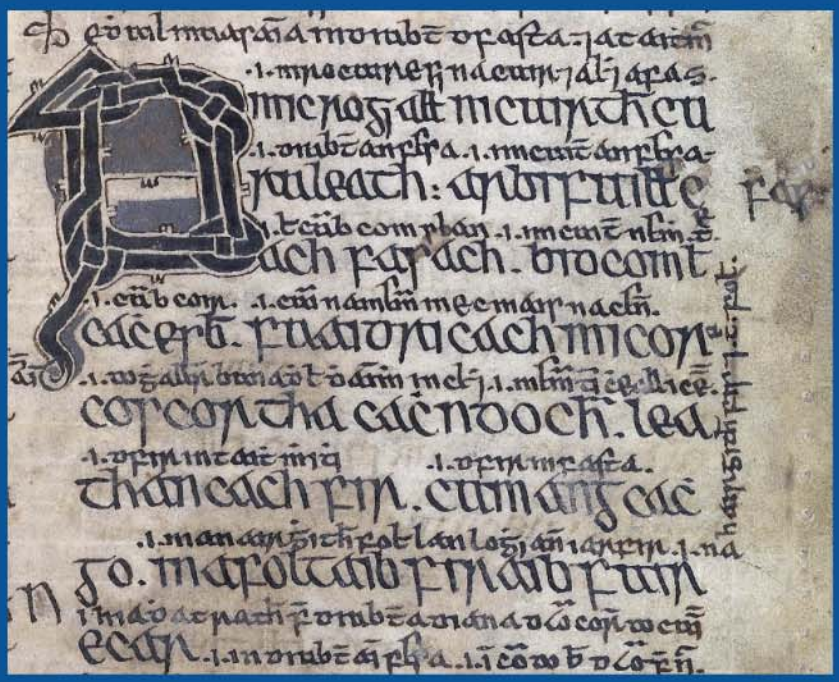
Fír Fesso

A Festschrift for

Neil McLeod



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Neil McLeod

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Contents

An Early Irish Poetic Formula[1]

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1 A Far-Fetched Formula for *fairrge*?[2]

Stanza 28 (lines 909–912) of Blathmac's Poems speaks about the power over the elements possessed by Jesus Christ, i.e. God, who can make the wind both rise and lie down. The quatrain is cited here after Barrett 2017:

Is hé túargaib toinn do thracht	It is he who raises wave to strand
co·mbáidi benna borrbarc.	so that it drowns the prows of proud ships.
Is é tróethas anfad ngréich,	It is he who calms the tempests' screech,
fo·cheird for fairrgi findḟéith.	who casts a fair calm upon the sea.

A few philological remarks are in order. Apart from trivial orthographic variation elsewhere in the stanza, the unique witness, the seventeenth-century NLI MS G 50, page 139,[3] has *anf̄ngreċ* in line c. Since the *ā*-stem *grécha* 'scream, outcry' furnishes the object of the relative clause, accordingly the accusative case *ngréich* with palatalised word-final consonant needs to be emended. This is further corroborated by its rhyme with *findḟéith* (MS *fin̄feiṫ*) which is written with a final palatalised consonant in the MS. *ā*-stem behaviour of *féth* 'calm, stillness' is also found in the Milan Glosses, namely nom. sg. *féth* (Ml 125d11), *féith* (Ml 126a2), *feid* (Ml 108d5) (the latter two displaying the spread of palatalisation to the nominative), and dat. sg. *féith* (Ml 126a1, 4). Irslinger (2002, 149) makes a similar remark, but she also notes the difficulty posed by the fact that *féth* is probably the second compound member of masculine *anfud*, *anbod* 'storm' (whose own ambiguous inflection does not simplify the problem, see below). A different stem-class of *féth* is also indicated by the acc. sg. *feth* (Meyer 1905, 496 §1) and the dat. sg. *feth* (*CIH* 272.8). Irslinger suggests that whatever the historical stem-class of *féth*, it may have been felt synchronically to be an *ā*-stem. This is the position taken here, too.

The word before *ngréich* must be a preposed genitive. The suspension mark accompanied by the deletion dot ⁻̇ usually represents *-ad/-ed* in the MS. The resulting form *anfad* appears to be a genitive plural. Evidently the noun *anfud* 'storm' is meant, the dictionary spelling of which suggests a *u*-stem. However, like in the case of *féth*, the evidence is morphologically ambivalent and contradictory; dil.ie/3608 cites forms that could belong to a *u*-stem (gen. sg. or pl. *ainbthe Tig*

[1] This article was written as part of the project *Chronologicon Hibernicum* that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 647351). For this study I have made ample use of the MA thesis on *Alliteration in the Poems of Blathmac* by Angelina Lavelle 2018. I thank Deborah Hayden and Lars Nooij for help, suggestions and observations.

