

Title	On stressed monosyllables ending in a short vowel in Classical Modern Irish
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## On stressed monosyllables ending in a short vowel in Classical Modern Irish

Through an examination of rhyming examples and orthography, Liam Breatnach (2003) demonstrates that Old Irish did not have a category of words ending in a short stressed vowel.<sup>1</sup> The words examined were (1) *dí* 'from her'; (2) *dé* 'from him, it'; (3) *dé* in *cechtar dé* 'each of the two'; (4) *immallé* 'together'; (5) *illé* 'hither'; (6) *té* 'hot'; (7) *só* 'this'; (8) *sé* 'this'; (9) *amné* 'thus'; (10) *danó* 'then'. In that article reference is made to rhyming examples of some of those words from Classical Modern Irish poetry (all perfect rhymes or *comhardadh slán* from poems in *dán díreach* or strict verse) to illustrate that the vowel was also long in that literary dialect. Breatnach notes (2005, 139) that it remains to be determined when the forms with a short vowel, familiar from Modern Irish, of some of these words arose.

This paper will demonstrate that some of the above-listed words had variants with short vowels in Early Modern Irish.<sup>2</sup> In addition, attention will be drawn to stressed *do*, a variant of *dó* 'to him' with a short vowel. For convenience, I use the numbering of words in Breatnach 2003 in the following discussion. All translations of unpublished material are my own and all citations are given as published in the source named. The word under discussion is given in bold in citations and the relevant rhyming words (where appropriate, in a standardised form) are given in brackets after each citation for the reader's convenience.

My paper, dealing as it does primarily with the forms of the words in question in bardic poetry, concentrates almost exclusively on the metrical evidence relevant to vowel length in the words under discussion. However, the limitations of this evidence have an important bearing on any conclusions to be drawn from (a lack of) rhyming examples of a particular form. While there are a number of stressed words in *-é* with which the uncompounded adj. *té* (long vowel) could potentially make perfect rhyme (*mé* 'I, me', *sé* 'he', *é* 'him', *dé* 'from him', *Dé* gen. sg. 'God', *glé* 'clear', etc.), a short variant *\*te*, if we assume its existence, has no potential (unambiguous) rhyming partners known to me, at least when not compounded with another word. Metrical evidence for the existence of short *te*, in common with the other stressed monosyllables with vocalic auslaut under discussion here, is, therefore, only likely to be found in rhyming compounds, in the *ab* half-quatrain of poems in *dán díreach* in those metres where looser internal rhymes are permitted in that position (e.g. *rannaigheacht*), in *uaitne shlán* between the finals of metres with *bd* perfect end-rhyme (e.g. *rannaigheacht* again), in poems in *brúilingeacht*, where the requirements of internal and end-rhyme are looser than in *dán díreach*, and in poems in *ógláchas*, where some end- and *aicill*-rhymes are, despite the looseness of the metre, diagnostic for vowel-length.<sup>3</sup> An examination of this evidence

- 1 I am very grateful to Professor Liam Breatnach for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper and for generously providing me with examples. I am indebted to Professor Damian McManus for his valuable comments. My thanks also to the editors and to the anonymous reader for suggesting some improvements. I alone am responsible for all the errors and inconsistencies that remain in this paper.
- 2 I adhere to the useful distinction drawn by Damian McManus (1994, 335) between 'Early Modern Irish' (henceforth 'EModIr'), an umbrella term for all forms of the Irish language, written and spoken, between c. 1200 and c. 1650, and 'Classical Modern Irish' (henceforth 'CIr'), the literary dialect cultivated for bardic poetry during that period. I use the term '(Late) Modern Irish' (henceforth 'LModIr') to describe the language of the period after c. 1650.
- 3 Here 'rhyme' includes so-called 'loose rhymes' (*comhardadh brisde* and *uaitne*) as well as 'perfect rhyme' (*comhardadh slán*). Only rhymes diagnostic for vowel-length are discussed in this paper. As a consequence, *rinn* : *airdrinn*-rhymes such as *de* : *cruinne* are not discussed at all.

requires a reassessment of some of the conclusions of Breatnach 2003 with regard to CIr and suggests that some of the words discussed by him had short forms going back to the EModIr period. In addition to the question of when the short forms first emerge, it remains to be determined for what length of time forms with a long and short vowel coexisted in the language. While a larger study would be required to address this issue, I do supply some late spellings, as well as the evidence of the modern dialects, which may illustrate the continued survival of the long-vowel forms into LModIr.<sup>4</sup>

(1) *dí/di* 'from her' / 'to her'

*Dí* undoubtedly had a form with a long vowel in CIr, as is clear from the rhyming examples referred to in Breatnach 2003, 135 (e.g. *dhi* : *an tí*; *IBP* poem 52.1cd).<sup>5</sup> It should, however, be noted that *BST* 193.19 gives *di dí ón dá chéill*, that is, *di dí* as the forms of the 3 sg. fem. conjugated prepositions of *de* 'from' and *do* 'to'. I have only one example of *di* rhyming, from a late sixteenth-century poem in *rannaigheacht* (*ógláchas*):

*Ní hi[o]nann 's do mháthair fé[i]n / - is Maighistir Seidhin gan chéill sibh - / is glan an ógh í bhar siur / ar mbreith chloinne do thriur dhi (sibh : dhi)*, 'Unlike your own mother – you are senseless Master Sheyne – your sister, having brought forth a child to the Trinity, remains a pure virgin' (*Dán na mBráthar* 27.9i)<sup>6</sup>

The language of this poem displays many non-classical features, however. As such it is an unreliable indicator of the usage of the bardic schools, but it indicates that *dí* had a short variant in EModIr by the sixteenth century at the latest. Short *di* is also found in some seventeenth-century *amhráin*, though these too are, of course, no evidence for the CIr form (see, for example, *Nua-Dhuanaire* 1, poem 26, l. 106; poem 34, l. 14; poem 35, ll. 2, 26). For *di/dí* in LModIr, see Breatnach 2003, 139-40.

