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This contribution presents a previously unpublished didactic poem that forms part of a collection of medieval Irish medical remedies now preserved in two separate Royal Irish Academy manuscripts. The poem consists of a versified cure for headache, and calls for ivy that has been gathered from seven different types of tree to be boiled together to create a wash or lotion for the head. In addition to providing an edition and translation of the poem, the discussion also considers its wider context and offers some lexicographical notes on various terms that occur in the composition.

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A versified cure for headache and some lexicographical notes[1]

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The short poem edited and translated below is found in a compendium of remedies for various bodily ailments, broadly arranged in the *a capite ad calcem* order typical of medical treatises throughout the classical and medieval periods. The compendium in question, which is now preserved as fragments in two separate, composite manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy, was copied around the turn of the sixteenth century by Connla Mac an Leagha, a member of the hereditary medical family of that name, and apparently a practising physician himself.[2] It consists of 81 pages of frequently dense and sometimes poorly legible script, and appears to be a compilation drawing on a number of different sources, most of which are anonymous.

In two more extensive discussions of this compendium published elsewhere, I have noted that it contains several intriguing features not found in other comparable Irish-language medical works. First, either the compiler of the text, or the sources on which he drew, frequently invoke various members of the supernatural Irish race known as the Túatha Dé Danann – in particular the healer-figure, Dían Cécht – as authorities for various medical cures (HAYDEN forthc. 2019). A second point of interest is the fact that the compendium contains many attestations of terminology or expressions that

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[2] RIA MSS 24 B 3 (445), pp. 33–93, and 23 N 29 (467), ff. 1–9. For a revised collation of these fragments, which are not recognised in the RIA manuscript catalogue as forming a single text, see STIFTER 2005: 161, citing the unpublished cataloguing work of Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha. On the Mac an Leagha medical kindred and the colophon indicating that Connla was working as a physician when he copied the text, see WALSH 1947: 215–216.

are either poorly documented or entirely unrecorded in the *Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language* (eDIL) or other published lexicographical sources for the Gaelic languages. Many of these terms pertain to plants or parts of the human anatomy, but others have a relevance for the historical development and interpretation of the Gaelic languages that extends beyond the field of medicine. It is hoped, therefore, that the gradual publication of some of this material can help to shed further light on a number of obscure entries in eDIL.

A third point of significance in relation to this medical compendium is that many of the remedies in the collection are cast in verse form, and were apparently composed to serve a mnemonic or didactic purpose. I have thus far published four of these poems in their entirety, and the poem edited below provides a fifth example; however a preliminary analysis of the full compendium indicates that at least 34 such verse compositions are included in the text as a whole.[3] All of these poems, including the one published here, appear to be written in *deibide*, one of the most common metres used by Irish poets throughout the medieval period, and essentially characterised by quatrains of heptasyllabic lines with rhyme between lines a/b and c/d respectively.[4] Most are of anonymous authorship, although the final stanzas of at least two poems invoke as an authority the name of an otherwise unknown member of the Mac an Leagha family, suggesting that the author of at least some of this verse material may have been a physician belonging to the medical kindred of that name.[5]

The dating of medical poetry such as this is difficult to establish on linguistic grounds since, like other comparable examples of Irish didactic or technical verse, it is "normally written in a loose metre […] with approximate rhymes and syllable count making the wording easily modernised by later scribes without disturbing the metrical pattern" (SIMMS 2009: 59–60). Apart from the aforementioned references to an otherwise unidentified member of the Mac an Leagha family, moreover, there are few contextual clues, such as names of authors or dedicatees, provided within the poems themselves that would give any clear indication of when they might have first been composed. As a genre, however, didactic medical poetry has

[3] One poem has been published in full in HAYDEN forthc. 2019. For three further examples, as well as a more detailed discussion of the wider context for this versified medical material, see HAYDEN 2018.

[4] For a more comprehensive account of the features of this metre, see Ní DHOMHNAILL 1975: 76.

