CONTENTS

p. 3 Preface

p. 5 References and acknowledgments

p. 9 Abbreviations

p. 11 Chapter 1: §1 Old Irish and the Celtic languages — §2 Spelling and pronunciation — Text I: Daith bech buide — §3 Word order — Text II: Och, a luin — Assignments

p. 21 Chapter 2: §4 Nouns and adjectives: (i)o- and (i)ā -stems, singular — Text III: Cride hé — §5 Personal pronouns, possessive adjectives and prepositions — Text IV: Úar ind adaig — §6 The definite article, singular — Assignments

p. 27 Chapter 3: §7 The verb: the present tense, third person singular — Text V: Atá ben istír — §8 The relative and passive verb forms — Text VI: Int én gaires — §9 Nouns and adjectives: i-, ē- and u-stems — Assignments

p. 36 Chapter 4: §10 Prepositions and prepositional pronouns; the emphatic suffixes — Text VII: Messe agus Pangur bán — §11 The present tense: complete paradigms; the substantive verb and the copula in the present tense — §12 The deponent verb in the present tense — Assignments

p. 46 Chapter 5: §13 The imperative — Text VII continued — §14 The noun: the consonantal stems — §15 The definite article in the plural — Text VIII: Fégaid úaib — Assignments

p. 54 Chapter 6: §16 The (i)o- and (i)ā -stems in the plural — Text IX: Int én bec — §17 The compound verb — §18 The preterite and the perfect, third person singular — Text X: Cétamon caín réé — Assignments

p. 68 Chapter 7: Text XI: Ro cúala — §19 The suffixed and infixed pronoun — §20 The numerals — Text XII: Imbu macán cóic bliadnae — §21 The subjunctive present — Text XIII: Dom-farcai — Assignments
p. 82 Chapter 8: §22 Word formation — Text XIV: A ben, bennacht fort — §23 The subjunctive past — §24 The degrees of comparison — Text XV: Cen áinius — Assignments


p. 106 Chapter 10: §28 Particles and prefixes; interrogative pronouns; demonstratives — §29 The imperfect or habitual past — §30 The adverbials — Text XIX: Aithbe dam cen bés móra — Assignments

p. 118 Chapter 11: §31 The preterite active and the perfect — §32 The dual — §33 The preterite passive and the participles — Text XIX continued — Assignments

p. 132 Chapter 12: §34 Coordination and subordination with conjunctions — §35 The verbal noun — §36 Phonological aspects — Text XIX concluded — Assignments

p. 149 Appendix 1: Middle Irish levelling

p. 151 Appendix 2: Verbal paradigms


p. 198 Subject index
ABBREVIATIONS

A / acc. accusative
abs. absolute
act. active
add. additional
adj. adjective
adv. adverb
arch. archaic
art. (definite) article
-ā ā-stem
c. conjunction
cf. compare
cj. conjunct
coll. collective
comp. comparative
cond. conditional
cons. consonant
cop. copula
-d d-stem
D / dat. dative
dem. demonstrative
dep. deponent
deut. deuterotonic
dim. diminutive
dir. direct
e.g. for instance
ecl. / " eclipsis, eclipses
emph. emphatic
eq. equative
f. feminine
f.2, etc. feminine, 2nd declension
fut. future
-g guttural stem
G / gen. genitive
h.l. hoc loco (here)
hab. habitual
-i i-stem
-ī ī-stem
-iā iā-stem
impf. imperfect
impv. imperative
ind. indirect
indecl. indeclinable
inf. infix(ed)
int. interrogative
-io io-stem
irr. irregular
l(l). line(s)
L. Latin
len. / ' lenition, lenites
lit. literally
Lit. literary
m. masculine
m.1 masculine, 1st declension
m.3, etc. masculine, 3rd declension
MI Middle Irish
MS(S). manuscript(s)
-n n-stem
N / nom. nominative
n. neuter
neg. negative
-nn nn-stem
nomd. nominalized
NP Noun phrase
-o o-stem
Oi Old Irish
p(p). page(s)
p.p. past participle
part. particle
pass. passive
perf. perfect(ive)
perh. perhaps
pl. plural
poss. possessive
prec. preceding
pred. predicative
pref. prefix(ed)
prep. preposition(al)
pres. present
pret. preterite
prev. preverbal
pron. pronoun
prot. prototonic
qual. qualifies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>q.v.</th>
<th>quo vide (see there)</th>
<th>-u</th>
<th>u-stem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-r</td>
<td>r-stem</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>vocative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red.</td>
<td>reduplicated</td>
<td>vn.</td>
<td>verbal noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refl.</td>
<td>reflexive</td>
<td>w.</td>
<td>with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rel.</td>
<td>relative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-s</td>
<td>s-stem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sc.</td>
<td>scilicet (namely)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>doubtful/ unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sg.</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>-?</td>
<td>doubtful stem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subj.</td>
<td>subjunctive</td>
<td>&lt;</td>
<td>(derived) from / form of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suff.</td>
<td>suffix(ed)</td>
<td>&lt;&gt;</td>
<td>indicates spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sup.</td>
<td>superlative</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>hence / becomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sync.</td>
<td>syncopated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>first person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-t</td>
<td>t-stem</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>second person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tr.</td>
<td>translate(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>third person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