(2) *dé/de* 'from him, it'

There is ample evidence that *dé* had a form with a long vowel in CIr (see Breatnach 2003, 135 for the rhymes *mé* 'I' : *dhé*, *sé* 'he' : *dhé*, *é* 'he, him' : *dé*, gen. sing. *Dé* 'God' : *dhé*, *cé* in *an bioth cé* 'this world' : *dé*). Did CIr also allow a form with a short vowel? On this point, the evidence of *BST* is problematic: *BST* 193.21 gives only *de* as the 3 sg. masc. conjugated preposition, despite the fact that long *dé* is well-attested. *De* in *BST* may be an error for *dé* and short *de* may not have been permitted by the bardic grammarians. Alternatively, perhaps both *de* and *dé* were permitted in CIr and *dé* was simply omitted in the course of the transmission of *BST*.<sup>7</sup> Liam Breatnach has supplied

4 The limitations of orthographical evidence should, of course, always be borne in mind. A spelling with a long vowel in a late MS, for instance, even if we assume it is not a mistake, may be no more than a scribal archaism, may derive from an older exemplar or may be intended to indicate a short diphthong rather than a long vowel. Where relevant, I note where a text contains both examples with long and short vowels, though, of course, the absence of a length-mark may be no more than an omission. The citations are illustrative but not necessarily exhaustive of the usage in a particular text.

5 For another particularly convincing example see *ní hénsdair dhosan as dí. fosadh í 's as ésgaid é* (*IGT* ii, ex. 1939), 'he does not have the same reputation as her; she is firm and he is flighty', a *cd* half-quatrain in *rannaigheacht mhór*, where *dí* makes perfect *aicill*-rhyme with *í* and *uaitne shlán* with *é*, neither of which are known to have short variants.

6 Damian McManus suggests translating the final line of this quatrain as 'having given birth to a family of three', that is, 'having given birth to the Trinity'.

7 Two of the three rhymes from bardic poetry cited as evidence of a long vowel in (8) *sé* 'this' in CIr in Breatnach

me with two examples of short *de* from a sixteenth-century poem in *rannaigheacht mhór* (*ógláchas*) by Donnchadh Caoch Ó hUiginn; the first is end-rhyme, the second *aicill*-rhyme in an *ab* half-quatrain.

*Mnā sēimhe síothamhla sūd, / mnā sgaoilios a rún gan cheilt; fada Filib ina n-ucht, / na mná do bhean a ghuth **de** (cheilt : de) (O'Reilly 15.13), 'They are gentle, enchanted women, women who give their affection openly; long has Filib been among them, the women who left him speechless'*

*Gean go bhfuilim diomdhach **de**, / gē maith leam a bheith gan bhēim (de : bheith) (O'Reilly 15.21ab), 'though I am not disappointed because of him, though I like to be without reproach'*

These two examples indicate that *de* was current by the sixteenth century and suggest that short *de* was possible in CIr.

The form with a short vowel is the most familiar in LModIr, but the spelling *dé* occurs in LCS (an early sixteenth-century MS): a *fhiarfaige dé* 'to ask him' (pp. 42-4).<sup>8</sup> Note also the following spellings in late MSS: (from an EModIr saint's life, transcribed by Aodh Ó Dálaigh in Dublin in 1725) *don turadh thainig um neonuidh **dhé** (BC3, 163) 'the fruit that came in the evening from it';<sup>9</sup> (from *Beatha San Froinsias*, transcribed c. 1720 by a Cavan scribe) *Fiarfuighid, dono, daoine āiridhe **dhé**... (BSF, l. 1808) 'certain people asked him'; go ndearnadh pāpa isin Róimh **dhé** (ibid., l. 2318) 'he was made pope in Rome';<sup>10</sup> (from a mid-eighteenth century copy of an early eighteenth-century tale composed in Co. Armagh) *Is annsin ro fhíadhfruinghe fear an toighe **dhé** (EAMG, 121) 'then the man of the house asked him'; teilgeas an (an) brocht **dhé** (ibid., 122) 'he threw the drink away'; no gur thochoill dóideac[h]a móra **dhé** (ibid., 123) 'until he scooped big handfuls of it', etc. *De* is the most common form in Irish today, but note *dé* in Hyde's recording of a Mayo Irish folktale ("Ná h-ólagáí mórán **dé** seo," arsa mé féin "do not drink a lot of this," I said' and *d'ith mé mo sháith **dé** 'I drank my fill of it', An Craoibhín 1932, 162, 164) and the same writer's remark to the effect that *dé* was long in Roscommon Irish (Hyde 1906, i, 397). A variant *dé* survives in Ulster Irish (Lucas 1979, 95).****

#### (5) *illé* 'hither'

Breatnach makes no observation about the form of this word in CIr, though he notes the replacement of *i lé* by *i leith* in the later language (2003, 137, 140). I have no metrically conclusive instance that could confirm vowel-length in *i lé* or *i le* in CIr verse. The following example, however, from a late, metrically loose poem, may be worth noticing:

*Cuirim, a leannáin leasa Luirc, / mo bheannacht chugaibh, a Chormuic, / is gabh a lé i n-uair airce; uaim mé ar char comairce (mé : lé) (LCAB poem 46, ll. 57-60), 'I send you my blessing, O Cormac, O lover of Lios Luirc; and come hither (?) in time of trouble; I desire to be placed under protection (?)'*

2003, 138 are with the 3 sing. masc. conjugated preposition *de*. That *sé* had a long vowel (or at least a form with a long vowel) is demonstrated beyond doubt, however, by the third example cited (*IGT* ii, ex. 1623).

