concern here is solely to establish the connection between the compilation in A and the marginal verses in H. In a forthcoming work on marginal verses I intend to provide a new translation of the verses in H along with a more detailed account of the variant readings in A.

³⁸The four verses are printed again as a single poem in Meyer (1918: 385), with readings from TCD MS H 1.11, folio 143r10, although the latter is in fact a copy of the former (see Abbott and Gwynn, 1921: 25).

³⁹The text is as in the MS, with the addition of word-division, punctuation, capitalisation, and macrons over long vowels.

It is clear from the subject matter that each of these verses is a separate composition, and the only ones that have anything at all in common are the first and the last. Furthermore, each of them is attested elsewhere in different contexts.⁴⁰ The first recurs as a marginal verse in RIA MS 23 P 26 (479), the Book of Fenagh, 4r inf.,⁴¹ the first two in the compilation of nine verses in RIA MS D ii 1 (1225), the Book of Uí Maine, 10 (46) vb13, and the last in commentary on *Auraicept na nÉces*.⁴² The third verse, which concerns the descending order of priority for potential candidates for the abbacy or headship of a church, recurs as a marginal verse on p. 86 of the Leabhar Breac, under the verses for April of the *Félire Óengusso*,⁴³ and in commentary on the *Senchas Már* tract *Córus Bésgnai*.⁴⁴

1. ISaoth lem int aos lēighind
do dul i nd-ifern phīanach,
is ind tī nāt lēg ecna
do dhul hī parrthus ngrīanach.
 2. IS ed is dech do senōir
ēрге romoch ōn degdōil,
cētul na salm dīa erāil,
ecc na marbh do gabāil.
 3. Ērlam grind, manach mīn,
eccluiss, dalta co nglanbrīgh,
combrugaid, is dēorad Dē;
ūadhaib dleghar apdaine.
 4. Fogluim feallsamnacht is fās,
lēighind Gaīdhelg 7 glūas,
litirrdacht lēir 7 rīm̃h;
is becc a mbrīgh is tigh thūas. as.
1. I find it distressing that learned people should go to torment-filled Hell, and that the person who never studied learned works should go into sunny Paradise.
 2. What is best for an elder is to rise very early at daybreak, to chant the psalms to commend him, and to recite the ...⁴⁵ for the dead.

⁴⁰Cf. Flower (1926: 486).

⁴¹Edited and translated in Hennessy and Kelly (1875: 33).

⁴²Calder (1917: 6, 173).

⁴³Also amongst the verses for April in the collections extracted from the notes and margins of copies of the *Félire* in Brussels Bibliothèque Royale MSS 5100–04 and 5057–59.

⁴⁴For discussion of the variant readings and a restored text see Breatnach (2007), and cf. also Breatnach (2017: 266).

⁴⁵The copy of this verse in Book of Uí Maine, 10 (46) Vb15–16 has the superior reading *ēgnaircc* ‘intercessory prayer’.

3. Vigorous⁴⁶ patron saint, gentle church vassal, church, pupil with pure force, a neighbour (?),⁴⁷ and exile of God; from amongst them the abbacy is taken.
4. Learning, philosophy, are vain; Latin learning, vernacular literature, and commentary, diligent booklearning, and arithmetic, they are of little import in the house above.

Although Mac an Leagha supplies neither a title nor an ascription, he does the next best thing, in that he contrives a *dúnad*, by placing the verse ending with *thūas* at the end, and drawing attention to it by writing *as* after *thuas*, to echo the first word of the first verse; all of this is clearly intended to pass off the four verses as belonging together.

Meyer (1913) followed the layout in the MS and presented these as a single poem, but as noted many years ago by Flower (1926: 486), 'they are really separate'. This is shown not only by the subject matter, as noted above, but also by the fact the verses are in different metres. Verse 1 is in *rannaigeacht bec*, 2 in *deibide nguilibnech*, 3 in regular *deibide*, and 4 in *rannaigeacht mór*.

These four verses are epigrammatic or mnemonic (v. 3), types of verse which are commonly found as marginal verses, and indeed two of them, as noted, do actually appear elsewhere as such. The verses of our text are also mostly of these types, and while it cannot be proven, it is likely that at least in part the text represents a compilation of marginal verses.

To conclude, the significant linguistic and metrical variation from verse to verse and the lack of any unifying theme, taken together with the fact that Uilliam Mac an Leagha can be shown to have had a hand in one other compilation of marginal verses and one other fabrication, indicate that the so-called *Riagail na Manach Liath*, the 'Rule of the Grey Monks', is not in fact a rule, but a fabrication consisting of disparate verses of varying dates of composition, some at least of which were likely garnered from the margins of MSS. The question of Mac an Leagha's motivation in doing this is not easy to answer, but given that it is preceded in the MS by two rules and followed by two others, it is quite possible that he was under pressure from a commission to supply a collection of early monastic rules.