§1 Introductory remarks on Old Irish and the other Celtic languages

Irish belongs to the Celtic branch of the Indo-European language family. The oldest textual evidence of this branch for the greater part survives in the form of brief inscriptions. From these, and from even more incidental remnants in the form of names of places and persons as recorded by earlier Greek and Roman historians, linguists have arrived at a division of Proto-Celtic, probably completed well before the beginning of the Christian era, into Continental Celtic and Insular Celtic. A further classification that includes later developments subdivides Continental Celtic into Celtiberian (in Spain) and Gaulish (in France and Northern Italy), and Insular Celtic into British (in Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany) and Goidelic or Gaelic (in Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man). There is also evidence of a Celtic dialect having been used until the fourth century AD in Galatia (Turkey), and of one or two northern dialects of British in Northern England and Scotland: Cumbrian, and possibly Pictish, both of which died out in the early Middle Ages.

Early historians from Greece and the Roman Empire looked upon the Celts as barbarians, and the cultural tradition of the Celts remained primarily an oral one up to the time when the surviving Celtic tribes were converted to Christianity and adopted the Latin alphabet. In fact, very little is known about the precise early relationship between Celtic and other Indo-European languages, the closest branches of which appear to be Italic (including Latin) and Germanic. Since Old Irish has a unique Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) word-order, it has even been surmised that this language may have been influenced by a substratum of whatever member of another language family which may have been spoken in Ireland before the first Celtic settlements there took place, some time between 500 and 300 BC, but this is highly speculative.

Linguistic evidence shows a major division between Q-Celtic and P-Celtic, so called because of the appearance of a /p/-sound in some languages where others retained a reflection of Indo-European /kʷ/. Celtiberian and Gaelic are Q-Celtic, and all the others belong to the P-variety. It has therefore been suggested that the westernmost Celtic tribes, which ultimately moved into Ireland and the West of Spain, retained this particular phonemic characteristic in their languages, whereas a “movement” of a sound-change which started from a centre in Continental Europe (where the Celts originated) never reached the far West.
In the outcome, only the six major Insular dialects developed a well-attested written as well as spoken tradition. Of the British languages, Welsh and Breton (the latter of which spread from modern-day southern England into Armorica in the fifth century AD) have survived, whereas Cornish became extinct during the eighteenth century. Gaelic was at first a single language, centred in Ireland. Around 1600, Scots Gaelic (which is still spoken, mainly on the Hebrides) and Manx (which officially became extinct when its last native speaker died in 1974) split off from Irish Gaelic, which therefore has the longest continuous written tradition of all Celtic languages. Chronologically it is generally subdivided into Primitive Irish (c. 400 - 600 AD, almost exclusively preserved in inscriptions and geographical names), Early Old Irish (7th century AD) and Old Irish (c. 700 - c. 900), Middle Irish (c. 900 - c. 1200), Early Modern Irish (c. 1200 - c. 1600), and Modern Irish (c. 1600 to the present day).