8 Contrast *dob olc le Mac Coilín sin dhíarfaige **dhe** 'Mac Coilín did not wish that that question should be asked of him' (pp 46-7).*

9 Contrast *d(h)e* without a length-mark in the same text: *leac do gach leith **dhe** (p. 156), 'a stone on every side of him'.*

10 Contrast *d(h)e* without a length-mark in the same text, e.g. *beanus an aibíd **dhe** (ll. 2992-3), 'he took off his habit'.*

This poem is found on p. 239 of *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe* (RIA MS 1076 (24 P 33)) and is signed by Tadhg Ó Rodaighe, who is probably also the author. The phrase *a lé* is glossed in the margin in the scribal hand but only the beginning of the gloss (*lé .i. ga...*) is visible. The fact that *i lé* is glossed at all suggests it may have been obscure to the recipient, Cormac Ó Néill, in the mid-/late-seventeenth century. The quatrain cited is difficult to interpret. I take it that the substantive verb is to be understood before *uaim* in the final line and it might literally be translated 'I desire me [i.e. my being?] after the placing of protection'. The reader of this paper has queried whether *lé* in this example might be *lé/léighe* 'affection', but I can make no sense of this possibility. In any event, even if *a lé* here does represent the compound preposition, the usage of so late a poet may or may not reflect the teaching of the bardic schools. The question as to whether *i lé* was long in CIr must remain open until less ambiguous examples come to light; nonetheless, this example, if it does contain the compound preposition, as I think likely, suggests as much.

[The spelling \*alé\* is common in LCS; see, for example, \*o shin alé\* \(pp 2, 16, 26\).](#)<sup>11</sup> I have noted also the following spellings in late MSS: *ó só a(i)-lé* (ABM 234.8a); *Ca cómhairle sin alé?* 'What is that advice?' (MacSweeney 1904, 4-5);<sup>12</sup> *osin alé* (BC3, 165);<sup>13</sup> *ó shoin a lé* (O'Grady 1892, 14); *ón ochtmhadh lá do August alé* (Ní Chinnéide 1954, 38; from one of Charles O'Connor of Belanagare's notebooks), 'from the eighth of August on'.

#### (6) *té/te* 'hot'

The adj. *té* undoubtedly had a form in a long vowel in CIr, as is clear from rhymes such as *thé : mhé* (O'Hara 10.13bd).<sup>14</sup> Rhyming compounds, however, provide ample evidence for a variant of *té* with a short vowel in CIr:

*slat a fód choirmthe* Cheara. *foirbhthe óg a hairrdheana* (*choirmthe : foirbhthe*) (IGT ii, ex. 2071), 'a scion from the land of Ceara of warm ale; she is both youthful and mature'

*fuinn tiormbraointe do thíre. ní iomlaoidfe ar énríghe* (*tiormbhraointe : iomlaoidfe*) (IGT iii, ex. 972), 'you will not exchange your country's lands of sparse, warm rain (?) for any kingship'

*Teine bhithbheo bhias ar fadódh / fríoth n-a ghleannaibh; / dá lasair dheirgthe mar dhonnfhuil / teinte an teallaigh* (*dheirgthe : teinte*), 'An ever-alive living fire is always in its glens; two flames hot and blood-red are the fires of that hearth' (*Magauran* 25.3)

*Fearfaidh re Seabhac Sléibhe Mis / dan mín muir gharbh / gach inbhear láinte gach linn ghorm / fáilte bhinn bhalbh* (*láinte : fáilte*), 'To this Hawk of Sliabh Mis, for whom rough sea grows calm, every estuary now full and warm, every blue lake, will give a sweet-toned murmured welcome' (McKenna 1952, quatrain 31)

<sup>11</sup> [Contrast \*o shin ale\* \(p. 6\).](#)

<sup>12</sup> Contrast *ó sin ale* (p. 102).

<sup>13</sup> Contrast *ó sin ale* (p. 164).

<sup>14</sup> The rest of the examples cited in Breatnach 2003, 137 are with 3 sg. masc. *dé*. However, it is possible that CIr allowed short *de* (see the discussion above) and as such not all examples of the rhyme *té : dé* are diagnostic for vowel length. In the following example, however, there can be no doubt that both *té* and *dé* are long: *Do-rinne an fhían aitreabh dhe. mar a taitneadh grían ré gai. líntar ar n-ochta dhúin de. te a úir is corcra a cnai* (IGT ii, ex. 1613), 'the battle-band made a home there, where the sun shone on a blade; warm its soil and purple its nuts; we fill our arms from it [all]'. Here *uaitne shlán* between the line-finals requires that the vowel in all the finals be long (*dhé : gaoi : dé : cnaoi*). The *aicill*-rhyme between *dé* and *té* thus confirms that the vowel in both is long.