⁴⁶The replacement of original *griän* 'land' (viz. members of the kin of the original landowner) with the adjective *grind* not only results in the loss of a category but also leaves the line a syllable short; this replacement is also found in two of the other four copies (Breatnach 2007: 34–5).

⁴⁷This reading, an otherwise unattested word, perhaps derived from *com* + *bruig* 'land' + agent suffix, is inferior to *compairche* 'a confederate church' in all the other copies.

EDITION

I

Corann liath, lethet bise,
ro las oc loscud drise;
nípa romór in maise,
cenidros acht ind laise.

‘A grey tonsure, the width of a finger, which caught fire when
brambles were being burned; it would not be any great embellish-
ment, if the flame had not set it [on fire].’

A jibe at a cleric with not much hair; his tonsure was set alight when getting a
fire going, but it would have made little difference if it had not been.

bise: MS *baisi*. The only rhyming scheme that will work for this verse is the *deibide* pattern of *a : b* and *c : d*. Rhyme of the *rannaigeacht* pattern, between *b* and *d*, is ruled out by the lack of any plausible emendation for either *drisi* or *loisi*; rhyme between *c* and *d*, however, is achieved by simply substituting one phonological variant for another. On the other hand, rhyme between *a* and *b* is achieved by substituting one word (*bise*) for another (*baise*). This emendation is not as radical as it might seem, as both words are similar in form and either word qualifying *lethet* would serve to denote narrowness; furthermore, the conjectured substitution of *baise* for original *bise* could be explained as due to the influence of the final words of the third and fourth lines.

DIL s.v. *I bise*, cites three examples, viz., from *Dúil Laithne*, *bisi .i. mór*, Stokes (1872: 75 §18), the first of the following three from the *Vita Tripartita* of Patrick, *co torinol lán a utlaig do bisib ega ... is sochmachtu do Día coro lassat cid na bissi amal crínach ... amdar suidigthi na bissi ega forsín teinith 7 a ndorat a anáil foí, ro lassaisét fóchétoir amal crínach*, Mulchrone (1939: 6.125–32), ‘he gathered his lapful of icicles ... it is competent to God that even the icicles should flame like firewood ... when the icicles were set on the fire and when he breathed under it, they flamed forthwith like firewood’, Stokes (1887: 11–13), and, in an EModIr lapidary, *CRISDALLUS .i. cloch bhansholus i, 7 do cusne no do bise in roigh doniter i*, Greene (1952: 81 §11), ‘CRYSTAL, i.e. it is a bright white stone, and it is from an icicle that it is made’. Meyer (1906) gave *biss* as the headword, suggested ‘finger’ as the basic meaning, comparing Welsh *bys*, and cited two of the above examples from the *Vita Tripartita*, where, qualified by *ega*, it means ‘icicle’. The examples cited above from *Dúil Laithne* (nsg.) and the EModIr lapidary (dsg.), however, justify the headword *bise* in *DIL*. If my emendation to *bise* is correct, this would provide the only example outside *Dúil Laithne* with the basic meaning ‘finger’.

oc loscud drise: That is, when using brambles as kindling.

nípa romór in maise: This must be an allusion to the term *foltmaise* (lit. ‘hair-beauty, comeliness of hair’) used for ‘tonsure’ in Early Irish. That the meaning is ‘tonsure’ was convincingly shown by Plummer (1923: 39–40),

although *DIL* s.v. *foltmaise* gives equal weight to an interpretation by O’Curry which was shown by Plummer to be mistaken; for the alleged example in *Cáin Adomnáin* see Breatnach (2017: 117).

cenidros acht: I so emend MS *cen ní drosacht*, taking it as the *t*-preterite form of *aigid/ad-aig* preceded by a combination of the conjunction *cení* with infixed *-d-* (*GOI* §426) and the particle *ro* with a 3sg. fem. infixed pronoun. The combination of *-d-* and an infixed pronoun is unusual, and *GOI* §426 cites only one example, viz. *ma nudub feil* ‘if ye are’, Wb. 12d28. I take the meaning to be as in the phrase *ad-aig i tenid* ‘sets on fire’ (*DIL* s.v. *ad-aig* (a)); see also *DIL* s.v. *ad-aig* for the complementary distribution of independent *ad-aig* with dependent *-aig*.

laise: I emend MS *loisi* for the rhyme with *maise*. *DIL* s.v. *loise* ‘flame, blaze’ etc. does not cite any variants with *la-*, but two instances are found in the Leabhar Breac copy of the MidIr Life of Colum Cille, viz. *Laisse mor tánic dosam fechtus in Híí* ‘On a certain occasion in Iona his face flushed greatly’, Herbert (1988: 238.446, 262), and *tanic laisse mor da gnúis 7 dia agaid* ‘a great glow spread over his face and countenance’, Herbert (1988: 240.278, 263).