[5] For the stanzas in question, see HAYDEN 2018: 114–115. For two other examples of versified medical material found in manuscripts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one of which is associated with a member of the Mac an Leagha family, see FLOWER 1921–1923.

many parallels in both Latin and other vernacular languages, where it can be seen to have enjoyed a particular popularity from the twelfth century onwards – a period that saw an influx of new scientific knowledge via texts translated into Latin from Arabic sources for a western European audience.[6]

The poem edited here occurs in a section of Connla Mac an Leagha's medical compendium that deals with ailments affecting the head, and consists of a cure for the condition referred to as *cenngalar* (lit. 'sickness of the head', and therefore most probably some variety of headache). The page on which the poem is found (no. 44 of RIA MS 24 B 3) also includes four other prose remedies for *cenngalar* (ll. 3 and 19), *galar cinn* (l. 8) and *tinnus in cinn* (l. 22), as well as the beginning of another versified remedy that continues on to the following page. In the following edition of the poem, as well as in other citations from unpublished texts, expansions are indicated by italics, missing letters or words are supplied in square brackets, and length-marks, where not found in the manuscript, are marked using a macron over vowels. Word-division and punctuation are editorial. Obscure words or emendations designed to improve either the sense or the form of the text are discussed in the accompanying commentary. Translations are my own.

RIA MS 24 B 3, p. 44.13–18:

1	Sec*h*t n-eidind ind*est*ter dam	May seven ivies be related by me
	íccu*s* nec*h* a*r* cendgal*ar*.	which cure a person of headache.
	Edin*n* cuilin*n*, mar is luind;	Ivy of a holly, since it is pleasant;
	edi*nn* cuill, edin*n* caort[h]uind.	ivy of a hazel, ivy of a rowan.
2	Edin*n* soilech, [edinn] lim,	Ivy of a willow, ivy of an elm,
	Edi*n* scīa*ch co n*delgnib.	Ivy of a whitethorn with thorns.
	Edi*n* cl*eith*i, c*er*t a grem,	Ivy of a house-post (?), proper its use,
	g*ur*ub īat na 7 n-edin*n*.	so that those are the seven ivies.
3	Cēdg*r*inde f*oil*ci soilec*h*:	The cleansing nectar of a willow:
	b*erbtur* trīt, gan imuirec*h*,	let there be boiled in it, without delay,
	sug na sec*h*d luib*enn* gan gaid.	juice of the seven herbs without plunder.
	Dob*er*ar uile a n-aonpait.	All is put into a single skin bottle.
4	Basl*ach* dē a*r* mullac*h* an c[h]in*n*	A handful of it on the top of the head
	antan tig doig amnu*s* ind.	when a strong shooting pain comes there.
	An galur, gidmad trēn tend,	The sickness, though it were strong [and] severe,
	sl*ánaid*i na 7 n-edin*n*.	the seven ivies [are] healing.

[6] For an overview of versified medical material in Latin and other languages, with a particular emphasis on Hebrew sources, see KOZODOY 2011. On the trend for versification of technical material during the later medieval period, see also SCHULER & FITCH 1983: 21–29 and THORNDIKE 1955.

As appears to be the case with many of the other herbal remedies found in the same collection, this versified cure represents a kind of "non-theoretical medicine exclusively concerned with the therapeutic administration of naturally occurring *materia medica*" similar to that found in other vernacular medical compendia of the medieval period (HUNT 1990: ix); such collections have sometimes been described, not unproblematically, as being 'popular' in nature.[7] Most of the remedies in the Irish collection do not refer to any particular authority as a source for the doctrine, cite no particularly exotic ingredients or specific measures, and offer only very simple instructions for preparation. However, it might also be argued that this kind of imprecision in detail itself indicates that medical poems such as this were not composed with a view to providing a non-specialist or non-professional audience with the tools to carry out basic medicinal cures. To the contrary, it is probable that their author has simply presupposed a certain amount of medical knowledge on the part of his audience, and that each individual composition therefore functions "as a short-hand way of organizing and recalling a larger body of acquired knowledge [and] as a mnemonic device, supplying the experienced professional or the serious student with a kind of template to which mentally to attach the details of his specialized education" (KOZODOY 2011: 263–264).