[2] The central idea of this section was first published as SnaS 19 www.facebook.com/chronhib/posts/740453076095196 on 11 June 2016.

[3] See www.isos.dias.ie/libraries/NLI/NLI_MS_G_50/tables/8.html#145.

143.21) and ones that look like an *o*-stem (gen. sg. *anfaid LU* 8498). The form *anfad* adopted here is compatible only with the latter. *Féth* and *anfud* occur commonly in collocation, but the uncertainties besetting the stem-classes of either word make it difficult to determine whether the latter is a compound of the former or whether it is just a chance similarity.

The last line of this stanza is reminiscent of the second line of the famous stanza about the rough sea in the ninth-century St Gall Priscian (Stiftsbibliothek MS 904):[4]

Is acher in gaíth innocht,	The wind is fierce tonight,
fu·fúasna fairggae findḟolt.	it disturbs the sea's fair hair.
Ní·ágor réimm mora minn	I do not fear the coursing of the clear sea
dond láechraid lainn óa Lothlind.	by the eager warriors from Lothland.

The formula is used again twice in the possibly eleventh-century poem *Oíbinn beith ar Beinn Étair* 'Delightful to be on Benn Étair (Howth)', found in Brussels, Bibl. Royale MS 5100–4, page 35 (Reeves 1857, 285). The second stanza is also found in Rawlinson B 512, f 126b.[5]

Oibind beith ar Beinn Edair	Delightful to be on Benn Étair,
re ndul tar fairrge findḟind.	before going over the white hair of the ocean.[6]
Turracc tuinde 'na hacchaidh	The wave's onslaught against it,
luime a caladh 'sa himild.	the barrenness of its harbour and its border.
Oibhind beith ar Beinn Ettair	Delightful to be on Benn Étair,
re ttecht tar fairrgi fonngil,	before going over the fair-bottomed ocean,
beith occ iomram a curcán,	to be rowing in a coracle,
uchan sa tracht tondmir.	oh!, on its wave-crazy strand.

The striking similarity between these four lines suggests that an established poetic formula underlies them, a formula that spans at least three centuries. Blathmac, who in all likelihood wrote his poems shortly before the mid-eighth century (Stifter 2015, 52–53; Breatnach 2015, 115–118), is the earliest witness of the formula. The St Gall stanza is evidently from after the arrival of the Vikings and therefore postdates 795, and it predates 850–1 when the precisely-datable codex 904 from St Gall was written (Ó Néill 2000). The poem, which appears on the upper margin of the page, was probably not composed at the occasion of writing the manuscript. The erstwhile omission and subsequent addition of *-gg-* in *fairggae* and of *minn* above the line give it the hallmarks of a copy.

The basic semantic-syntactic structure of the formula is:

$X_{[verb]}$ ($Y_{[preposition]}$) *fairrge find-*$Z_{[nominal]}$

The formula consists of the word *fairrge* 'sea' followed by a compound made up of *find* 'fair' + another noun or adjective, also starting with *f* (except for *fonngil*[7]). But, as can be expected, the poems also display slight differences. *Fairrge* can be

[4] See www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/0904/112.

[5] See image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msrawlb512.

[6] Or: 'the white-haired ocean'.

[7] The pair *fairrgi fonngil* approximates complex alliteration with its sequence *f-V-(n/r)-g*.

in the accusative, followed by an adjective, or it can be a preposed genitive before a noun (in *Is acher in gaíth innocht* and perhaps in the first stanza of the *Benn Étair* poem). The syntactic structure is thus flexible. It is the phonological structure which comes first. Ideally, X, Y, and Z, even if unstressed, start with an *f*. The Middle Irish author of *Oíbinn beith ar Beinn Étair* is less preoccupied with observing alliterations of unstressed elements than his Old Irish predecessors were. This need not indicate less care, but rather general developments in alliterative usage. Against the background of the contents of the poems, the heavy alliteration on *f* conjures onomatopoetically the image of a stormy wind. The maximal alliterative pattern is therefore:[8]

fF (f) F Ff

Its syllabic structure is:

x x́x x́x x́x

Unlike normal Irish poetry, this heptasyllabic line therefore has a consistent accentual rhythm, namely an acephalous trochaic dimetre:

(–) ˘ — ˘ | — ˘ — ˘

When viewed from the point of view of the stanza as a whole, there is even more regularity: the formula always occurs in an even-numbered line. Whereas in Blathmac's poem and in *Is acher in gaíth innocht* it occupies the second line of a *deibide* couplet, providing the *ardrinn* of a *rinn-ardrinn* rhyme, in *Oíbinn beith ar Beinn Étair* it stands in a homosyllabic rhyme within a *rannaigecht* metre.