II

Ad-tlochur
do Mac Dé úasail amrai,
oc crois com bachuil nuí,
buith i tuí cen labrai.

‘I give thanks to the son of noble wondrous God, at a cross with
my new crozier, for being in silence without speaking.’

A pilgrim or retiree to the monastic life rejoices in his new-found state.

Diagnostic OIr features are the deponent verbal form *ad-tlochur* (MS *atlochur*), and the hiatus in *nuí* and *tuí*.

úasail amrai: *usal amra*, MS. If the rest of the verse is to be restored in accordance with the indications of an OIr date just mentioned, the rhyme with OIr asg. *labrai* requires normalisation of *amra* to the gsg. *amrai*, and *usal* must then be emended to *úasail*. I take it then that in the original both adjectives qualified *Dé*, but that at some later stage they were re-interpreted as qualifying *Mac*. On the other hand, the same epithets are used of Jesus in the Epilogue to the *Félire Óengusso*, viz. *Rom-sóerae, á Íssu, / á rí úasail amri* ‘Mayst Thou save me, O Jesus, O King noble, wondrous!’, Stokes (1905: 285.461–2). In the latter case the second line should be normalised to *á rí úasal amrae*, in accordance with *GOI* §315 and p. 678 n. 74, as well as the majority of the MSS, which have *usal*.

com bachuil: Strachan divided MS *combachuil* as *co mbachuil* ‘with a crozier’, but given the introspective nature of the verse as a whole, it is more likely that it is to be read with the possessive pronoun. As noted in *DIL* s.v.

bachall, (*gaibid*) *bachail(l)* is used both of taking holy orders and of going on a pilgrimage. The reference to *oc crois* and *i tuī*, indicates a monastic regime, and accordingly I take it that what is in question here is *ailithre*, a term which is usually translated ‘pilgrimage’, but which had a wider meaning in OIr, as Ó Corráin (1989: 261) pointed out:

‘The term *ailithre* ... has two meanings which are not properly distinguished in the dictionary (*DIL* s.v.): (i) pilgrimage (in the ordinary sense of visiting a holy place for religious reasons), and (ii) retirement (often from high office in church or secular society) to a monastery (often a distant one) in order to make one’s soul and prepare for death’.

d: A close parallel to this is in *adram in coimdid molē / hī toe, cen chomlabrae*, *SR* 1585–6, translated ‘Let us worship the Lord together, in silence without speaking together’ in Greene and Kelly (1976: 63).

buith: I emend MS *beith* to the OIr form of the verbal noun.

tuī: For this and the rhyming word *nuī* in line *c* the MS has *tai* and *núi*, respectively; the syllable-count in both lines requires forms with hiatus. In the example cited above from *SR*, as well as in *Tuae ocus fēthamlae* ‘Silence and stillness’, *Riagail Ailbi* v. 21a (O Neill, 1907: 100–1), hiatus forms (*toē*, *tuāe*) are also confirmed by the syllable count.

III

Cumma lim-sa ní don bith,
acht rop cléirchide rop clith;
is cumma lem cid bé dé,
acht rop clith rop cléirchide.

‘I do not care about anything of the world, as long as whatever is a comfort is clerical; at all events then, I do not care, as long as whatever is clerical is a comfort.’

The expression of a smug sentiment that membership of the clergy should be synonymous with a comfortable life.

It seems impossible to decide between an OIr or a MidIr date for this verse, and I restore to a MidIr standard. The word *clith* appears to have died out in the later language, but its presence here is hardly diagnostic of an OIr rather than a MidIr date. I take the syntax of line *b* to be copula (*rop*) + predicate (*cléirchide*) + subject (the headless relative clause *rop clith*), and the same, with inversion, applies to line *d*. Headless clauses are not confined to OIr; cf., for example, from the Metrical *Dindsenchas*, *nā buí i nHéire no érad*, *LL* 20799, ‘that there was not in Ireland anyone whom he would refuse’.

acht rop: See *GOI* §904.

clith: The rhyme with *bith* shows that this must be a *u*-stem noun, and the existence of the *u*-stem noun is further confirmed by the adjectival

derivative *clithach*. The examples cited in *DIL* (s.v.) of *clith* as an adjective are doubtful, and many of those cited as examples of the noun are either acc. or dat. singular forms where the final is confirmed by rhyme as pal., and thus belong with 2 *cleth* 'concealment' etc. (for the vowel alternation in *cleth* see Breatnach, 1997). The suggestion, with a query, in *DIL* that *clith* here is an adjective meaning 'hidden, inviolate' seems to assume a different interpretation of the verse to that proposed here.