§2 Spelling and pronunciation

The earliest records of Irish Gaelic are to be found on several hundred so-called Ogam (or Ogham) stones. Ogam (Oghamchraobh) is the name of a primitive alphabet of twenty (later 25) symbols, consisting of longer or shorter straight or slanted lines, suitable for carving into the edges of standing stones. The use of these mainly commemorative inscriptions is roughly dated from the late fourth to the early seventh century. The year 432 AD is traditionally considered as the year in which Christianity came to Ireland with St Patrick, but the first manuscript records, using an insular version of the early medieval Latin alphabet, are not attested until the seventh century. In fact, the bulk of Old Irish material, comprising texts of a religious nature as well as numerous myths, legends, sagas and epic narratives in prose, interspersed with sections in verse, has come down to us in manuscripts from the twelfth century or later. These Middle Irish manuscripts also contain what are considered to be more or less faithful renderings of older texts. However, quite a few manuscripts dating from the Old Irish period have survived as well, containing glosses which explain the Latin main text, part of them written in the vernacular, Old Irish language. These interlinear glosses, such as those preserved in the monasteries of Würzburg (c. 750), Milan (c. 800) and St. Gall (c. 845), contain a treasure of linguistic information; for this reason they are often used in introductory manuals such as Strachan’s Old-Irish Paradigms. In the margins of such and similar manuscripts poems were often jotted as well.
The highly alliterative nature of Old Irish poetry and possibly also the fact that Irish end-rhyme is based on only partial phonetic correspondence (what in an English context would be called assonance) testify to the fact that Old Irish generally has the main stress on the first syllable of the word. Early lyrical poems are often extremely short, which is one of the reasons why we shall make use of such texts in this Primer. Quite common are quatrains such as Text I, which also gives an idea of the basic characteristics of the Old Irish language — its spelling, its pronunciation, and the basic pattern of its syntactic functions, upon which we will comment in the next chapter.

(All words in the texts will be glossed and annotated as fully as possible. Needless to say, some of the information provided, such as the distinction between nominal declensions, will have to be ignored for the time being. The abbreviations used in the annotations are set out on pp. 9-10 above. For the glosses on Text I, see p. 17.)

Text I

Daith bech buide a húaim i n-úaim,
ní súail a uide la gréin,
fó for fuluth 'sa mag már,
dag a dagchomul 'na chéir.

Translation (rather free, as in Dillon, p. 154): “Nimble is the yellow bee from cup to cup, / he makes a great journey in the sun, / boldly he flits into the wide plain, / then safely joins his brethren in the hive.”

This poem probably dates from the eighth or ninth century; its rhythm seems to be free, but there are in fact seven syllables to each line (for instance through elision of the final -e in buide), a very common Old Irish measure type. The use of alliteration (as in bech buide, fó ... fuluth and mag már), what looks like assonance, but within the Irish prosodic context counts as full rhyme (húaim and súail, gréin and chéir), and internal rhyme (buide and uide, mag and dag) is clear ... to the eye. What about the relationship between spelling and sound?

The Irish version of the Latin alphabet makes use of eighteen letters altogether. The five vowels are spelled <a>, <e>, <i>, <o> and <u> when short; length is indicated by means of the acute sign, known in Irish as síneadh fada (“long stretch”). Their pronunciation is the “continental” one, i.e. these vowels are generally pronounced as they would be in Latin or e.g. Italian (<á> being pronounced as in English “bar”). When
weakly stressed before a consonant, OI <a>, <ai>, <e> and <i> are pronounced as a murmur-vowel or **schwa** i.e. /ə/.

Eleven combinations of vowels were used to indicate eight different diphthongs; these are <íu>, <ía>, <éu> or <éo>, <áu>, <aí> or <áe>, <oí> or <óe>, <úa> and <uí> ( <ói> and <ái> are also found in MSS). Here, the length-marks (which the scribes did not always carefully provide!) simply serve to mark a diphthong, both members of which together form a long segment. The recommended pronunciation of the diphthongs is as follows:

- íu(i) as in “Ian”, but with velar off-glide (cf. Italian “io”)
- ía(i) as in “Ian”
- éo(i), éu as in “playoff”
- áu as in “crouch”
- áe, aí as in “aisle”
- óe, oí as in “oil”
- úa(i) as in “brewer”
- uí as in “sweet”