The three poems are clearly intertextually connected. Two scenarios are conceivable. Maybe *fairrge find-X* was a traditional poetic formula or cliché learned by *filid* in their education. In that case, the three instantiations could be independent of each other. Alternatively, the poems might draw upon each other. In that case, Blathmac as the earliest would be the inventor of the formula, and the other two would be the first-ever piece of evidence for familiarity with Blathmac's poems in Irish literature before the nineteenth century.

Geographically there is a connection between the three poems. Blathmac comes from the Louth-Monaghan area. In Stifter 2015, 52 I made the tentative proposal that Blathmac could have been affiliated with the church of Lann Léire (modern Dunleer in Co. Louth). However, he could also have been in Bangor, Co. Down, which is not very far away. *Is acher in gaíth innocht* was in all likelihood written in Northern Ireland; Bangor and Nendrum have been suggested as possible places

[8] The conventions for representing alliterative structures follow those laid out in Lavelle 2018, chapter 2. The alliterating part of each word is represented by a letter. Single upper-case letters represent the initial radical sounds of stressed words (*V* stands for any vowel). Single lower-case letters represent the initial radical sounds of unstressed words or pretonic syllables. Double letters indicate compounds, deuterotonic verbal forms or adverbs with stress not on their first syllable, whereby the upper-case letter stands for the stressed part of the word, the lower-case letter for the pretonic part or, in the case of compounds, for the second compound member. *Sg* thus represents *sruthglan*, *dB* stands for *do·beir*, or *vV* for *inuraid*. For practical reasons that will become clearer towards the end, I do not specifically indicate lenited *f* in this paper.

of provenance (Hofman 2000, 260–261).[9] The poem, with its concern for the sea, would very well suit the location of Bangor, which, being by the sea, would have been particularly vulnerable to Viking attacks. Finally, while nothing is known about the provenance of *Oíbinn beith ar Beinn Étair*, its theme is Colum Cille and his departure to Iona, so we are still thematically in the north-east of Ireland. Mutual knowledge of the compositions in this well-circumscribed area is easily conceivable.

In order to prove the possibility of continuing the tradition, for no other purpose than what is called in German 'Spaß an der Freud' 'for the joy of having fun', I wrote on 16 October 2017, at the occasion of hurricane Ophelia and its concomitant shutdown of public life in Ireland, a stanza that utilises the same formula, to bring the formula to life again after a thousand years:[10]

Fom·géissi gérgaíthe redg,	The sharp wind's assault roars at me,
fliuchthum na fairrge frossḟerg.	the ocean's showerful wrath drenches me.
Is cummae a sáethar indíu	I don't care about work today,
ar ollscoil la éicíniu.	at university with students.

Blathmac's stanza 228 also has an afterlife. As an outreach part of her PhD, Siobhán Barrett asked the composer Martin O'Leary to set music to Blathmac's words. Stanza 228 was one of the parts of the Poems of Blathmac chosen for the choral piece, entitled *Figell Blathmaic* 'Blathmac's Vigil' (Barrett 2017, 388–401), which saw its première on 24 November 2017 in Mullingar's Cathedral of Christ the King, performed by The Lynne Singers. In this way, Blathmac's words have come to life again after almost 1300 years.