DIL offers 'hiding place, protection' as meanings for the noun *clith*, 'protective, close, sheltering' for the adjective *clithach*, and 'protection, shelter' for the abstract *clithchae*.

Under the last of these it cites the example *Trí búada étaig: maisse, clithcha, suthaine*, from the *Trecheng Breth Féne*, without mentioning that the editor translated it as 'Three excellences of dress: elegance, comfort, lastingness' (Meyer, 1906b: 24–5 §182). The meaning of an abstract derived from an adjective derived from a noun will naturally be close to that of the base noun; certainly 'comfort' suits the context of the triad, and as it also suits the context here, I translate accordingly.

cid bé dé: Earlier *cipé* (*DIL* s.v. *1 cía* B(j)) with the adverb *dé* 'then' etc.; for the latter see *DIL* s.v. *de* XLV(a), and Breatnach (1956: 334). Cf., with a different tense, *cīa buī dē*, *LL* 30065 (= Gwynn, 1903–35: 1 p. 396.23).

IV

Techt dond iarmérgiu mór sáeth,
loisces in gáeth mo dá n-ó;
manid omun Fíadat find,
cid bind in cloc, ní tiag dó.

'Great is the hardship going to matins, when the wind burns my ears; but for fear of the bright Lord, however sweet the bell is, I do not go to it.'

A complaint about the hardship of going to matins on a windy night. A similar sentiment is expressed in the marginal verse (another copy of which is in BL MS Harleian 5280, 46v sup.) at the top of p. 90 in the RIA MS An Leabhar Breac, ed. and transl. in Stokes (1880: xcvi). Both of these contrast with the eagerness expressed in the verse beginning *Clocán binn / benar i n-aidchi gaithe*, ed. and transl. in Murphy (1956: 4–5).

If I am right in my interpretation of *loisces* in the second line, we have to do with an OIr original, and I normalise to an OIr standard. The only serious emendation involved is of *munbad* to *manid* in the third line, but the MS reading would be a difficulty in the Irish of any period.

The verse was translated in Best (1912: 165) as: 'To go to *iarmérge*, great labour, the wind stings my two ears, were it not dread of the blessed Lord, though sweet the bell, I would not go to it'.

a: This line is strikingly reminiscent of the first two lines of the often anthologised verse on the vanity of pilgrimage found in the Codex Boernerianus:

Téicht do Róim / mór saído, becc torbai ‘To go to Rome, much labour, little profit’, *Thes* 2, 296. It is quite possible that the latter verse may have had a wider currency than its surviving attestation in a single MS would indicate.

dond íarmérgiu: On the canonical Hours see Best (1912) and Ó Néill (1990).

loiscēs: Best’s translation ‘the wind stings’ would be appropriate if the verbal form were *loiscid*. The MS, however, has *loiscis*, and as a preterite form does not suit the context, I take it to stand for the 3sg. pres. relative form, with the not uncommon spelling in later MSS of the unstressed short vowel with *i* rather than *e* before a non-pal. final consonant. For the meaning ‘when ... burns’ see Breatnach (1980).

manid: The MS reading *munbad* causes a problem with the sequence of tenses, that is, with pres. indic. *ní thiagh* in the next line, rather than the conditional to be expected with the past subj. in *munbad*. The easiest solution is to take *munbad* as a substitution for *manid*, and I emend accordingly. Regarding this combination of *mani* with the 3sg. pres. ind. of the copula, *DIL* s.v. 3 *má* I A(b) states that *manid* ‘passes early out of use, giving way to the subj. manip (minab, munab)’, and this development would help to explain why an original *manid* could be replaced.

The two clauses *manid ... ní ...* might also be translated as ‘it is only for fear of the bright Lord ... that I go to it’.

clóc: Thus in the MS; Strachan’s reading *cloch* is a slip.

ní tíag: I restore MS *ní thiagh* to the OIr form, rather than the MidIr (and later) form with lenition after *ní*.

V

Ádam, Samsón, Solam rí,
ro mersat a mbanairli;
cí bé con-túaisi fri mná,
cen gúasacht ní érnaba.

‘Adam, Samson, King Solomon, the counsels given to them by women unhinged [them]; whoever heeds women will certainly not come well out of it.’

A variation on the theme of misogyny.

The language is early, and could well be OIr; the rhymes in *ab* (-í with -i) and *cd* (-á with -a) conform to the OIr distinctions between short unstressed final vowels (although this could be coincidence), and the deuterotonic verbal form *con-túaisi* occurs in the third line.

