# Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 36

Records of the discussions in the Conference Room on 16-05-2018

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Fangzhe Qiu, Siobhán Barrett, Theodorus Fransen, Romanas Bulatovas, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Apologies: Bernhard Bauer, Daniel Watson

**Practicalities**
David has now caught up with the minutes and they've all been sent out to the group.

David has also taken a training course on the new EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which are very strict indeed. He wonders how a company like Facebook could operate under such laws. It also affects university staff dealing with sensitive data, which must now be handled with (even) greater care.[1]

**No epenthetic vowel (§111)**
"Development of Secondary Vowels" We would prefer changing the title to epenthesis or anaptyxis. What is the difference between epenthesis and anaptyxis? Anaptyxis is the insertion of a vowel, whereas epenthesis is insertion in general. So epenthesis of a vowel and anaptyxis would mean the same thing.

"A nasal or liquid (*r, l*) which, owing to the loss of vowels in interior or final syllables, comes to stand between consonants or in final position after a consonant, retains its consonantal character only: …" This is again fundamentally a diachronic matter, but – like syncope – it has synchronic implications, so it is right to treat it here. It is somewhat confusing that Thurneysen begins by discussing the cases where there is no vowel insertion.

"1. When it follows an identical consonant, e.g. **do·ar-r-chét** (§ 109)." This is correct and the example indeed illustrates it, but it is not an ideal example, as it requires double syncope: *\*to-are-ro-kanto-*.

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[1] We wonder whether Theodorus will sue us for revealing the fact that he had a birthday in the previous minutes.

"2. When *n* or *m* is preceded by a vowel + *r, l, n,* or *d…*" The formulation is misleading, as for *n* only the sequence *Vrn* is actually possible. It would be better to make that explicit. The sequences *ln* and *dn* would have undergone further changes in the prehistory of the language.

We wonder whether the sequence *Vln(C)* is possible, e.g. in the comparative of *álaind*. Would this be **\*\*áilndiu*? No, there is actually very early *n*-deletion in such cases, e.g. Wb. *áildiu*, and abstract *áilde*.

In Modern Irish, the examples cited by Thurneysen (*form*, *ainm*, etc.) are all pronounced with an epenthetic vowel, i.e. /forəm, anʲəmʲ/, but whatever the phonetic reality may have been, these syllables were not considered to have a vowel for metrical purposes in Old Irish.

"3. When the preceding consonant disappears in accordance with § 125…" This condition is not synchronically meaningful, but may work diachronically.

"4. When the nasals stand before homorganic mediae…" Yes, this is correct, although some reductions also take place in these clusters (as Thurneysen acknowledges in the small-print). Mediae is an older term for voiced stops.

The German version adds the word *dauernd* 'permanently, continual' in the first lines of this paragraph, which is helpful (so the English would then read: "… permanently retains its consonantal character only: …"). Conditions one and two are merged and, in general, there are fewer examples. Also, he had *δ* instead of *d*, and left out *n* (possible to avoid the 'cluster' *nn*) as a possible letters in the sequence.

**Epenthetic vowels (§112)**
"Nasals and liquids in this position otherwise assume a syllabic (vocalic) character, and a secondary vowel then develops before them." This is correct, but this is a diachronic description.

"This development is most clearly shown when the lost vowel originally followed them." Yes, otherwise the epenthetic vowel takes the place of the lost vowel, making it far less obvious.

The word *domun* is actually attested as monosyllabic *domn* early on, in genuinely archaic texts (further literature on this and related phenomena in D. Stifter, 'Towards the linguistic dating of Early Irish law texts', in: A. Ahlqvist & P. O'Neill (eds.), *Medieval Irish Law. Text and Context*, Sydney 2013, 185–186).[2]

The word *cétal* illustrates the regular development of the root \**kantlo-*, which we have often discussed of late. If *céol* is indeed related to this same root (as we hypothesised previously), it must have somehow split off from the paradigm at some stage. The Welsh cognate *cathl* (MW *cathyl / kathil*) nicely shows the monosyllabic development of the word, at least in a phonological sense, although it is phonetically disyllabic (and was written as such in Middle Welsh, but it is noted that such words were considered to be monosyllabic for metrical purposes even at that stage of the language).