2 The Ocean in Uproar[11]

Thurneysen 1917 explains Old Irish *fairrge*, *foirge* (f, i̯ā) 'ocean, sea' as originally an abstract of the adjective *fairsiung*, *foirsiung* (u) 'ample, broad, spacious', which became restricted in its use to the 'vast extent (of the ocean)'. Although this explanation, which is endorsed by dil.ie/21164, can claim a certain semantic appeal, it does not work phonologically. *Fairsiung* itself is a compound of intensifying *for-* + **eissiung* 'wide, vast' < Proto-Celtic **eχsangu-* 'un-narrow' < Proto-Indo-European privative **ég*$^{\hat{}}$*h*$_{s}$*-* + **h*$_{2}$*m̥g*$^{\hat{}}$*hú-* 'narrow', cf. Welsh *ehang* 'wide' (Wodtko 1995, 170–171). Unprefixed **eissiung* is not attested as such in Old Irish, but its antonym *cumung* 'narrow' is (cf. Stifter 2013, 108–109 for the wider word-formational background). Since *fairsiung* has already undergone syncope, the

[9] The connection with Bangor rests on a mention of Maíl Gaimrid, possibly an abbot of Bangor and/or the person cited in the Milan glosses. The connection with Nendrum derives from a mention of Mochaoi. Pádraic Moran (pers. comm.), following a suggestion by Francis J. Byrne, rather thinks of Castledermot in Kildare: marginal glosses indicate the scribe was pre-occupied with the feast of Diarmaid for three successive days.

[10] See twitter.com/ChronHib/status/919897472549507072. I humbly beg the reader's indulgence for breaking several of the metrical requirements outlined above.

[11] This etymology was first published on 19 May 2018 as SnaST 35 twitter.com/ChronHib /status/997720615695069184 on 19 May 2018.

further addition of the suffix *-e* regularly yields the abstract *fairsinge* 'width, extent', which is indeed attested in this form. An additional, analogical syncope of *fairsinge* > **fairs(n)ge* is not expected, nor is there any justification for the loss of *s* which *fairge* would presuppose. Old Irish did not have a phonotactical difficulty with complex clusters that contained medial *s* arising from syncope, cf. *·derscaigi*, the prototonic stem of *do·róscai* 'to distinguish', *tairsce* 'some part of a shield', or *airsclaige*, the verbal noun of *ar·clich* 'to ward off', where an unetymological *s* was even inserted into the cluster. Thurneysen's **foirsge* would have been the only one where, after the loss of medial **n*, voiced *g* and not *k* would have come to stand after **rs*, but I assume that this would have made no difference.[12] I can see two alternative etymologies for *fairge*:

1. It could be a compound of the preverb/preposition *for* 'over, upon' + a noun derived from the W1 verb *srengaid* 'to pull, drag, draw' < PIE root **streng*^{h}- 'to twist' (*LIV* 604), i. e. Proto-Goidelic **u̯or-sreng-iu̯ā*. The semantic motivation would be comparable to the one spelt out above, namely first 'extent, width < *drawing wide out', which was then applied to the 'extent of the ocean'. The diachronic phonology is regular in this case: the middle *e* would be syncopated with concomitant palatalisation and loss of the nasal,[13] and the cluster *-rsr-* would be simplified to *-rr-* since the formation of this word belongs to a much earlier period than the one suggested by Thurneysen for his explanation of *fairge*; cf. also the behaviour of the compound *do·srenga* 'to draw, drag, pull' whose prototonic stem is *·tairr(n)g-*. A compound **fo-sreng-* 'draw/pull under' would work even better formally, but the semantic development would be less straightforward.

2. Another possibility is to connect *fairrge* with the 1st–2nd-century topographical term Ωκεανός Οὐεργιού(ι)ος /u̯ergiu̯(iu̯)os/ 'Vergivian ocean', transmitted in Claudius Ptolemy's *Geographia* (2,2,6; 2,3,2) (Nobbe 1843, 65, 67) for a part of the Atlantic south of Ireland. Whether Modern Welsh *y Môr Werydd* 'the Irish Channel', only attested in a glossary from 1719, can be connected with this is very doubtful. It could either be an intentional, erudite cambrisation of Οὐεργιού(ι)ος, or it could be a corruption, with loss of the initial vowel, of *Iwerydd* 'Irish'. The name Οὐεργιού(ι)ος may be related to Old Irish *ferg* 'fury, anger' < PC **u̯ergā* < PIE **u̯erHĝeh$_2$* (Zair 2012, 186–187); accordingly it can be set up as **u̯ergiu̯iu̯o-*. Allowing for a few necessary extra assumptions, *fairrge* could conceivably go back to such a Proto-Celtic **u̯ergiu̯iu̯ā* 'raging ocean < the wild, furious one', referring to the less agreeable aspects of the North Atlantic. O'Mulc 492 *fairrge .i. [a] feruore .i. ó bruth*, '*Fairrge* 'sea', i.e. from [Lat.] *fervor* 'boiling, raging', i.e. from boiling' (Moran forthcoming), offers a similar explanation. This has a close parallel in O'Mulc 520 *fergg a feruore* '*ferg* 'anger', from [Lat.] *fervor* 'raging'. A medieval Irish etymology does not, of course, provide any proof that the etymological connection really exists.