Samsón: The long *ó* is confirmed not only by the spelling in *gnīmrada Samsóin*, *SR* 5338, but also by the consistent spelling of the nom./acc. *Samson* with *o* (never *a* or *u*) in *SR*; see Knott (1952: 119).

ro mersat: 3pl. perfect of the weak verb *meraid* ‘crazes’, rather than a later form of *ro mertatar*, perfect of the strong verb *mairnid* ‘betrays, deceives’, as Strachan suggested.

ci bé: I so emend MS *gidhbé*, on the assumption that the verse is OIr.

d: Lit. ‘without peril will not escape’.

gúasacht: Strachan’s *guassacht* is due to inadvertently reading the *s* twice in the compendium for *acht*.

érnaba: I follow Strachan’s suggestion in so emending MS *ernama*; for lenited *b* > lenited *m* where there is another nasal consonant in the word, see *SnaG* 235, §3.20. In the absence of any counter-evidence, it can be assumed that, as in the case of the other A III verb *ad-roilli* (*GOI* §644), the *f*-future flexion of *ad-roinni* is as old as OIr.

VI

Día do dermat deog do bás;
ní fotha gaís, gním do tháir,
paiter tercda óclaig naím;
mairg ricfad úaim ifirn áin.

‘To forget God is to drink of death; no wise foundation, an act of contempt, is the infrequent paternoster of a religious youth; woe to him who would reach the pit of fiery Hell.’

On the importance of regular prayers.

That the verse is later than OIr is indicated by the gsg. *gaís*, but it is difficult to date it any more precisely.

Día: Strachan suggested that MS *diam* is an error for *Día*, and I cannot see how it could be anything else.

gaís: This instance is cited (from Strachan’s edition) as the only example of an *o*-stem gsg. of *gáes* in *DIL* s.v. (G 12.55); for the later inflexion of abstracts in *-s* as masc. *o*- or *u*-stems see Greene (1963).

gním do tháir: Lit. ‘an act resulting from contempt’.

tercda: The MS reading *terc dacach* gives a line of eight syllables. The simplest remedy is to delete *cach* and revise the word-division, so as to read *tercda*, a derivative of *terc* (*GOI* §347), of which one other example is registered in *DIL* s.v. *tercdae*. *DIL* takes it to mean ‘scarce’, but in this context ‘infrequent’ would be more appropriate.

ifirn: The MS has *ifn* with the suprascript *er/ir* compendium.

VII

Clocán bind,
 iná cothraim ós nach glind;
 is í toil ar Fíadat find
 úathad bráthar fo áenchuing.

‘A sweet bell, since I do not ... above any valley, the will of our bright Lord is [that there should be] a small number of brothers under a single yoke.’

There is a major difficulty in the second line, but it seems that the point being made here is that, since a bell cannot be heard over a great distance, those following a strict monastic regime should be gathered together in small numbers, rather than be on their own and dispersed over a wide area. Compare the injunction in the *Regula Coluim Chille: Bith i nn-uathad i lucc fo leith hi fail primcathrach minap inill lat cubus beth i coitchennidus na sochaide*, Meyer (1901: 28 §1), ‘To be as one of a small number in a site apart, in the vicinity of a major (ecclesiastical) city, if your conscience does not consider it safe to be in the company of the crowd’. Here, as clearly in our text, *úathad* means ‘a small number, a few’. It is not ambiguous, as Etchingham (1999: 346) stated when suggesting ‘alone’ as an alternative translation for *i nn-uathad*; see Greene (1971).

iná cothraim: The first word can hardly be anything other than the combination of *hi*^N ‘when’ with the negative particle, but I can make nothing of the second.

Fíadat: It is difficult to be certain whether the MS has *fiaghad* altered from *fiadhad*, or, as Strachan saw it, *fiadhad* altered from *fiaghad*.

áenchuing: The rhyme with *find* is imperfect in that the internal consonants in the disyllable do not correspond in quality to the initial consonant in the monosyllable. For this type of *rinn oculus airdrinn* rhyme in Old and Middle Irish see Murphy (1961: 32) and Carney (1964: xxxii–iii), and note also *chniss* : *Pharduis*, LL 853–4 and *cruind* : *ōebind*, LL 29867. The closest parallel to the rhyme in our verse is that of *tinn* with *oenchruinn* in lines 253–4 of the Poems of Blathmac, noted by Carney (1964: xxxiii); here also the *airdrinn* word is a compound with *ōen*, where one would expect the vowel of the second element not to have been reduced to schwa.

VIII

Ó ra-láthar súil dar cách,
 at-beir Liter – aithgén féin –
 bíd a Parthus fer cen grád,
 cid fer cu ngrád bíd a péin.