The Welsh *eglwys* shows that the direct preform of Irish *eclais* must have been \**eglēs*.

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[2] Incidentally, this article, deplorably outdated five years on, was the starting point for *ChronHib*.

The word *arathar*, gen. *arathair* (Welsh *aradr*, MW *aradyr*) < *\*arathr̥* < *\*aratron* is interesting in that it shows us that syncope took place whilst the word was still disyllabic and therefore did not affect this word. Epenthesis took place after syncope.

The word *sonairt* is a compound of *so-* 'good' and *nert* 'strength'. The derived abstract *\*sonerte >* *\*sonr̥te > sonərte* is an example of where the epenthetic vowel is not as obvious, since it appears where a vowel was previously syncopated. Why is the *n* not palatal? Aaron Griffith explored this in detail in an article in *Ériu 57*. Thurneysen missed some subtle subrules, which influence whether these clusters end up being palatal or not. This is all clarified in Griffith's article. The cited form from Würzburg *sonirte* is ambiguous, but all the other attestations clearly show that the *n* is not palatal.

"The retention of the interior vowel in **arathar, forcetal forcital** 'teaching', and the like, shows that in final syllables too this anaptyxis is later than the syncope of interior syllables. At the period of syncope the second vowel in *\*arathr, *forcetl*, etc., belonged to the final syllable, and accordingly was not syncopated. This fact often helps to distinguish primary from secondary vowels in final syllables." This is correct.

Finally, it is noted that unlike in Welsh and in some very archaic Irish texts (a bare few examples from poems believed to go back to the 6th, or perhaps the early 7th century) these epenthetic vowels were considered to be fully real by the early Irish, as they count for metrical purposes.

**Elision and loss of hiatus (§133)**
The title "Vowel Contraction" is rather unspecific. Thurneysen is mostly talking about loss of hiatus and elision, so that would make for a more appropriate title.

"Where two vowels have come together in a word which still has more than two syllables after syncope, these vowels frequently coalesce to form a single syllable." This is basically correct, but his examples are not very good. A good example would have been *coäir* 'correct', dat. pl. *córaib*, which – synchronically speaking – offers a clear case of the loss of hiatus whenever another syllable is added to the word within the paradigm and in derivation. Diachronically, the second syllable was simply syncopated as usual, removing the hiatus. However, Thurneysen does not use this example.

"In our texts the uncontracted and contracted forms are sometimes found side by side…" This can hardly be a regular development. Let us go through his examples.

The word *loathar* 'basin', Middle Breton *louazr*, Gaulish *lautron* < Proto-Celtic *\*lou̯atrom* (a native word) is actually from an intermediate *\*loäthr > loäthər*, as described in the previous paragraph. As such, syncope failed to remove the hiatus, as the word was disyllabic when syncope operated.

Within the Old Irish period there are two ways in which hiatus is lost: 1) synchronically: hiatus is lost within paradigms whenever a syllable is added to a word with hiatus, 2) diachronically: hiatus is lost altogether over time (but this does not happen in Scottish Gaelic!). The example of disyllabic *lóthar* must be due to this secondary, diachronic loss of hiatus.

The word *impuud* is a regular compound of *soüd*, the verbal noun of *soäid* However, hiatus should only be allowed in stressed syllables in Old Irish, so there should be no hiatus in *impúd*. David believes that the spelling *impuud* probably indicates that this word had hiatus (i.e. *impuüd*) nonetheless and that it is

due to analogy with *soüd* and the verb *soäid*. However, why is it not written *<ou>* then? Moreover, the spelling *<uu>* could also represent *ú*.

The word *erchoat* / *erchót* is the verbal noun of *ar·coäd*. The hiatus was probably analogically restored on the basis of the verb. It is wondered whether *erchoat* might not also be an archaism, but it cannot be regular given the rule of early syncope of a vowel before *\*u̯* we discussed last week: *\*are-chou̯ed > \*ar-chu̯ed > \*ar-ched*.