All of the etymologies discussed here require that the earliest form of the word was *foirge*. This is indeed attested in the St Gall Glosses, namely *foirrce* (*Sg* 67b9) and *foirrgae* (*Sg* 124a1). The change to *fairge* is due to the early merger of *o* and *a*

[12] In the younger Gaelic languages, the opposition between *g* and *c* is neutralised after *s*.

[13] The loss of the nasal poses a certain problem, since it is unclear whether it is a regular or only a sporadic development (see *GOI* 112–113; Roma 2018, 10).

between *f* and a palatalised consonant (*GOI* 52–53). The vowel of the first syllable of *foirge*, in its turn, could be due to a misinterpretation of **u̯ergiu̯i̯o-*, as if it were formed like a prepositional compound with PC **u̯er-* < PIE **uper-*. In the prehistory of Irish, the Proto-Celtic preverb and preposition **u̯er-* was replaced across the board by **u̯or-*. Perhaps this replacement affected the present word as well, resulting in **u̯orgiu̯i̯ā-*. The rather unusual adjectival suffix **-iu̯i̯o-* is necessary to account for the attested form. A simple **u̯orgi̯ā*, with a more traditional adjectival suffix, would have given Old Irish **forgae* where the cluster *-rg-* would have blocked palatalisation from occurring (McCone 1996, 116). However, the syncope that **u̯orgiu̯i̯ā* has to undergo because of its extra syllable will readily yield **u̯or'g†u̯'i̯ā* > *foirge* with a palatalised cluster.

3 The Sound of the Silent

The stanza discussed in chapter 1 also invites a discussion of the types of alliteration found in Blathmac's poems.

The accounts given of alliteration in medieval Irish poetry in various handbooks (Meyer 1909, 1–4; Bergin 1921–3; Knott 1934, 10–11; *EIM* 36–39) recognise the correspondence of the sounds at the beginning of the stress-bearing syllables in contiguous stressed words, allowance being made for the occurrence of unstressed function words between the alliterating words. This traditional type will be called 'narrow alliteration' here; 'narrow' because the participating words have to stand narrow to each other, and narrow also because it is alliteration in the narrow sense of the word. It stands at the heart of metrical analyses because it is the most common type, but its long-established rules have been expanded by the studies of Sproule 1987, Hollo 1990 and De Vries 2015; see also Stifter (2016, 66–67). Most recently, Lavelle 2018 has devoted a special study to alternative types of alliteration in the Poems of Blathmac.

One such new type of alliteration is so-called compound alliteration, that is, a compound noun whose two constitutive elements start with the same sound, such as *borrbalc* in Blathmac's stanza 228. It is possible that what I would like to call 'pseudo-compounds' can also take part in this type of alliteration. Here the term 'pseudo-compounds' refers to words of two or more syllables that could be analysed by folk-etymology as consisting of two elements, be it because one of the extracted syllables echoes an actual word, or because the overall structure is reminiscent of a compound formation. Words that I have in mind include *immarmus*, *galgat*, *babilon*, *barnabán* or *tothacht*. They are included in the statistics below, but I do not want to stretch the point too far. In any case, taking them out of the calculation would not alter the overall result very strongly.

There are 75 examples of alliterating compounds in Blathmac's poems. They may alliterate solely with themselves (internal compound alliteration), or with other words with the same initial sound within the line (external compound alliteration). Their distribution is heavily skewed. They appear at the end of lines (57 examples = 76%), and anywhere else within the lines (18 examples = 24%). The latter, non-final alliterating compounds are shared roughly evenly among the lines, which suggests that their occurrence is random: 4 (22%) in line a, 3 (17%) in line b, 5 (28%) in line c, 6 (33%) in line d. When they appear at the end of lines, they are almost exclusively restricted to lines b and d where they occur with almost equal likelihood (line b: 27 examples = 47%; line d: 29 examples = 51%), with a sole

outlier in line c (2%).[14] In other words, 75% of all alliterating compounds in the Poems of Blathmac are found at the end of an even-numbered line, even though in a random distribution the expected value for that position is around 10%.[15] These numbers suggest strongly a conscious pattern for line-final alliterating compounds.