‘When one has taken a look at everyone, Scripture says so – yes, I realise – there is often in Paradise a man without holy orders; even a man in holy orders, he is often in torment [of Hell].’

Membership of the clergy is no guarantee of entry into Paradise.

A similar sentiment is expressed in the first of the four verses edited and translated above pp. 87–8.

The two instances of monosyllabic *bíd*, in lines *c* and *d*, show that the verse is not OIr, while the verbal form *ra-láthar* in *a* points to a MidIr date. The metre is *rannaigecht mór*, but with end-rhyme not only between *b* and *d*, but also between *a* and *c*.

aithgén: MS *aidhchein*, with *d* made on *t*, as Strachan noted. Dr Jürgen Uhlich drew my attention to the line *do-fil áes dam; at-gén féin* 'age is upon me; I myself recognize it', in the 'Lament of the Old Woman of Beare' (Murphy, 1956: 78–9, v. 18d). In his re-edition of the poem, Ó hAodha (1989: 325) discusses the variant readings *atgen*, *aithgén*, *aitgen* and also restores *at-gén*. The last two of the variants, however, point to a prototonic form, as does the MS form in our verse. Taking prototonic *aithgén* as a responsive (see Greene, 1972), in reply to an implied question, would suit the context in both cases, and I restore and translate (lit. 'I myself recognize') accordingly.

IX

Mairc dána bés bithdiultad,
mairc nách orraim a liatha;
miscuis cach buirb a tinchosc,
berid slemain a fhiacha.

'Woe to him who has a habit of always refusing; woe to him who does not revere his elders; what every boor hates is their being corrected, a tactful person obtains his dues.'

This verse is difficult to date closely, but it contains no features diagnostic of an OIr date.

A variant appears as a marginal verse on the upper margin of fol. 52v of RIA MS D iv 2 (1223), ed. Meyer (1910: 298):

Mairg dianadh bes beith diultad.
mairg nach ríaraigh a liatha.
olc le borb a chairiugud.
beridh slemain a fiachu.

Another variant appears as v. 13 of *Fersaighecht an tempuil tall*, ed. Meyer (1913b: 172–5):

Maircc dána bēs bithagra,
maircc nāch ríaraigh a liatha,
nī maith borb ré cairechadh,
beridh sleamuin a fiacha

For some comments on the possible relationship of all three see p. 81 above. The most significant differences are in the first line, where the last of these has *bithagra* 'perpetual suing', the second line, where both variants have *nāch ríaraigh* 'who does not obey', and the third line, where the first has *olc le borb*

a chairiugud ‘a boor dislikes being rebuked’, and the second the nearly synonymous *nī maith borb ré cairechadh* ‘a boor does not take kindly to being rebuked’. Furthermore, with a trisyllabic ending in the third line we have the well attested metre of *ái freislige*, whereas disyllabic *tinchos* leaves us with an irregular form of *rannaigecht*.

orraim: This can hardly be anything other than a denominative verb derived from the noun registered in *DIL* s.v. *airraim*, although I know of no other examples.

miscuis: I so expand MS *misc* + the *us/uis* compendium, rather than *miscus*, as in Strachan’s edition.

berid: All three variants write the first syllable of this word as *b* and a suspension-stroke. I expand as *ber*, whereas Meyer varied between *ben* and *ber*.

X

Ná clecht in sírfell sádail,
is nert dílenn gá dígail;
bíd a neim isna nélaib,
fégaíd sein arna sínaib.

‘Do not practise easy constant treachery, with torrential power
punishing it; [even] clouds can be virulent, observe that from the
storms.’

Wrongdoers will eventually meet their come-uppance, and ‘even a worm will turn’.

A MidIr (or perhaps later) date is indicated by *gá dígail* (OIr *oca*), monosyllabic *bíd*, *na*, the dpl. form of the article, in *isna nélaib*, *arna sínaib*, and the demonstrative *sein* (rhyming with *neim*).

clecht: The MS has *cl* followed by the compendium *s* + suprascript stroke which, while it usually stands for *acht*, can also stand for *echt*.

sírfell: The MS has *insire*, with the *e* expunged and *feall* above the line with insertion marks. According to Strachan, *feall* is in a later hand, but while the ink is clearly lighter, it not certain to me that the hand is different. I adopt the corrected reading, which is confirmed by the internal rhyme with *dílenn*.

sádail: I replace MS *sádhail* with the variant with a palatalised final, which form will make *úaitne* with the rhyming end-words in *b* and *d*.

dílenn: Gsg. of *díliu* in the sense of ‘torrential, vast, enormous’, and particularly apt in the context of the simile in *cd*.

gá dígail: MS *gadigb*–. As far as I can see, of all words beginning in *díb*– and *díg*–, only the dsg. of *dígal* will both rhyme and make sense in this context, and I emend accordingly.

c: Lit. ‘their virulence is wont to be in the clouds’.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Clavis* Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *Clavis Litterarum Hibernensium: Medieval Irish Books and Texts (c. 400–c. 1600)*, Corpus Christianorum, Claves. 3 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017) 821 §636.
- 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, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1926–70).
- SR* Whitley Stokes, *Saltair na Rann* (Oxford, 1883).