*Ar feadh m'eōlois ar fhiadh Mumhan / múr mur ē nī haithnidh damh, / mo chean fear innte do hoileadh, / treabh shlinnte na ngroigheadh nglan (innte : shlinnte) (Butlers 3.4), 'As far as I my knowledge of the land of Munster extends, I know of no fort like it; bless the man who was raised in it, the warm-tiled house of fine steeds'*

*Dá ttáinig(h) ó thor Breoguin / tar muir n-eignidh n-ainbhtheanuidh / lucht bairce don talmhuin thoir / go hadhbaidh ttraichtte tTuathoil (báirce : dtráichtte) (ABM 174.4), 'As a result of which the crew of a ship from the eastern land came across the salmon-filled stormy sea to the land of Tuathal of warm beaches'*

At least as the final element in a compound then, *té* had a short form in Clr. Indeed, at present I have no examples of long *té* as the final element of a compound. I know of only one rhyming example of short non-compounded *te*, in a *dán grádha* in *ógláchas* attributed in BOCD to Cú Chonnacht Ó Cléirigh:

*Moille mé ná crann re sruth; atá mo ghuth ar mo bhreith; / dá mbeidís bruit Leithe Cuinn / fá mo dhruim, do bheith sé te (bhreith : te) (DG 8, ll. 13-16), 'I am more sluggish than a tree drifting away with the stream; my guilt has caught up with me; [only] if I were swathed with all the cloaks in Leath Cuinn would I feel warm'*

This single rhyming example, appearing as it does in a metrically loose composition, may not be a reliable indicator of bardic usage, but combined with the examples of compounded *te* given above, I think it is clear that a form of the adj. *té* with a short vowel was familiar to bardic poets.<sup>15</sup> The form with a short vowel is that most familiar in LModIr, but note the following post-classical spellings of *té*: *do luidheadh an tí si, do bhí té, láidir o sbioraid, a n-uamhaidh lán do shneachta* (BSF, ll. 1827-9), 'that person, who was hot, would lie strong of spirit in a cave full of snow';<sup>16</sup> (from Eugene O'Growney's word-list of late nineteenth-century Meath Irish; the reference was supplied by Liam Breatnach) *thá an lá d[ocarach] té* (O'Growney 1900, 158), 'the day is very hot'. Note too that, though the headword in Dinneen's dictionary is *te*, he gives *té* as a variant form.

(7) só/so 'this'

All of the examples of rhyming *só* from Clr verse in Breatnach 2003, 137-8 are with the 3 sing. masc. conjugated preposition *dó*. These rhymes are not, however, diagnostic for vowel-length, as *dó* has a variant form *do*, as is clear from BST 193.19 and the following two examples (both internal rhymes from poems in *brúilingeacht*):

*Turas na hanma ar cuairt chugad, / a thruaill fhallsa fhalamh, / budh cuairt chaorach dho<sup>17</sup> fā dheireadh / a ccaomhthach con alladh<sup>18</sup> (dho : con) (Ó Cuív 1950, ll. 17-20), 'The visit of the soul*

15 IGT ii §82 may also provide evidence for the variants *té/te*: after the declension of *lá té* 'hot day' has been illustrated, it is remarked *lá te, deoch the, inann ghabhaid 'lá te, deoch the, they are declined in the same way'. Lá te* might be interpreted as a variant of *lá té*, but it is not unusual for the headword or -phrase of a paradigm to be repeated in this fashion in IGT ii (cf. §81, for example).

16 Note spellings without a length-mark in the same text, e.g. *Do bhí féin \*7 a chompānach ag siubhal slēibhe lá te samhraidh* (ll. 2268-9), 'He and his companion were walking in the mountains on a hot summer's day'.

17 Note the masculine conjugated preposition referring to fem. *ainim* 'soul' (see IGT ii §34). *Ainim/anam* has both fem. and masc. forms (see IGT ii §§8, 11, 17, 19, 34).

18 The MSS read *allaidh* and *allaidh* (?) here. Though *allaidh* is the expected form of the adjective, it will not make

to you, O false, empty vessel, would be like the last visit of a sheep to the society of a wolf'

*tocht tarin tegh ni budh tuirseac / ac nac beg do a ndobart (tocht : do) (ABM 223.21ef), 'it would not be tiresome to describe the house [further]; but have I not said enough on this matter?'*

In LModIr, the 3 sg. masc. conjugated preposition *do* is found in contemporary Munster Irish (Ua Súilleabháin 1994 §6.8).<sup>19</sup>

With regard to the demonstrative pronoun, metrical evidence is, indeed, forthcoming to demonstrate the existence of *so* (short vowel) in Clr. The first three examples are taken from poems in *brúilingeacht*, the following four from poems in *dán díreach*. All are internal rhymes.

*gell ac dol ó chách dot chleirchecht / mur so a-tá do thúatacht (dol : so) (ABM 213.17gh), 'all give the palm to your clergy, likewise are your lay people' (cf. the same internal rhyme in Ó Cuív 1950, ll. 21-2, *LBranch* 20.11ab, *IBP* 37.4ab)*

*ni fhuil so ara neart dod neimced / ben do chor ad comar (so : chor) (ABM 223.11cd), 'a comparison of you to another woman is only valid by your permission' (cf. the same internal rhyme in *ABM* 67.31ab)*

*croch ar ceann gach conaire, / ag so a gheall ar ghaduighe (croch : so) (O'Reilly 1.6cd), 'a gallows for every path, this is how he repays a thief'*