Several other factors support the idea that their employment is a deliberate poetic device. In 32 instances, they also stand in narrow alliteration with another noun.[16] Eight times (stanzas 8, 16, 46, 56, 67, 94, 203, 238), they provide the only alliteration in a stanza, thus making up for the lack of narrow alliteration which is missing in about 40 of the 272 meaningfully analysable stanzas. A strong cumulative argument emerges from these observations to suggest that Blathmac employed this pattern intentionally.

When we take a step back and look at the bigger picture, it emerges that the use of alliterating compounds is relatively uncommon in Early Irish syllabic poetry, but that it is not exclusively confined to Blathmac. I conducted an unsystematic search outside of the Poems of Blathmac. Note that *Is acher in gaíth innocht* contains a double occurrence of external compound alliteration, namely *findḟolt*, which is further connected with *fo·fúasna* and *fairrgae*, and *Lothlind*, which further connects with *láechraid* and *lainn*. Like overwhelmingly in the Poems of Blathmac, these alliterating compounds occur at the end of lines b and d. In Meyer's *Bruchstücke*, I identified two stanzas; the relevant initials are in bold:

38 (a kind of *casbairdne*, = *MV* II 44)
A **D**ochaide **d**elb**d**athaig,
a del **t**ressa **t**rom**th**oraig,
a minn marcṡlúaig munchoraig,
a maicc **ch**arprúaid **Ch**on**ch**obair.

52 (*ochtḟoclach*, = *MV* II 108)
Bairri **b**réo **b**ith**b**úadach,
búaid m**b**etha **b**rethadbail,
ruithen réil rathamra
ruithniges Ébermag,
lia lúagmar lainderda,
ní lúad nach liúin.
Éo órda ilchrothach,
úaisliu cach **c**aín**ch**umtach,
aire **a**rd **o**ll**a**irbrech
érnes cach n-**o**ll**a**dlaic
do **b**uidnib **b**alc**B**anba,
barr **b**roga **B**riuin.

[14] This is *ruiri* in line 959. Although historically a compound of *ro-* + *rí* (and counted here as such), the composition may not have been transparent any more to native speakers and they may have regarded it as a simplex.

[15] This last number is an approximation, based on the estimate that alliterating compounds would be typically between 2–3 syllables long and could thus occupy ca. 22 different positions within a heptasyllabic quatrain, i.e. 5–6 positions within a line. The random probability of them occurring in any of those 22 positions is ca. 4.5%.

[16] Only instances of narrow alliteration were counted for this statistic. If alternative types of alliteration such as gapping and linking alliteration (Lavelle 2018, ch. 2) were allowed to enter the equation, the number would be considerably higher. But these other types of alliteration will not be studied in the present article.

In Murphy's *EIL*, external compound alliteration features only in one poem to such an extent that it cannot be discarded as mere chance, namely *It é saigte gona súain* (*EIL* 86–88, nr. 36). Murphy assigns the poem to *c*.800. Of the seven stanzas (numbered 1–2, 4–8 in the edition), five contain alliterating compounds, three or four examples at the end of line b (stanzas 1, 5, 6, and perhaps internal compound alliteration in 8 if *ḟoraided* counts), and two in line d (st. 4, 8):

1b: cech thrátha i n-**a**idchi **adú**air
4d: céle **t**ana **t**óeb**th**aise
5b: ní·bínn fri **d**úla **d**o**d**áil
6b: la ríg n**A**idni **adú**aire
8b: a Chríst cáid, a **ḟora**ided
8d: cech thrátha i n-**a**idchi **adú**air

The overall impression is that compound alliteration is fairly common in *Saltair na Rann* (Stokes 1883). Because of the length of the composition, only a special subset of examples was collected from it (see below). A special case is the poem *Augaine ar n-athair uile* (Bronner 2017, 23–78). Stanza 17 has two possible instances, but both involve personal names, *Fiacha Findḟolaid* and *Feradach Findḟechtnach*, so the occurrence of compound alliteration here can be regarded as coincidence and not poetic intent. Given the predilection in poetry for compounds, it is in fact surprising to find relatively few alliterating compounds overall, far less than one might expect. It seems as if they were actively avoided, outside of the compositions cited above.