REFERENCES

- ABBOTT, T. K. and GWYNN, E. J. 1921: *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin).
- BEST, R. I. 1907: ‘The canonical hours’, *Ériu* 3, 116.
- , 1912: ‘The Lebar Brecc tractate on the canonical hours’, in O. Bergin and C. Marstrander (eds), *Miscellany Presented to Kuno Meyer by some of his Friends and Pupils on the Occasion of his Appointment to the Chair of Celtic Philology in the University of Berlin* (Halle), 142–66.
- BREATNACH, LIAM 1980: ‘Some remarks on the relative in Old Irish’, *Ériu* 31, 1–9.
- , 1997: ‘On the flexion of the *ā*-stems in Irish’, in Anders Ahlqvist and Věra Čapková (eds), *Dán Do Oide. Essays in Memory of Conn R. Ó Cléirigh* (Dublin), 49–57.
- , 2007: ‘A verse on succession to ecclesiastical office’, in Pádraig A. Breatnach, Caoimhín Breatnach, Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail (eds), *Léann Lámhscríbhinní Lobháin. The Louvain Manuscript Heritage*, Éigse Publications 1 (Dublin), 32–41.
- , 2008: ‘*Cinnus atá do thinnrem*: a poem to Máel Brigte on his coming of age’, *Ériu* 58, 1–35.
- , 2017: *Córus Bésgnai. An Old Irish Law Tract on the Church and Society*, Early Irish Law Series 7 (Dublin).
- BREATNACH, R. A. 1956: ‘Some Welsh and Irish adverbial formations’, *Celtica* 3, 332–7.
- BREEZE, ANDREW 1987: ‘The Charter of Christ in medieval English, Welsh and Irish’, *Celtica* 19, 111–20.
- BYRNE, AISLING 2016: ‘Cultural intersections in Trinity College Dublin MS 1298’, in Axel Harlos and Neele Harlos (eds), *Adapting Texts and Styles in a Celtic Context. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Processes of Literary Transfer in the Middle Ages. Studies in Honour of Erich Poppe*, Studien und Texte zur Keltologie 13 (Münster), 289–304.
- , 2019: *Translating Europe: Imported Narratives and Irish Readers at the End of the Middle Ages*, Paul Walsh Memorial Lecture 4 (Maynooth).
- CALDER, GEORGE 1917: *Auraicept na n-Éces. The Scholars’ Primer* (Edinburgh).
- CARNEY, JAMES 1940: ‘A miscellany of Irish verse’, *Éigse* 1, 239–48.
- , 1964: *The Poems of Blathmac Son of Cú Brettan Together with the Irish Gospel of Thomas and A Poem on the Virgin Mary*, Irish Texts Society 47 (Dublin).