The use of ivy (Lat. *hedera helix*; Ir. *eiden(n)*) for curing headaches is paralleled in other medical sources from the early medieval period. For example, the Old English *Herbarium*, an Anglo-Saxon medical text dated to around A.D. 1000 and translated from a fifth-century Latin work, suggests that ivy might be soaked in wine with rose juice and then rubbed on the temples and face in order to lessen the pain of a headache (VAN ARSDALL 2002: 193). I am unaware of any other medieval sources which call for seven different types of ivy to be employed for this purpose, although it should be noted that other versified recipes in this same Irish compendium begin by citing what may be a somewhat formulaic number of ingredients. Thus, for example, a cure for *lír* ('diarrhoea') begins with the words *cet[h]air luib ar līr gan locht* ('four herbs without fault for diarrhoea'), while a separate versified remedy for urinary disease begins *secht losa ar in ngalur fúail* ('seven herbs for urinary disease').[8]

Moreover, it is not clear from the context of the poem presented here whether its author understood the various types of ivy cited to be taxonomically distinct, and it is possible that the significance of the seven

[7] On the use of the term 'popular' and alternative descriptors employed for comparable vernacular recipe collections, see NIIRANEN 2014: 293–294.

[8] RIA MS 24 B 3, p. 61.5–14 and RIA MS 23 N 29, fol. 7v23–8 respectively; the latter poem is edited and translated in full in HAYDEN 2018: 112–113.

different varieties lies more in their association with particular trees. Since ivy is a climbing plant that frequently wraps itself around trees, rocks or various man-made structures, in some cases leading to competition for soil and other nutrients, it may be that it was seen to draw upon the medicinal properties of whatever plant or substance to which it became attached. In this regard, it may also be noteworthy that at least six of the seven trees mentioned in the poem were well known in Ireland from the early medieval period, and clearly acquired a degree of symbolic significance in later medieval sources. Thus the *cuilenn* 'holly', *coll* 'hazel', *cáerthann* 'rowan, mountain ash', *sail* 'willow', *lem* 'elm' and *scé* 'whitethorn, hawthorn' are all cited in a list of twenty-eight trees and shrubs, arranged in accordance with their economic value, in the eighth-century legal tract *Bretha Comaithchesa* 'The Judgements of Neighbourhod', where the first two are referred to as *airig fedo* 'nobles of the wood' and the latter four as *aithig fedo* 'commoners of the wood' (KELLY 1976).[9] This doctrine is repeated in later commentary to the grammatical compilation known as *Auraicept na nÉces*, where several of the trees in the list from the law-tract are associated with letters of the Ogam alphabet (CALDER 1917: 88–93 and 232–234).[10] The identity of the seventh plant or property associated with ivy in this poem, which is abbreviated to the letters *cli* followed by a suspension stroke, is uncertain and discussed in more detail in the textual notes below.

Textual notes:

1c: I take the final word in the cheville of this line to be the adjective given in eDIL s.v. 1 *lainn*, which has a variety of meanings including 'keen, eager' and 'bright, pleasant'. It is possible that the word *mar* is not the conjunction meaning 'as' or 'since', but rather the early form of the adjective *mór* meaning 'great' (see eDIL, s.v.), and that *is* should instead be read as the conjunction meaning 'and'; the cheville would thus mean something like 'great and pleasant'. However given that there is no length-mark over the 'a' of the word *mar* in the manuscript, I have not emended the form and have interpreted the line accordingly in the translation.

2b: In the manuscript witness, this line reads *Ed*in *scīa*ch co n*delgnib i*n*d*. The genitive singular *scíach* could be either monosyllabic or disyllabic, depending on the date of the text, with the latter being the earlier form (see

[9] On the significance of trees in early Ireland, see also LUCAS 1963 and KELLY 2000: 379–390.