Matters become somewhat more complicated when short vowels are put together (except for <ía> and <úa>, which are always diphthongs), because these combinations do not so much indicate different vowel sounds as whether the consonants that precede or follow them are “broad” (i.e. velar) or “slender” (i.e. palatalized). For instance, in the word **uide** (l. 2), the <i> indicates that the following <d> is to be pronounced with a palatal quality. Similarly, in word-final weakly stressed <ae> and <ai>, the <a> merely serves to indicate that the preceding consonant (cluster) is “broad”, and the pronunciation remains /e/ and /i/ respectively. We are dealing here with a spelling convention, which was necessary to be able to represent the fifty-odd different phonemes of Old Irish by means of only eighteen symbols.

According to Thurneysen, the twelve consonants of OI, <b>, <c>, <d>, <f>, <g>, <l>, <m>, <n>, <p>, <r>, <s> and <t>, could have three phonemic realizations: velar, when followed or preceded by <u> or <o>, neutral when followed by <a>, and palatal when followed or preceded by <i> or followed by <e>. Almost all later scholars reject this, reducing the distinction to two varieties. In any case, as will be seen later, only the distinction between the former two (ModI broad) and the latter (ModI slender) is also phonemic, i.e. semantically significant. The finesses of this aspect of pronouncing the language may be picked up more easily by a speaker of ModI than by an absolute newcomer to the field. Since
the phonetics of the older language are in any case only rough approximations, they may to some extent be ignored at an early stage, although it should also be remembered, firstly, that phonemic distinctions not indicated in orthography may conceal cases of so-called “minimal pairs”, and, secondly, that the enjoyment of reading poetry is not only a matter of understanding the text but also one of hearing it. (The Lehmanns offer phonetic transcriptions of the first four text fragments in their book, and the student who has no sounding-board in the shape of a knowledgeable teacher might find it of interest to consult these; see also the first twelve exercises in Quin. It should be noted, however, that some experts in historical phonology consider these transcriptions to be partially incorrect.)

Apart from the above-mentioned variants, the consonants are also affected in other, even more vital, ways. We are here referring to the phenomena of voicing, lenition (the term aspiration, which is used e.g. in O-I P, had better be avoided) and eclipsis (or nasalization). In the middle or at the end of words, the letters <c>, <p> and <t>, which word-initially are normally voiceless stops (/k/, /p/, /t/), are often to be pronounced voiced (/g/, /b/, /d/), but this is not clear from the spelling. When preceded in a previous word by a nasal in Proto-Celtic (but which had disappeared in OI), a similar thing happened. In ModI, this eclipsis is indicated in the spelling by writing a <g> before the <c>, a <b> before the <p> and a <d> before the <t>, but this was not done by the OI scribes. Examples to clarify this point will be given in §5 below.

Lenition, due to phonetic conditions in Proto-Celtic or to syntactic rules in OI, means that the stops are transformed into fricatives. To indicate such realization, an <h> was added to the letters <c>, <p> and <t>, with realization as indicated in the schedule below. This is in fact the major function of the letter <h>, which is otherwise only used at the beginning of words starting with a vowel in order to avoid amalgamation with a final vowel in the previous word.

Being already voiced by nature, the stops represented by the letters <g>, <b> and <d> cannot obtain extra voicing. Instead, they are lenited in circumstances where the voiceless stops are voiced or lenited. However, no <h> was inserted here in the orthography. On the other hand, when these sounds are eclipsed this is indicated in the spelling, which respectively becomes <ng>, <mb> and <nd>.

Lenited or “voiced” <m> is pronounced /v/ with a nasal sound (=/ṽ/); this sound does not eclipse, but is occasionally spelled double (<mm>) in eclipsing or non-leniting circumstances. Generally speaking, when <c>, <p>, <t> and <m> are written double, this effectively means
that they have their “original” pronunciation. The letter <f> mainly occurs word-initially in OI, in compounds, and in certain verbal endings. When lenited, the scribes sometimes put a dot, the so-called "punctum delens" ("destroying point", ordinarily used to indicate a mistake) over it, as was done over lenited <s>, thus: <ḟ>, <ṡ>. The former is not heard at all (/ø/ or “zero” pronunciation), the latter as /h/. Eclipsis of <f> (pronounced /v/) is not usually indicated (but sometimes spelled <b> in MSS); consonants that do not change their quality by eclipsis may be written double. Vowels of course cannot be lenited, but they can be eclipsed by prefixing <n>-.