9 of the 74 examples of compound alliteration in the Poems of Blathmac involve the letter *f*, such as *findḟéith* in the stanza which supplies the starting point for this article. All occur in the second poem:

line 710 ro·cés testin **fín**ḟolo
line 798 **f**allnathar **find**ḟlaith **f**ledbailc
line 812 do·roäd dúnn a **fír**ḟín
line 837 Is **for**blaith for cach ndíne
line 838 is barr inna **fír**ḟíne
line 908 is **find**ḟlatho **fír**ḟlaithem
line 912 **f**o·cheird **f**or **f**airrgi **find**ḟéith
line 1088 cid i·n-áraillsem do **fír**ḟeirg

This sample allows for a few observations, which, given its smallness, must not be mistaken for generalisations. The only outlier among the group is l. 837. It is the only one in an odd line and the only one where radical *f* of the second element is realised as phonological /β/. It is also one of the only two where the word is not at the end of the line. When at the end of line d, the alliterating compound has a trochaic rhythm; at the end of line b it can appear in a dactylic structure. In l. 812, the internal compound alliteration is the only type of alliteration present in the entire stanza. In l. 1088, since both *f*s are lenited, the vowels could actually carry the alliteration, together with *·áraillsem*; this would thus be similar to line 236 *ḟinacet*. The adjectives *find* 'fair' and *fír* 'true' are particularly prone to be used for alliterating compounds with *f*.

Saltair na Rann has plenty of comparable examples of alliterating compounds with *f*. In lines 258 (***F**iadu **f**orḟinn*), 846 (*a **F**iadu **f**iren **f**irfind*), 982 (*fal **f**ri **f**óir **f**orsaid **f**orfind*), 1802 (*Fiadait **f**ír **f**oroll **f**orḟind*), 1938 (*firien **f**irḟuirbthe*), 4384 (*firien **f**irḟossad*) they stand in narrow alliteration with other words. In lines 1547

(*in* ***f****ir****f****laith*), 1618 (*in* ***f****ir****f****laith*), 1812 (*cosin* ***f****ir****f****laith*), 6244 (*ind* ***f****ir****f****latha*), there is only internal compound alliteration; in line 1730, ***f****ir****f****laithius* provides the only alliteration in the entire stanza. Finally, the *Metrical Dindšenchus* (Gwynn 1903–35) contains external compound alliteration involving *f* in III 110, 19 (***f****ind-****f****adb* ***f****romtha*); III 112, 31 (*na* ***f****ian-****f****lescaig* ***f****othuga*); III 194, 8 (**f**eda **f**ind-**f**rémaig). Lines with ***f****or****f****ind*, where the second element is not actually lenited, are found in II 80, 14; IV 32, 28.

According to the traditional accounts of Irish alliteration, the second element in these compounds should not actually count as alliteration, since the lenited *f* is supposedly silent. I hope I have assembled enough evidence to show that their distribution cannot be random. Alliterating compounds with *f* behave exactly like those with other sounds and they are employed for the same functions: they are strongly attracted toward the ends of lines b and d, they occur on their own or in larger alliterative sequences, and they can serve as the only alliterating elements of stanzas, compensating for the absence of narrow alliteration. Furthermore, they figure in a poetic formula with onomatopoetic purpose.

Alliterating compounds with *f* can be explained in two ways. They could be 'alliteration for the eye', i.e. alliteration that only operates on the visual, but not on the aural level, but such an argument borders on the circular since the only possible example of alliteration only for the eye in Old Irish is precisely the one with *f*. All others are indeed alliterations for the ear or for the mind (unless the treatment of *f* in the examples above also falls under the category of psychological alliteration). The more interesting hypothesis is that the use of lenited *f* in alliteration goes back to a time when the predecessor of that sound, namely /w/, was still pronounced, in the sixth or early seventh century, and that this alliteration was preserved as a phonological school archaism in poetic teaching.

4 ALLITERATING *BEÖS*

As a final point, I want to touch briefly upon another special instance of alliteration in the Poems of Blathmac, in stanza 218 (lines 869–873):

Fo·rruär méit ronda·car	The extent to which he loved them had caused
a meinci dochum n-apstal,	his frequent visits to apostles
do·n-ánaic beös íar sin	to whom he came again after that
in cach inbaid i nGalail.	at every proper time in Galilee.

At a first glance, this stanza seems to belong to those approximately 40 in the Poems of Blathmac that do not have any narrow alliteration, although this lack is in this case compensated by the occurrence of linking alliteration across lines b–c between *apstal* and *·ánaic*.