[10] Lines 1147–1200 and 4242–4308 of Calder's editions of the shorter and longer recensions of the *Auraicept* respectively. On the Ogam letter-names and their purpose, see MCMANUS 1997: 34–9.

eDIL, s.v. *scé*). If one chooses not to emend the line as it appears in the manuscript witness, it might be argued that *scíach* was understood by the scribe to be monosyllabic, as this would allow for the expected seven syllables in the line; however, as has been noted above, syllable count is often only approximate in didactic poems of this kind, so this need not necessarily be a factor. Another possibility is that the form *ind* at the end of the line should be omitted altogether, as I have done in the edition given here. This form, which I interpret as the 3rd singular conjugated preposition with the literal meaning 'in(to) it' or, by extension, with the adverbial sense of 'there', seems superfluous to the meaning of the line, and moreover only rhymes imperfectly with the word *lim* at the end of the line 2a. By omitting *ind*, however, one can achieve perfect *rinn-ardrinn* rhyme between *lim* and the final syllable of *delgnib*. Interpreting *scíach* as a disyllabic form would, in this instance, also provide the ideal seven syllables expected in *deibide*-metre. One wonders whether the form *ind* was added to the end of this line as a result of a copying error, given that the same form also occurs at the end of line 4b, where it serves a clearer semantic purpose.

2c: The second word in this line is written in the manuscript as the letters *cli* with a suspension mark over the 'i'. The expansion for this is ambiguous, but clearly the word must be in the genitive case and dependent on the preceding word *edin* 'ivy'. I have noted elsewhere a comparable example found in another versified recipe from the same text (RIA MS 24 B 3, p. 66.12), which reads *bruiter ces cli-(?) is ces limh*. In that context, I interpreted the abbreviation as representing a vowel + continuant and expanded it as *clainne* (gen. sg. of *clann* 'plant' or 'plant-cuttings'),[11] thus translating the whole line as 'a basket of plant-cuttings and a basket of elm (bark?) are boiled' (HAYDEN 2018: 110 and 112). However, I also noted in that discussion that the meaning of *clann* is not very specific – a point which is problematic in the present context, since in this poem the word would appear to denote a particular kind of tree, plant or man-made structure around which ivy tends to grow, as is the case for the seven types of ivy that are listed before it.

An alternative possibility, therefore, is that the abbreviation *cli* + suspension mark stands in both instances for the word listed in eDIL under the headword 1 *clí*, which has the literal meanings of 'house-post' or 'pillar', but which could also be used metaphorically of people. The dictionary also states, however, that the term *clí* is 'appar[ently] indeclinable'; this would not suit the above attestation well, since the suspension mark in the manuscript would indicate that the word was understood to contain at least

[11] On the meaning of this term, see RUSSELL 2014.

one other syllable, and a disyllabic genitive singular form would, moreover, provide the ideal seven syllables required for the metre of the poem. One possibility is that the abbreviated form is in fact the feminine ā-stem noun *cleth*, gen. sg. *cleithe*, which carries the same literal and figurative meanings as *clí*, and is in fact equated with the latter term in O'Clery's glossary (WATKINS 1978: 156). The form *cleth* could, moreover, be more widely applied in both various compound forms and in the sense of 'tree' or 'spear'; indeed 'tree-trunk' and 'tree' are given as the primary definition of the term in eDIL.[12] The expansion of the form above as the genitive singular form *cleithe* is therefore speculative, but premised on the association between the term *cleth* with *clí*, both of which seem to have carried the meaning of either 'a house-post' or (by extension) 'a tree'.

It should be noted that eDIL also gives a separate entry for the word *clí* with the more specific meaning of 'apple-tree' on the basis of a single citation found in the grammatical compilation *Auraicept na nÉces*, which reads *quiert .i. cli .i. abull*.[13] The term *aball* 'apple-tree' is itself etymologised in this context as *clithour baisgell* ('shelter of a hind').[14] However, given the fact that this etymological association of a term *cli* and the word *aball* 'apple-tree' is tenuous, I have here opted for a more literal translation of the passage as denoting ivy that grows around a house-post. Whether such an object would have been associated with any one particular type of tree is unclear, although oak (*dair*) is one possibility. For example, a gloss on the Würzburg copy of the Epistles of St Paul (*Thes* I, 707 (33a5)) refers to a *clí darach* 'oaken pillar',[15] while various legal and literary sources refer to oak-timber used as a material in the construction of a house (*tech*).[16] These attestations accord well with the archaeological record; thus O'SULLIVAN & NICHOLLS (2011: 76) note that oak timber door-jambs on an internal door connecting a round-house with its back-house at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim have been dendrochronologically dated to AD 648.