*Ag so an chomhairle go gclaon / fan dobhuingthe sos ná srian (so : sos), 'Look at my perverse ways [better 'behold the perverse intent'] so impatient of check or control' (*AiD* 51.6ab)*

*Mar so im cheann ar gcaomhanta / dearbh a-nos do naoimhfhearta (so : a-nos), 'Prove (O Mary!) thy holy power in saving us' (*AiD* 60.16ab)*

*Ni hé so a-bháin do-berair / a crodh leisín ndaimh ndoiligh (so : crodh) (ABM 263.12ab), 'Not only this: his cattle are taken by the difficult poet-band'*

*Go dtí so gan doilgheas daoibh / - ós ort as oircheas a úidh - / suas don deaghbhragh, a shiur shéimh, / an t-iul réidh do dhearbhadh dhúin (so : ort), 'May it be easy for thee – for it should be thy care – to show me the smooth path to the palace above, dear sister' (McKenna 1925, quatrain 6 = *DiD* 51.6)*

In *ABM* 323.5, *cnó : so* is probably a mistake for nom. pl. *cno* (see *IGT* ii §203) : *so*.

*comhardadh brisde*, as the metre requires in this poem, with *fhalamh*. I know of no evidence of a variant form *alladh*. Perhaps read *alla*, a variant of *allaidh* sometimes found in MSS. I have no rhyming examples of *alla* in bardic poetry, however, which could confirm the existence of this form in Clr.

19 Unfortunately, the existence of an accepted variant of *dó* 'to him' with a short vowel in Clr means that the rhyme adduced by Breatnach (2014, 209-10) to demonstrate that the stressed vowel of *aná* 'thus, therefore, so, then' was long in Clr is, in fact, inconclusive for vowel-length: *Ó seangDhubhda sunna-na* [following Breatnach, read *sunna 'ná*]. *urra an gha deaghbhulga dhó*, 'the mastery (?) of the good "ga bulga" belongs to him, graceful Ó Dubhda there' (McKenna's translation) (*BST* 225.24). Here the *uaitne shlán* between 'ná and *dhó* is not conclusive as to vowel-length, as *dó* has a form with a short vowel. Taking 'ná and *dhó* as having long vowels, one must indeed read *gá* in the second line for *aicill*-rhyme between that word and *aná*, as Breatnach observes, but taking them as having short vowels, one could retain *ga* with a short vowel in the second line.

*Na fola saora a[s] sé a suim / mar nach faghaid a bhfoghlaim / tiagaid so a tteirce tora[i]dh / cnó gan eit(h)ne a n-ionomh[ai]l(a), 'As the noble kindreds are not educated – this is the point of what I am saying – they yield less fruit; they resemble nuts without kernels' (cf. the internal rhyme nom. pl. *cno* : *so* in DiD 9.7cd)*

In contrast, unambiguous rhyming examples of *só* are difficult to come by.<sup>20</sup> Liam Breatnach draws my attention to a *dán grádha* (*ógláchas*) attributed to Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh in which *só* rhymes with *gó* 'falsehood':

*Dar fia féin do b'ait, / a ghlac ghlan gan ghó; gidh eadh, ar do bhás / ná cluineadh Cáit só (ghó : só) (DG 19, ll. 25-8; see also Mac Craith 1982-3), 'Indeed it would be pleasant, O pale palm without falsehood; be that as it may, on your life don't let Cáit hear of this'*

Once again, however, as this is in relaxed metre, the evidence is not conclusive that *só* was permitted in strict verse, though I think it suggests as much.

Examples of the spelling *só* indicate that, as in the case of *do/dó*, *só* survived alongside the variant with a short vowel in EModIr. Indeed, the variation in vowel-length may have continued into LModIr. For examples of the spelling *só* in transcripts of bardic poems, see *IBP* 55.4b, *ABM* 410.4b and *ABM* 234.8a. In addition to the spellings cited by Breatnach (2003, 137), note also (from an Elizabethan (?) catechism) *tar eis na beathadh só* (de Brún 1987, 58);<sup>21</sup> (from the 1639 *Catechismus* of Theobald Stapleton, 22) *na dhiaigh só* 'after this', (24) *do hoibreag só* 'that this was done';<sup>22</sup> (from a 1650 translation of a religious work) *ní mhairfeadh combuan \*7 so* [MS *só*] *ó aimsir Chríost (BNChr, ll. 2214-15)*, 'it would not have remained as fast as this from the time of Christ', *Óir as mó an t-uathbhás \*7 an ghráin chuireas ar neach smuaineadh orra so* [MS *só*] *iná an dúil nó an taithneamh do-gheibh as smuaineadh orra* (ibid., ll. 5346-8), 'For greater is the horror and fear that thinking about these gives one than the desire or pleasure one gets from thinking about them';<sup>23</sup> (from a mid-eighteenth century copy of an early eighteenth-century tale written in Co. Armagh) *go nuige seó* (*EAMG*, 125);<sup>24</sup> (from a copy of the tale *Eachtra Aodha Duibh* found in a MS written in 1823 by Tomás Mágh Geatheogáin of Co. Limerick (?)) *suíge ar bhruach na faille seó agus fuireach ann* (Ó Cuív 1967-8, 42), 'to sit on the edge of this cliff and wait there', *gurrab olc an áit seó ionna ttángamair chum deóruígeacht anocht* (ibid., 44), 'wretched is this place in which we have wandered tonight', *é seó an dún ar a bhfuil ár ttriall* (ibid., 49), 'this is the fort that we are heading for';<sup>25</sup> (from a nineteenth-century MS probably written by the Dundalk scholar, Nicholas O'Kearney) *Is iongnadh libh seó, acht ge gur budh iongnadh, is fíor é* 'you wonder at this, and though it is a wonder it is true' (Ó Buachalla 1970, 90), *an fear a rinn seó, agus a dhéanfas tuilleadh* 'the man who did this, and who will do more' (ibid., 91), *ma dúbhairt se seó, dúbhairt an file ceádna...* 'But if he said this, the same poet said...' (Ó Buachalla 1970, 93); (from an early nineteenth-century Tipperary MS) *Barantus Mhurartach O Hirille an só síos mar leanas* (Ní

20 By 'unambiguous rhyming examples', I mean to exclude rhymes such as *dó* : *só*, where *do* : *so* can be read without difficulty.