The remaining consonants <l>, <n> and <r> may also be lenited, but this is not reflected in either spelling or pronunciation. For the user’s convenience the various realizations of OI consonants are set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Final / Intervocalic:</th>
<th>Lenited:</th>
<th>Eclipsed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c /k/</td>
<td>c /g/</td>
<td>c(c) /k/</td>
<td>ch /x/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p /p/</td>
<td>p /b/</td>
<td>p(p) /p/</td>
<td>ph /f/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t /t/</td>
<td>t /d/</td>
<td>t(t) /t/</td>
<td>th /θ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g /g/</td>
<td>g /γ/</td>
<td>g /γ/</td>
<td>ng /η/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b /b/</td>
<td>b /v/</td>
<td>b /v/</td>
<td>mb /m/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d /d/</td>
<td>d /ð/</td>
<td>d /ð/</td>
<td>nd /n/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m /m/</td>
<td>m /ṽ/</td>
<td>m(m) /m/</td>
<td>m /ṽ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f /f/</td>
<td>f /b/</td>
<td>ē /-/-</td>
<td>f /v/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s /s/</td>
<td>s /s/</td>
<td>Š /h/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that <c> is always a plosive, even when palatalized. Word-medially and word-finally, <m> is often unlenited, and <c>, <p> and <t> not always voiced. Before a front vowel, or word-finally after a front vowel, <s> is pronounced as in “shin”, but when following a back vowel, it is broad, also where the back vowel is not written, as in ēs (“knowledge”, ModI fios) or crīs (“belt”, ModI crios), where a hard /s/ is heard. For more specific details, see §36.

Before moving on to other matters, the word-by-word gloss for Text I will now be provided. Exceptionally, some additional information concerning pronunciation to illustrate some of the points made above will be given as well.
It will strike the reader to what extent the vocabulary of OI has been retained into ModI, although some of the modern reflexes are now literary or archaic, and there have been changes in the spelling. A more literal rendering of the poem than the one provided by Dillon could run as follows: “Nimble (is) a yellow bee out of a cave into a cave, not trifling (is) its journey with (the) sun, boldly fluttering into the great plain, well its union in its wax.” The absence of verbs creates the sense of a snapshot, rather like the effect achieved by a well-turned Japanese haiku. Perhaps the word dagchomul in l. 4 is meant to suggest that the bee is safely “cowled” in its quasi-monastic hive.

A few additional remarks about OI prosody may also be noted here. The use of alliteration is common to the early poetry of all languages which bear a strong word-initial stress. The oldest OI verse seems to
have been mainly alliterative; the use of a fixed rhythm and of rhyme was probably due to the influence of early medieval Latin hymnody. Poetry written in quatrains (there may be more than just one) often uses a heptasyllabic line, with stresses on the odd syllables, i.e. four per line (\x\x\x\x), and a word boundary after the fourth syllable. Unlike in Old English alliterative poetry, the first stress does not alliterate, and the alliteration may continue into a following line. Vowels alliterate with any other vowels, consonants only with each other, even when eclipsed or lenited (except for lenited <f>, which becomes silent), and the clusters <sc>, <sp> and <st> alliterate with themselves as well.

Endrhyme in Old Irish verse allows for greater phonetic freedom than is the case in English — in fact, it often resembles what in English prosody would be called assonance, but with specified restrictions. Each vowel after the stressed vowel must rhyme; as to the final consonants, these must “rhyme” with their phonemic cognates: voiced stops with voiced stops, voiceless stops with voiceless stops, voiced fricatives and lenis or lenited liquids with the same, voiceless fricatives ditto, /m/ and fortis or unlenited liquids ditto, /s/ with itself, and any final vowel with itself. In M1, short final vowels had all become weakened to the so-called “murmur-vowel”, which allows such vowels to rhyme with any other such final vowel.