3a: Cēdgrinde foilci: eDIL, s.v. *cétgrinne*, suggests that this word consists of the elements given under eDIL 1 *cét-* 'first, foremost' and 2 *grinde* 'a faggot, bundle' or 'a crowd, troop of soldiers', and gives four examples of the compound. In a citation from the St Gall glosses, the words *céit grinne fíno* gloss Lat. *nectar*, and are translated by Stokes and Strachan

12 See eDIL, s.v. 1 *cleth* (a).

13 eDIL, s.v. 4 *clí*; cf. CALDER 1917: 233 (ll. 4282–4283).

14 The etymology (but not the equation of the words *quiert* and *cli*) is also found in the shorter published version of the *Auraicept*: see CALDER 1917: 92–93 (ll. 1184–1185).

15 eDIL, s.v. 1 *clí*; note, however, that all other citations given under this entry provide no indication of the kind of material from which the house-post is made.

16 eDIL. s.v. *dair* II.

as 'the first droppings of wine'.[17] An Old Irish gloss on Virgil's *Eclogues* (V.71) similarly reads *nectar .i. cetgrinne .i. admirabilis saporis.* In the latter example, Lambert interprets the term *cetgrinne* as a compound based on *grinde* "'fagot, bouquet' (ce que l'on cueille ou ramasse)", and translates it as 'premier prélèvement' (LAMBERT 1986: 99 and 109).[18] The association between the element *grinde* and wine that is found in the example from the St Gall glosses is echoed in the a line of verse from the Old Irish tale *Immram Brain* that reads *óol fíno óingrindi*, which MEYER (1895: 8–9) translates as 'drinking the best of wine'.[19] Here the implication seems to be that the wine in question is made from the fermented juice of the best or first-picked (*cét-*) grapes in a gathering or crop (*grinde*). The Latin word *nectar* offers, of course, a close semantic parallel for this: for while the term originally derives from the Greek word for a fabled drink that allowed the gods to overcome death, it could also be used in relation to wine or any other sweet liquid, as well as in a transferred sense of anything deemed sweet, pleasant or delicious.[20] The *OED* (s.v. *nectar*) also specifies that in post-Classical Latin from the eighth century onwards, the word *nectar* is attested with the meaning perhaps most readily associated with it at present, namely as a (sugary or sweet) fluid secreted by plants.

The English translation of 'faggot, bundle' that is given in eDIL for the headword 2 *grinde* is, however, potentially somewhat misleading in that the English term 'faggot' might be interpreted as chiefly denoting a gathering of dry organic material to be used as firewood – a sense that is conveyed in the first definition of the word listed by the *OED* (s.v. *faggot* AI.1a), i.e. 'a bundle of sticks, twigs or brushwood tied together for use as fuel'. The definition given for the headword 2 *grinde* in eDIL appears to derive at least

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17 *Thes* II.148 (122a2).

18 Lambert also notes an example of the term *iargrinde* in a legal passage from TCD MS H 3. 18, where it appears to mean 'last collection', i.e. 'property left at death'; for the text in question, see *CIH* 574.36 (H 3. 18, 10a), and MEYER 1908: 271.

19 The more recent edition of this text by Seamus Mac Mathúna gives the reading *óol fíno cen ingrindi* 'drinking most palatable wine', based on two manuscript witnesses of the text; this requires that the word *óol*, which would have been disyllabic in the Old Irish period, be taken as a monosyllable. Mac Mathúna analyses the second element in the word *ingrindi* as the iā-stem noun *grinde* 'keenness, pleasantness, charm' (cf. *eDIL*, s.v. 1 *grinde*), to which the negative prefix *in-* has been added (thus giving a literal translation of 'drinking wine without unpleasantness'). Alternatively he suggests emending the phrase to *cétingrindi* or *co n-ingrindi* 'with the greatest pleasantness': see MAC MATHÚNA 1985: 35 (text), 48 (trans.) and 152–3 (commentary). In a review of Mac Mathúna's edition, however, Liam Breatnach has argued that there is no manuscript evidence to support these last two emendations (BREATNACH 1988: 181).