It is raised that there is a good number of examples of hiatus in non-initial syllables in names in Blathmac, but these are Hebrew names and generally seem to have been stressed on the final syllable, which is where the hiatus occurs. Since they are learned forms, they say nothing about the spoken language.

There really should not be any cases of regular hiatus in unstressed syllables, although analogy seems to have restored hiatus to these syllables in some cases.

In the case of *óclach* there are actually no attestations with hiatus spellings. It is indeed an old compound of *oäc* with some second element, but the hiatus was apparently never analogically restored on the basis of the simplex.

As to *núabla* 'new flames', would we actually expect this to turn up as a three-syllable word?

In general it may be stated that Thurneysen was not very clear on what he discussed in this paragraph. There are many processes involved in vowel contraction and all of them need to be made more explicit and better illustrated.

"For the form of the prepositions **dí fo ro to** before vowels, see §§ 831, 837, 852, 855." Does he refer to the shape of these preverbs in verbal composition here? It is not very clear to us what he is on about.

"Other vowel contractions, which date from before the period of the written language, lie outside the scope of the present work." This is a rather obscure statement.

The German version has an extra few lines, which deal with a particular issue with the verb *ibid* 'to drink'. Thurneysen rightly left it out of his *GOI* since it does not deviate from the general behaviour.

**More 'vowel contractions' (§144)**
"Even disyllabic words are liable to contraction when weakly stressed…" What does this mean? Thurneysen includes conjugated preposition here, but we consider these to be fully stressed (they take part in rhyme), not weakly stressed. We also wonder how he decides whether a word like *dóib* is monosyllabic or disyllabic outside of metrical texts. We also note that whilst *díb* does indeed look monosyllabic, it seems impossible to determine whether *díib* was not monosyllabic as well. These issues can only be decided on the basis of metrical evidence, although even that is not always perfect (for Blathmac these words could optionally be either mono- or disyllabic, depending on his metrical needs – as we will discuss in more detail in a moment). To be of an use, Thurneysen should have indicated the source of the forms that he cited.

The conjunction *dús* from *du ḟius* 'in order to know', which has the Breton cognate *daoust*, does have a good claim for being weakly stressed in Old Irish, since conjunctions are as a rule unstressed.

The examples with *alaille* must be caused by the fact that this word is stressed on the second syllable, meaning that both the vowel of the preposition and the first vowel of *alaille* would have been unstressed, making them liable for elision.

"Accordingly, in verse an unstressed initial vowel after a word ending in a vowel need not count as a syllable." Yes, that is correct.

"In such positions the form of the article **na** instead of **inna** (§ 467) may have developed." Yes, this probably played a part in this development, although other contexts and factors were also involved, as David has been arguing for some years now.

"Pretonic **dia** (pres. **di** or **do** with possess. or rel. pron. **a**), **foa fua** and the like appear to be nearly always monosyllabic in verse (cp. the spelling **díar** 'to our' Wb. 4ᵇ17); **ce ci** 'though' with following initial *a* occurs both as a monosyllable and as a disyllable…" Well, it rather depends on the poet as well. Moreover, the spelling *díar* does not necessarily indicate that the word was monosyllabic (if that is what Thurneysen intended to posit, at any rate).

In Blathmac (cf. David's 2014 article on the language of Blathmac, 5.8) hiatus is essentially optional and therefore linguistically meaningless. The conjugated prepositions can be either monosyllabic or disyllabic, depending on the poet's metrical needs. This probably means that hiatus had already been lost in these forms in his spoken language, allowing him to include both the spoken, monosyllabic forms and the archaic, disyllabic ones. This ambiguity also goes for prepositions followed by the possessive pronoun, which may count as two syllables for Blathmac. By contrast, in the *Féilire Óengusso* a preposition followed by the possessive pronoun is always monosyllabic. This consistency makes it likely that the *Féilire* actually agrees with the spoken language of the time, whereas Blathmac is neither reliable nor particularly archaic in this regard.

At any rate, a much more extensive study of metrical texts is required to fully determine the status of hiatus in these forms.

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Pages read in this session: 2.
Paragraphs discussed: §§111–114.