21 Contrast *ansa mbeathaid so* on p. 57 of the same text.

22 Contrast *gur cheilis so* (p. i), 'that you hid this', and *ar an abhar so* (p. 24) 'for this reason', etc.

23 Contrast l. 2155 *Ag so go deimhin an naoimtheagasg úd as faobhraige iná gach claidheamh dófhaobhrach*, 'This is certainly that holy teaching which is sharper than deep-cutting sword' and l. 5353 *As so dob fhéidir leis na daoineibh ainbhíosaacha a mheas...* 'From this the ignorant people could judge...'

24 Contrast p. 122 *go nuige seó*.

25 Contrast p. 41 *gurrab é seó t'fiadhach déagheannach ar an saoghal so*, 'this is your last hunt in this world' and p. 49 *an laoch lánchumasach seo* 'this able warrior', etc.



Shéaghda 1976, 114; supplied by Liam Breatnach), 'this is the warrant for Murartach Ó hRille as follows',<sup>26</sup> (from a Co. Cork MS dated 1834-5) *gurab uathbhásaidhe é só ioná an scéal eile* 'this is more hideous than the other [anecdote]' (Buttimer 1997, 60).<sup>27</sup> In LModIr, Douglas Hyde reports that the *o* in *seo* was long in his 'native dialect of Mid-Connacht' (1906, i, 397). In Tír Chonaill Seosamh Laoide remarks that *seo* is 'often lengthened to *seó* before a vowel', an example being *seó anois* 'here now, come now, come! come' (Laoide 1913, 58, 164-5).<sup>28</sup> For the dialect of Iorras Aithneach, Ó Curnáin reports (2007, ii, 1313): 'I have one instance of *o*: [in the proximate demonstrative] in my notes: *bə jo: e· d'e k'e:di:n' badh eobh é Dé Céadaoin*. This may be attributable to the acoustic effect (on my ears) of the prevocalic position of /ow/ or /ou/.' One should, indeed, be particularly cautious interpreting the spelling *seó* with a length-mark in MSS, as it could conceivably represent a short diphthong as well as /o:/. Short of unambiguous rhyming examples or clear evidence from the modern dialects, I think the question of whether long *só* survived into LModIr must remain open.

(10) *danó (nó) / dano (no)* 'then'

The evidence presented above that *so* had both a form with a short vowel and (probably) a form with a long vowel in CIr is of significance in attempting to determine whether historical *danó* (reduced to *nó* or *no*) had a long vowel in the bardic dialect. All of the CIr rhyming examples known to me, with a single doubtful exception (discussed below), including that cited at Breatnach 2003, 139, are with *so* (see *DiD* 58.29bd, *ABM* 206.6bd, 217.25cd, *AiD* 33.8cd, 34.17cd, and Fraser and O'Keefe 1931, poem 8.5cd, .9cd). As such, they are at best ambiguous for vowel-length. The doubtful example of rhyming *nó* presents a number of difficulties:

*A Īosa, nī haithreach libh, / tuguis neart dó ar na dúilibh; beag más mhō bhur bhfearta féin; uaibhsi, nō [MS na], eachtra an fhíréin,* 'O Jesus, you do not regret it: you gave him power over nature. Scarcely greater are your own miracles. His wondrous feats have you, indeed, for author' (*Dán na mBráthar* 18.24)

Though the poem, attributed to simply to 'Ó Cléirigh', is *dán díreach*, here *uaibhsi* (line d) is left without a rhyming partner in line c, the metrical fault of *anocht*. In addition, the MS reads *na* and not *no* or *nó* in line c, though the sense favours an emendation to *no/nó* and the corruption is easily explicable as a substitution of '*ná* 'than' for *nó*'. The editor of the poem suggests reading cd as *suail más mhó bhur bhfearta féin; is uaibh, nó, eachtra an fhíréin*. Though this would fulfil the requirements of *dán díreach*, it is without MS authority. If *nó* does indeed have a long vowel here note the *breacadh* (superfluous rhyme) between *dó* (line b) : *mhó* (line c) : *nó* (line d), which might have been intended as compensation for the metrical fault of *anocht* here (see Ní Dhomhnaill 1975 §§94a, 102, 106). Despite the difficulties involved, this rhyme seems to be diagnostic for a long vowel in *nó*. Note that though this word is commonly spelt without a length-mark in MSS (e.g. *BST* 238.10, where the MS reads *no no*), the vowel is sometimes marked long, e.g. *nó nō* (: *so*) *dénuidh mar a-dér* (TCD 1378 (H 5. 6), 208; from a transcript prepared by the Irish Department of Trinity College, Dublin), 'then do as I will say', and *nó nō bá roidhíomhaoin a stiúradh* (*BNChr*, l. 7135),

26 Contrast *ann so síos* in the same MS (Ní Shéaghda 1976, 114).

27 Contrast p. 60 *ag so an gearán do rin sí*, 'this is the complaint she made'; p. 61 *d'fhreagar si mur so iad*, 'she answered them thus', *nach é so mhacso [sic]*, 'is this not my son...?'