20 Note that 'pleasantness' is one of the definitions given in eDIL, s.v. 1 *grinde*, drawing on a single example from an Old Irish text.

in part from an entry in the glossary *Sanas Cormaic* that reads *fascud a faisce, ōn grinde* (MEYER 1912: 51).[21] In a separate entry (eDIL, s.v. ? *faisce*), it is stated that this term 'seems intended for Lat. *fascia* or *fascis*' – the former of which refers to a kind of bandage or girth, and the latter to a bundle of wood, twigs, straw or reeds (LEWIS & SHORT 1879, s.vv.). However, an interesting aspect of the entry in *Sanas Cormaic* is the glossator's association of the term *faisce* (for which *grinde* is provided as a translation) with the Irish verbal noun *fáscud* 'pressing' or 'squeezing'. It is noteworthy, for example, that the corresponding verb *fáiscid* is used in the Middle Irish tale known as *Immram curaig Máel Dúin* ('The Voyage of Máel Dúin') to describe the extraction of a marvellous juice from the berries of willow and hazel trees, which is then consumed by Mael Dúin and his companions.[22] While the link made between *fascud* and *faisce* (and therefore *grinde*) in *Sanas Cormaic* is clearly based on the phonological similarities between the first two terms, it is however possible that the glossator also had a semantic connection in mind, since Lat. *fascis* could denote not only a gathering of dry sticks to be used as firewood, but also a bundle of fresh plants from which juice or nutrients could be extracted or 'squeezed out'. Thus the definition of *fascis* given in LEWIS & SHORT 1879 also includes the more general translation of 'a packet, parcel', while the diminutive form *fasciculus*, for which Ir. *grinne* is also given as a translation gloss in one source, is used by Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* to refer to a 'bunch of flowers' or a 'nosegay'.[23]

The *Dindshenchas*-poem on *Fid nGabli* provides support for a similar interpretation of the Irish term *grinde* (or *grinne*) as a gathering of fresh (and thus nutrient-rich) plants rather than dried twigs or sticks to be used for fuel, since it describes how Ainge gathered together a *grinne buch barr-úr* ('soft fresh-leaved *grinne*') from *cach crand cen timme* ('every kind of tree without exception').[24] In a similar vein, the prose version of the *Dindshenchas* lore on *Fid nGaibli* further explains that Ainge had gathered

[21] Cf. the corresponding entry in O'Mulconry's Glossary: STOKES 1900: 258 (no. 496): *fascud a fasce .i. ō grinniu.*

[22] E.g. *Teclaimsed an ba de iarom, ⁊ no ḟaisced ⁊ linad an ba di lestraib léo* ('Then they gathered all there was of it, and were squeezing it, and filling (with its juice) all the vessels they had'): see STOKES 1889: 70–1.

[23] LEWIS & SHORT 1879, s.vv. *fascis* and *fasciculus*, the latter of which gives the Ciceronian citation; for the Irish gloss on the word *fasciculum*, see *Thes* I, 2.16.

[24] *MD* II.58–9. The identity of Ainge is uncertain, but she may be a daughter of the Dagda; Gwynn (*MD* II.103) describes this *Dindshenchas*-tale as representing "a myth imperfectly reported and consequently unintelligible." The imagery of gathering bundles (presumably of leaves or bark) from 'every tree without exception' certainly provides, however, a striking parallel for the reference in our poem to ivy that is collected from many different types of trees.

together a *grinne* (translated by Stokes as 'a bundle of twigs') in order to make a tub or bath (*drochta*) that would not leak.[25] However the thief Gaible 'hurled a cast of that bundle from Belach Fualascach and [in the place where it alighted] a fair wood grew thereout' (*tarrlaicc ercor don grinne sin a Belach Fualasccach co ro fas Finncoill as*), thereby giving rise to the name of the wood as *Fid nGaible* (STOKES 1894: 301–303). Here, too, the implication is that the plants that are gathered to form the bundle are fresh cuttings that might take root and therefore give rise to new growth. The specific sense of the element *grinde* in the Irish term *cétgrinde* is therefore arguably more closely aligned with the separate but related definition of Eng. *faggot* given in the *OED* (s.v. *faggot* AI.3a), namely 'a bundle or bunch of reeds, herbs, flowers, etc.; esp. a small bunch of herbs for seasoning a dish'.