The metre requires that *beös* in line c be read with a hiatus. Trivocalic spellings of this word such as *beous* (Ml 77b2) or *beius* (*LU* 9035) are also indicative of a hiatus. *Beös* can be analysed etymologically as a univerbated phrase of the copula and the noun *fos* 'state of rest' (*VKG* I 271), for instance as a collocation **bi fus* 'be in rest = stay still, still', diachronically consisting of the imperative of the copula, or perhaps a 1st- or 2nd-person subjunctive, + a prepositionless dative of *fos* with locatival meaning. It is far less likely that the first element continues the Proto-Indo-European local adverb and preposition **b^{h}í* 'by, near, at' (*LIPP* 113–116)

which is otherwise not securely attested in Celtic. Since the copula is inherently unstressed, the stress must fall on the second element. Scanning *beös* in this way yields an instance of narrow alliteration with·*ánaic* for free. Line 429 *Tróg do Iudas Scariöth* 'woe to Judas Iscariot' shows a similar behaviour (Lavelle 2018: ch. 2). The rhyme with line 430 *choimdeth* requires that *Scariöth* is stressed on its third syllable, and that for rhyming purposes it counts as a monosyllable. This creates alliteration with *Iudas* as a side effect.

In later poetry, after the loss of hiatus, *béos* of course alliterates with *b*, for instance in *Saltair na Rann* lines 11 and 5046. The *Lament of the Old Woman of Beara* reflects an intermediate treatment: in stanza 13 *beus* is measured as a disyllable, but it alliterates with *buide* and *barr* (*EIL* 86).

Abbreviations & Bibliography

THIS reference section is intended to contain full bibliographical references to works referred to above through an abbreviation. In respect of web-based sources, it may be noted that the ones corresponding to printed works are given after those, with the URL shown after a semi-colon; if no printed equivalents are listed, a colon precedes the URL. Moreover, it will be noted that a central place of honour has been provided for as many publications of our honorand's as were known to the editors at the time of going to press.

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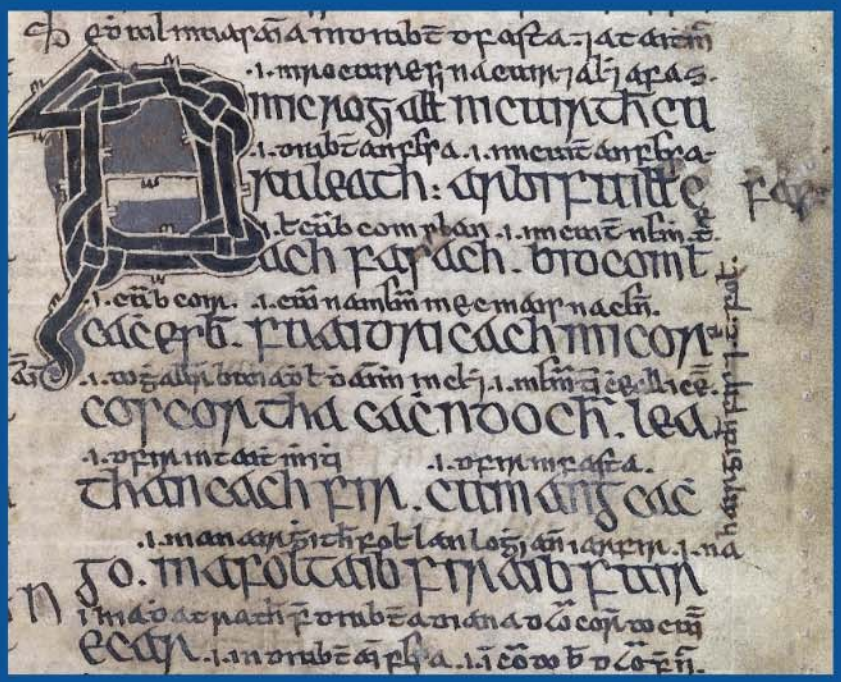

Dublin, Royal Irish Academy Manuscript 23 Q 6 p. 32

A maic ro-gíallaig: ni cuirther curu leth-fásа. Ar bid fuilnithi cach fásach. Bid comlán cach esbaid. Fúaitrithi cach míchor. Coscarthai cach dochor. Lethan cach fír, cumang cach gáu i nadfoltaib fíraib -fuirecar.

O son of abundant hostages: you should not make half-empty contracts. For every emptiness will have to be supplemented by damages. Every deficiency will be [made] complete. Every illicit contract [is] to be impugned. Every disadvantageous contract [is] to be dismantled. Every truth [is] broad, every falsehood narrow when it is not found with true considerations.

Di Astud Chor §37

Neil McLeod, *Early Irish Contract Law* pp.170–171