28 But note de Búrca's remark (1958 §94) on the alteration between /əu/ and /oh/ in *s(e)o* and other words in the Irish of Tourmakeady ('In utterances, [əu] ... frequently replaces o before a pause in roh/rəu *raibh*, s'oh/s'əu *s(e)o*, and before a vowel, e.g. N'i: rəu e:Nin'ə ru:m ní *raibh aonduine romham*) and the quotation from Ó Curnáin 2007 in this paragraph.

'for otherwise it would be useless to guide it'. For LModIr, both Dinneen's and Ó Dónaill's dictionaries give only *nó* (Dinneen 1927, s.v.; Ó Dónaill 1977, s.v. 2 *nó*). I have no metrical evidence that would support a form with a short vowel.

In summary: It appears likely that CIr had two forms of (1) the 3 sg. fem. conjugated preposition of *de/do*, *di* and *dí*, and (2) the 3 sg. masc. conjugated preposition of *de*, *de* and *dé*. In addition, CIr had two forms of the 3 sg. masc. conjugated preposition of *do*, *do* and *dó*. It is possible (5) *i lé* had a long vowel in CIr, but the sole metrically-conclusive example known to me comes from a late poem and is difficult to interpret. CIr verse had both (6) *té* 'hot' and, at least in compounds and probably also independently, *te*. Metrical evidence confirms the existence of (7) short *so* 'this' in CIr verse, but a single rhyming example and orthographical evidence suggests a variant with a long vowel may have remained current in CIr and EModIr more generally. In the sole diagnostic rhyming example known to me, (8) *sé* 'this' has a long vowel. The vowel in CIr (10) *nó* was also probably long.

The shortening of the vowel in *dí*, *dé*, *dó*, *só* and *té* is attested, therefore, in the EModIr period, but both the forms with a long vowel and the short variants of these words survived into LModIr. Breatnach (2003, 139) suggests that *dé* developed a short form through analogy with the simple preposition *de* (and a similar explanation could be proposed for *do*, with *di* being an analogical development influenced by the shortening in both these forms). Alternatively, the development of a form with a short vowel in the case of *di/dí*, *de/dé* and *do/dó* could be explained through the influence of the forms combined with the appropriate *notae augentes*, *di-se*, *dei-sean* and *do-san*.<sup>29</sup> A further stimulus to the development of short *do* and *di* may have been the short vowels found in other persons in the conjugated forms of the preposition *do* in CIr: 1 sg. *damh*, 2 sg. *duit / dit* etc., 2 pl. *duibh* (as well as *dúibh* and *daoibh*) (see *BST* 193.18-20).<sup>30</sup> In the case of *so/só*, the development of the short form is explicable through analogy with the enclitic *-so* (Breatnach 2003, 139).<sup>31</sup> The development of a short form of the adjective *té* is harder to explain. Jürgen Uhlich has suggested that *te* may have developed a short form under the influence of the abstract *teas* 'heat' (Breatnach 2003, 140). I propose that the short form may have developed as a back-formation from the disyllabic declensional forms of *té* with vowel-hiatu, in which one would expect the long vowel to be shortened (at least in CIr<sup>32</sup>), giving gen. sing. fem., nom./acc./dat. pl. *te''e*, from which a radical

29 As far as I know, the vowel is normally short before the *notae augentes* in the earlier language (see McCone 1994, 89, 187; *GOI*, 274), though Liam Breatnach informs me that there are examples of spellings in Early Irish manuscripts (pre-1200) where the long vowel is retained. [Breatnach also draws my attention to variation in the length of the vowel of \*dó\* + \*nota augens\* in the rhymes \*fossad : dossam\* \(Best, Bergin and O'Brien 1954, ll. 3605-8\) and \*bó-som : dó-som\* \(Clifford 2007, 23, quatrain 2\).](#) The vowel is normally short before the *notae augentes* in CIr, but examples where the long vowel is retained are also attested. For *di-se*, see *DiD* 99.33 (= *IGT* ii, exx 170, 1481), where *dhi-si* makes *uaitne shlán* with *Aise : deise : deise* and *aicill*-rhyme with *cris-se*, and *isi : disí* (*BST* 208.8); for *dí-se*, see *dí-se : dí-s-[s]e* (*ABM* 193.22) and the loose rhyme *dhísi : chíche* (Macbain and Kennedy 1894, 224-32, quatrain 35cd). For *do-san*, see *IGT* ii, ex. 341 *dosan : Lughnasadh* and ex. 1939 *dhosan : fosadh*; for *dó-san*, see *TD* 32.17cd *dósan : sósar* and *ABM* 239.30cd *soiser* (read *sósar*) : *dosan* (read *dó-san*). I have no rhyming example of *dé-sean*; for an example of *dei-sean*, see the loose rhyme *deisean : gcreideann* (McGrath 1943-4, poem 1.56cd). [All of the rhyming examples of the forms with long vowels of the conjugated prepositions in question combined with \*notae augentes\* known to me are from late-sixteenth-/seventeenth-century poems.](#)

30 Indeed, the short vowel in 2 pl. *duibh*, heard in West Kerry today (Ó Sé 2000, 200), is itself probably analogical from *duit* (Bergin 1916, 168).