On this basis, one might interpret the reference to *cétgrinde soilech* in the poem above as referring to the 'first' or 'best' gathering of fresh leaves or bark from a willow tree, and by extension the nutrients, or 'nectar', that can be extracted from them. It is no doubt worth noting, in this regard, that willow trees have long been associated with the treatment of various disorders involving fever or inflammation due to the presence in their leaves and bark of salicin, a synthetically altered version of which is now known as the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug Aspirin. For example, the first-century Greek physician Dioscorides recommended willow bark preparations as a remedy for gout and other inflammatory diseases (SCHULZ *ET AL*. 2004: 197–198).

The assocation between Ir. *cétgrinde* and Lat. *nectar* is also evident from a third citation from eDIL drawn from a medieval Irish tract on Latin declension, where the words *.c. grindí foilcí* gloss Lat. *hoc nectar* (STOKES 1860: 32). This example provides the closest comparandum for the second word in stanza 3a of the poem above, which is written in the manuscript as *fci* with a suspension mark over the 'f'. Of the gloss in question, however, Stokes states that "I cannot explain [it], unless the Irish be put for *c*[*eannach*] *grinde no foilce*, 'reward of baptism, or washing'" (STOKES 1860: 120). Stokes' interpretation of *grinde* as meaning 'baptism' appears, however, to be based on various questionable etymological glosses, and in any case, the example of the phrase *cétgrinde foilci* in our poem suggests that his expansion of the abbreviated 'c' in the tract on declension as *ceannach* is erroneous. Stokes is, however, no doubt right to associate *foilci* with the verb *folcaid*, which is defined in eDIL, s.v., as meaning 'washes (usu. specific, of washing the head).' The form *foilci* is cited once in eDIL as

[25] On the term *drochta*, which evidently denotes a wooden vessel of some kind, see STOKES 1901: 468–469.

a genitive singular form of the verbal noun *folcud*, where it may represent a rendering of the more commonly cited form *foilcthe* or *foilcthi* (see eDIL, s.v. *folcud*). The term *folcud* is, in turn, also attested with the concrete sense of 'a lotion, wash, or lye'. This is illustrated by a tract on the names and medicinal properties of various plants that is preserved in the seventeenth-century medical manuscript known as the 'Book of the O'Shiels', which contains the instruction *an luaith do chur ar folcadh fuinnsionn ⁊ an ceann d'ḟolcadh as* ('put the ashes in an ash-tree lotion and wash the head with it').[26] In the present context, the sense intended by the author of our poem is evidently that the fresh cuttings of a willow tree (or possibly the ivy that grows around it) are to be boiled along with other ingredients to form a wash or poultice that should be rubbed on the head to treat headache. Note also that a second poem on the same page of Connla Mac an Leagha's medical compendium similarly refers to the *folc*ad *asin cétgrinde* ('wash from the "nectar"', or 'first/best pickings', of the plant).[27]

3d: See eDIL, s.v. *pait(t)*, which defines this word as 'a skin-bottle for containing liquids (esp. wine)'; however the dictionary also gives one reference (from legal commentary) to a *pait foilcthi* 'wash-pot', which may be the kind of vessel intended here.