In Text I, these rules are meticulously followed, as in húaim and súail and in gréin and chéir, where the vowels have the same respective quality and quantity, and the final consonants are slender and lenited liquids. Often, as also here, a further rule concerning a first stressed word assonating with the final word in a previous line is followed. For more specific details, the interested reader is referred to Gerard Murphy’s Early Irish Metrics, Dublin 1961.

§3 Word order in Old Irish

The Irish language is unique in the Indo-European family (apart from Modern Welsh) in having a basic Verb-Subject-Object word order. Except for ní, no finite verb occurs in Text I (we are saving these for Chapter 2), but before the first word in the poem the copula is is understood. In such sentences, the nominal or adjectival predicate precedes the subject: (is) daith bech buide literally means “(is) nimble a yellow bee.” As appears to be common to VSO-languages, the attributive adjective (buid) follows the noun it qualifies (bech). The absence of a copula is more usual in Irish than it is in English, although it is possible there as well, with a similar inversion of predicate and subject, as when Nanki-
Poo sings in Gilbert and Sullivan’s opera *The Mikado*: “A wandering minstrel I, a thing of shreds and patches,...” This structure is adhered to in every subsequent line of Text I. If an adjective precedes the noun it qualifies, it must form a compound with it, as in *dagchomul*. This is also the case with the cardinal number “one”, *óen-*(ModI *aon* + noun) and with the adjective “old”, *sen-*(ModI *sean*). The reader is now first invited to investigate the points mentioned above in Text II.

**Text II**

Och, a luin, is buide duit
cáit sa muine i fuil do net:
a díthrebaig nad clind cloc
is bind boc síthamail t’fet.

1 a luin: voc.sg. of lon: -o m. “blackbird”, *lon (dubh)* (m.1).
    is: 3sg. pres. of the copula: “is”, *is*.
    buide: -iā f. “thanks”, “satisfaction”, *buidhe, buí*.
    The combination *is ... do* ... expresses a conviction.
2 cáit: “in whatever place”, “wherever”, *cáit, cá háit*.
    sa: see I.3. The older form would be *isin* (see §10).
    muine: -io m. “brake”, “thicket”, *muine* (f.4).
    i: here used as relative preposition: “in which”.
    fuil: rel. form of at-tá, 3sg. “is”, *ina bhfuil*: “in which is”.
    net: -o m. “nest”, *nead* (f.2).
3 a díthrebaig: voc.sg. of díthrebach -o m. “hermit”, *díthreabhach* (m.1), voc. a *díthreabhaigh*.
    nád: neg. rel. c. “that not”, *nach*, ná.
    clind: = clinn, 3sg.pres.cj. of clinnid: “rings”, *cling(eann)*.
    cloc: -o m. “bell”, *clog* (m.1).
4 bind: = binn, adj. -i “melodious”, *binn*.
    boc: -o/-ā adj. “soft”, *bog*.
    síthamail: adj. -i “peaceful” < *síth = síd* -s n. “peace” + adj. ending, *síth* (f.2),
    -amhail > -iúil *síthiúil*.
    t’: do “thy”, when followed by vowel, *d’* (Munster Irish: *t’*).
    òet: < *fet-*ā f. “whistle”, *fead* (f.2).

The ModI forms of words ending in <t> and <c> (*net, fet, cloc, boc*) suggest the voiced pronunciation of these sounds in OI. Note the internal (cross-) rhymes in *luin, buide, muine, fuil*, and the correspondences of
sounds in *díthrebaig* (with slender <g>) and *síthamail*, and the double rhymes of *clind cloc* and *bind boc*. Dillon dates this poem as seventh or eighth century, but in *FDA* it is suggested it may be “as late as the eleventh”. A late date seems to be confirmed by *sa muine* for more “correct” *Ol isin muiniu*, the dat. sg. of a m. io-stem (see §4). Dillon also provides the translation by Kuno Meyer (1858-1919), one of the greatest Celticists ever. It runs: “Ah, blackbird, thou art satisfied / where-ever thy nest is in the thicket: / hermit that clinkest no bell, / sweet, soft, peaceful is thy note.” See also Lehmann, p. 147, for a slightly different redaction.

* Assignments

1. Make a rough phonetic transcription and practice the pronunciation of Texts I and II.
2. Translate Text A (see Additional Texts at the back of the book).

*