31 Furthermore, as is clear from some of the late spelling cited under (7) *só/so* above, once the distinction between the demonstrative pronoun and the enclitic had broken down, the demonstrative pronoun with a long vowel is also found used for the expected short enclitic form.

32 See Ó Cuív 1990, 101-3, McManus 1996, 181-2, McManus 2005, 151-2, and especially Mac Cárthaigh 2014, ll. 875-9 and notes.

form *te* could have been extrapolated.

While the analogical explanations proposed above reasonably account for the emergence of the short forms examined here, it is difficult to imagine, as Liam Breatnach points out to me, that EModIr could have developed a category of stressed monosyllables ending in a short vowel in such a limited number of words if such a category did not already exist in the language. There is no evidence that Old or Middle Irish had such a category (Breatnach 2003).<sup>33</sup> An explanation for how such a category could have developed in EModIr may lie in phonological developments within the spoken Irish of the Late Middle/EModIr, namely, the loss of final *-dh*, *-gh* and *-th*. It appears that by the beginning of the fourteenth century *-dh* and *-gh* were commonly not realised at all (McManus 1994, 351-2; Breatnach 1952, 56-7), while *th* had already come to be pronounced /h/ and hence often /Ø/ by that period (McManus 1994, 351; O'Rahilly 1930, 173-4; Breatnach 1952, 52). This resulted in a situation in which EModIr had, indeed, a significant number of monosyllables which could be realised with a final short vowel (e.g. *blogh*, *fiodh*, *modh*, *sraith*, *sruth* etc.), though the historical final fricatives *-dh*, *-gh* and *-th* were still preserved in orthography and in the conservative pronunciation of the CIr literary dialect (McManus 1994, 352-3).<sup>34</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the short variants of the words discussed here did not form an isolated category of stressed monosyllables ending in a vowel in EModIr; in other words, in EModIr there is no phonotactic constraint against stressed monosyllables ending in a short vowel.

### Abbreviations

*ABM* Damian McManus and Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh, *A bardic miscellany*. Dublin 2010.

*BC3* Charles Plummer, 'Betha Caoimghin (III)' in *Bethada Náem nÉirenn/Lives of Irish saints. Volume 1*, 155-67. Oxford 1922.

*BNChr* Pádraig Ó Súilleabháin, *Buaidh na Naomhchroiche*. Dublin 1972.

*BSF* Pádraig Ó Súilleabháin, *Beatha San Froinsias*. Dublin 1957.

*BST* Lambert McKenna, *Bardic Syntactical Tracts*. Dublin 1944.

*Butlers* James Carney, *Poems on the Butlers of Ormond, Cahir, and Dunboyne (A.D. 1400-1650)*. Dublin 1945.

*Dán na mBráthar* Cuthbert Mhág Craith, *Dán na mBráthar Mionúr*. 2 vols. Dublin 1967.

*DG* Thomas Francis O'Rahilly, *Dánta Grádha*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Cork 1926.

*DiD* Láimhbheartach Mac Cionnaith (ed.), *Dioghluim Dána*. Dublin 1938.

*EAMG* N.J. A. Williams, 'Eachtra Áodh Mhic Goireachtaidh', *Éigse* 13 (1969-70), 111-42.

*GGBM* Parthalán Mac Aogáin, *Graiméir Ghaeilge na mBráthar Mionúr*. Dublin 1968.

*IBP* Osborn Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry*. Dublin 1970.

*IGT* Osborn Bergin, 'Irish Grammatical Tracts', supplements to *Ériu* 8 (1916), 9 (1921-3), 10 (1926-

33 It has been suggested that the shortening of *-áe* to *-a* in Old Irish *gáe* 'spear' (CIr *ga/gaoi*) goes back to Middle Irish: Breatnach (1994, 233) draws attention to the spelling *ga* in the Book of Leinster, but notes that the version of the same poem in Rawlinson B502 reads *gáe*. If *gáe* had developed a short form *ga* in Middle Irish, some account of how such a form could develop in the language given the absence of a category of stressed monosyllables ending in a short vowel in Old Irish will have to be provided. In the case of the Book of Leinster spelling *ga*, one might wonder whether this is in fact an example of *gá*, a variant form of *gáe* attested in Middle Irish (see Breatnach 2014, 210 fn. 21); there is no metrical impediment to this reading. For the shortening of *gáe* to *ga*, see O'Rahilly 1946, 461-2 and McManus 1994, 373. For notice of a future study of this problem, see Breatnach 2014, 210 fn. 21.

34 Ó Murchú (1997, 184-5) points out that compensatory vowel-lengthening after the loss of final *-gh/-dh* is not a regular development in words like *ogh*, *tiugh*, *fiodh*, *modh*: *modh* was traditionally pronounced /mu/ in Munster and Connacht. (I am grateful to Liam Breatnach for this reference.) Note, for example, the rhyme *mogh* : *cor* in *Nua-Dhuanaire* 1, poem 9, ll. 5-6, 9-10. As well as being dropped altogether, *-gh/-dh* is also sometimes realised as /g/ and /v/ (see McManus 1994, 352-3 and O'Rahilly 1932, 53-75).

8), 14 (1946), 17 (1955).

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[LCS Paul Walsh, \*Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne: an account of the Mac Sweeney families in Ireland, with pedigrees\*. Dublin 1920.](#)

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TD Eleanor Knott, *A bhfuil againn dár chum Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (1550-1591)*. 2 vols. London 1922-6.

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