4a: The term *baslach* meaning 'a handful' is recorded in Ó DÓNAILL 1977, s.v. *baslach* (along with the variant *boslach*), and in DINNEEN s.vv. *baslach* and *baisleach*. eDIL gives four separate entries under the formally similar headword *baislec*, but none of the meanings given for that term – which include 'sorceress', 'church' and 'one of the seven holdings into which distrained cattle may not be taken' – correspond to that which is clearly intended here. Note, however, that under the headword 1 *bas* ('palm of the hand') eDIL does cite some examples in which that noun can denote either capacity or a measure of length or breadth. The word *baslach* is evidently formed from the noun *bas* + the collective suffix *–lach*, and can be compared with terms such as *uchtlach* 'child' (lit. 'lapful'), *gallach* (from older *gatlach* 'a number of fish strung together'), *marclach* 'a horse-load; load of a beast of burden', and *dorlach* 'handful' (< *dorn* 'hand, fist').[28]

4d: The first word of this line is written in the manuscript as *sli* with a suspension stroke through the letter 'l', and must be expanded to a word

[26] RIA MS 23 K 42, 401.

[27] RIA MS 24 B 3, 44.25; I am grateful to Siobhán Barrett for pointing out this example to me.

[28] On *uchtlach*, *gallach*, *marcach* and *dorlach*, see eDIL, s.vv; on *uchtlach*, see also LEIA-31 and O'BRIEN 1954. On the collective suffix, see PEDERSEN 1909–1913: II, 55.

consisting of three syllables, since the following words *na 7 n-eidinn* provide the remaining four syllables required for the metre. The abbreviation *sl* + suspension stroke is used elsewhere in the compendium to represent the word *slán* 'sound, whole, healthy', often at the conclusion of a recipe: see, for example, RIA MS 24 B 3, p. 46.26 (*₇ bid sl*án 'and he/it will be healthy'); p. 46.34 (*bid sl*án *na diaig* 'and he/it will be healthy afterwards'); and p. 47.15 (*₇ bid sl*án 'and he/it will be healthy').[29] On this basis, two possibilities can be proposed for the expansion of the form *sl* + suspension stroke in the present context.

The first is that the abbreviated word is a form of the deponent verb *slánaigidir* 'makes whole, heals, saves', with the words *na 7 n-edinn* representing a plural subject and the intended sense being something like 'the seven ivies heal it' ('it' being the *galar* referred to in the previous line). In this case, one would expect to find a 3rd sg. masc. or neut. object pronoun to agree with *galar* (which, according to eDIL, s.v., was originally neuter but later masculine). However, the only way to provide such a pronoun would be to understand the final 'i' written by the scribe after the letters *sl* + suspension stroke as a suffixed pronoun, the addition of which to a deponent verb would have resulted in elision of the vowel of the preceding syllable in accordance with the rules of syncope in Old Irish.[30] However, as BREATNACH 1977 has demonstrated, the system of suffixed pronouns was already defective in the Old Irish period, and their use as functioning pronouns had disappeared by the beginning of the Middle Irish period (conventionally dated to *ca* 900–1200). Such a dating might be argued to accord well with other features of the poem, e.g. if one thinks that the form *mar* in line 1c is in fact an early form of the adjective *mór* 'big', or if one accepts that the word *scíach* in line 2b is intended to be disyllabic (on the problems with these examples, however, see the discussion above). Even if the resulting form *slánaigthi* in this context were to be interpreted as containing a petrified suffixed pronoun, moreover, it would not represent the expected formation. As BREATNACH 1977 has also demonstrated, the new suffix *–it* became the only form of the 3 sg masc./neut. suffixed pronoun permitted with a 3rd plural present or future verb in Old Irish – in other words, the verbal form that one might expect to find here in agreement with the plural subject (*na 7 n-edinn*).

A more probable solution, therefore, is that the word abbreviated as *sl* + suspension stroke + *i* is a plural form of the *io/iā*-stem adjective *slánaide*

[29] All three of these examples are drawn from the section of the compendium that deals with ailments of the ears; I am grateful to Siobhán Barrett for providing them to me.

[30] BREATNACH 1977: 77 and 85, citing the comparable example of the form *sudigthi* (LU 1446).

'healing, salutary', and that the line as a whole is a copula sentence in which the copula form has been omitted, i.e. [*it*] *slánaidi na 7 n-eidinn* 'the seven ivies [are] healing'.

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