- CULVERWELL, A. BEATRICE 1913: 'Quatrains from H. 2. 12', *Hermathena* 17, 133–6.
- DE BRÚN, PÁDRAIG 1972: *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in King's Inns Library Dublin* (Dublin).
- ETCHINGHAM, COLMÁN 1999: *Church Organisation in Ireland A.D. 650 to 1000* (Maynooth).
- FLOWER, ROBIN 1926: *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum, Volume 2* (London).
- FOLLETT, WESTLEY 2006: *Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages*, *Studies in Celtic History* 23 (Woodbridge).
- GREENE, DAVID 1952: 'Lapidaries in Irish', *Celtica* 2, 67–95.
- , 1963: 'Ir. gnás : W. gnaws ; OHG kunst', *Celtica* 6, 62–3.
- , 1971: 'Varia II. 2. Ir. úathad, óthad: W. odid', *Ériu* 22, 178–80.
- , 1972: 'The responsive in Irish and Welsh', in Herbert Pilch and Joachim Thurow (eds), *Indo-Celtica: Gedächtnisschrift für Alf Sommerfelt* (München), 59–72.
- GREENE, DAVID and KELLY, FERGUS 1976: *The Irish Adam and Eve Story from Saltair na Rann I* (Dublin).
- GWYNN, E.J. 1903–35: *The Metrical Dindshenchas, 1–5*, Todd Lecture Series 8–12 (Dublin).
- HENNESSY, W. M. and KELLY, D. H. 1875: *The Book of Fenagh* (Dublin).
- HERBERT, MÁIRE 1988: *Iona, Kells, and Derry: The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba* (Oxford).
- KENNEY, J. F. 1929: *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical* (New York).
- KNOTT, ELEANOR 1952: 'An index to the proper names in *Saltair na Rann*', *Ériu* 16, 99–122.
- MCMAMARA, MARTIN 1975: *The Apocrypha in the Irish Church*, (Dublin).
- MEYER, KUNO 1901: 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften. *Regula Choluimb Chille*', *ZCP* 3, 28–30.
- , 1906: Contributions to Irish Lexicography, Supplement to *ACL*.
- , 1906b: *The Triads of Ireland*. Todd Lecture Series 13 (Dublin).
- , 1908: 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften (*Fortsetzung*)', *ZCP* 6, 257–72.
- , 1910: 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften (*Fortsetzung*)', *ZCP* 7, 297–312.
- , 1913: 'Ein Gedicht aus Additional 30,512', *ZCP* 9, 470.
- , 1913b: 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', *ZCP* 9, 166–77.
- , 1918: 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften (*Fortsetzung*)', *ZCP* 12, 358–97.
- MULCHRONE, KATHLEEN 1939: *Bethu Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick* (Dublin).
- MURPHY, GERARD 1956: *Early Irish Lyrics* (Oxford).
- , 1961: *Early Irish Metrics* (Dublin).
- NÍ SHÉAGHDHA, NESSA 1967: *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland, Fasciculus I* (Dublin).
- Ó CORRÁIN, DONNCHADH 1989: 'Early Irish hermit poetry?', in D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach, K. McCone (eds), *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney* (Maynooth), 251–67.

- Ó CUÍV, BRIAN 1986: 'Aspects of Irish personal names', *Celtica* 18, 151–84.
- , 1990: 'The Irish marginalia in Codex Palatino-vaticanus no. 830', *Éigse* 24, 45–67.
- , 2001: *Catalogue of Irish Language Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Oxford College Libraries. Part 1: Descriptions* (Dublin).
- Ó HAODHA, DONNCHA 1989: 'The lament of the Old Woman of Beare', in D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach and K. McCone (eds), *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney* (Maynooth), 308–31.
- Ó MAIDÍN, UINSEANN 1996: *The Celtic Monk: Rules and Writings of Early Irish Monks* (Kalamazoo).
- O NEILL, JOSEPH 1907: 'The rule of Ailbe of Emly', *Ériu* 3, 92–115.
- Ó NÉILL, PÁDRAIG 1990: 'Welsh *anterth*, Old Irish *anteirt*', *Ériu* 41, 1–11.
- O'SULLIVAN, ANNE, and O'SULLIVAN, WILLIAM 1971: 'Three notes on Laud Misc. 610 (or the Book of Pottlerath)', *Celtica* 9, 135–51.
- PLUMMER, CHARLES 1923: 'Notes on some passages in the Brehon Laws [13–25]', *Ériu* 9, 31–42.
- POPPE, ERICH 2017: 'Cultural transfer and textual migration: Sir Bevis comes to Ireland', in Wolfram R. Keller and Dagmar Schlüter (eds), *'A Fantastic and Abstruse Latinity?': Hiberno-Continental Cultural and Literary Interactions in the Middle Ages*, Studien und Texte zur Keltologie 12 (Münster), 205–20.
- QUIN, E.G. 1939: *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*, ITS 38 (Dublin).
- SMITH, PETER 1994: 'Aimirgein Glúngel tuir tend: a Middle-Irish poem on the authors and laws of Ireland', *Peritia* 8, 120–50.
- STOKES, WHITLEY 1872: *Goidelica: Old and Early-Middle-Irish Glosses, Prose and Verse*. Second Edition (London).
- , 1880: *On the Calendar of Oengus*, Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, Irish Manuscript Series 1 (Dublin).
- , 1887: *The Tripartite Life of Patrick, with Other Documents Relating to that Saint* (London).
- , 1905: *Féilire Óengusso Céili Dé: The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee*, Henry Bradshaw Society 29 (London).
- , 1910: *A Supplement to Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* (Halle).
- STRACHAN, JOHN 1904: 'An Old-Irish metrical rule', *Ériu* 1, 191–208.
- , 1905: 'Two monastic rules', *Ériu* 2, 227–9.
- , 1905b: 'Cormac's rule', *Ériu* 2, 62–8.
- , 1905c: 'Addenda to Ériu I, 191 sq.', *Ériu* 2, 58–9.
- WALSH, PAUL 2003: *Irish Leaders and Learning through the Ages, Essays Collected, Edited and Introduced by Nollaig Ó Muraile* (Dublin).

LIAM BREATNACH

Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies