

Lenition and non-lenition after *ar*, *thar* and *gan* in Peadar Ua Laoghaire's Irish

The extensive works of Peadar Ua Laoghaire were used by mid-20th-century grammarians such as Gerald O'Nolan and Cormac Ó Cadhlaigh as a corpus of good Irish on which they based their presentations of Irish grammar. However, the reliability of the Irish in Ua Laoghaire's works is considerably marred by a very large number of typographical errors. This is particularly the case when it comes to the incidence of lenition. Consequently, a degree of caution needs to be applied before assuming that the published texts contain Canon Ua Laoghaire's spoken Irish. I would like here to examine Ua Laoghaire's use and omission of lenition after the prepositions *ar*, *thar* and *gan*. First of all, it is worth establishing Ua Laoghaire's own view on the spelling errors in his manuscripts. This has nothing to do with Ua Laoghaire's preference, albeit inconsistently adhered to, for spellings that clarified the pronunciation of West Muskerry Irish. Where lenition is missed and it is grammatically required in the dialect, its omission is clearly nothing other than a slip of the pen. In a letter to Risteárd Pléimeann dated February 6th 1918 held in the National Library of Ireland in the G 1,277 collection of manuscripts, Ua Laoghaire wrote:

D'fheuchainn tré gach aon chaibidíol fé mar a bhíodh sé críochnuighthe agam, chun na marcana do chur síos. Tá eagal orm go mb' fhéidir gur chuaidh cuid acu uaim gan cur síos. Ach beidh tú féin ábalta ar iad do chur síos. Is dóich liom gur géire do shúil chun na h-oibre sin 'ná mo shúil-se. Ní bhíon aon ghá agamsa leo ar mo shon féinig, agus mar gheall ar sin sleamhnuíghid siad orm. Uaireanta, féuch, cuirim síos iad a ganfhios dom féin, sa n-éagcóir. Bhíos ag féuchaint anois ar an aít [*sic*] ud [*sic*] 'n-ar chuir an Samaritánach fóganta an duine créachtuighthe "ar muin a bheithig féin". Agus cad a bhéadh curtha síos agam ach "ar mhuin"! rud nár airígheas riamh; agus rud a cheartuígheas do dhaoínibh eile "chómh minic agus tá méireana orm"! [Spelling and underlining as given in the original manuscript.]

The fact that Ua Laoghaire did not need the dots for lenition to tell himself which words to lenite meant that he left it to his acolytes to correct his manuscripts before publication. Not only did he leave out required lenition, but he also added it in from time to time where it was not appropriate. Consequently, with Ua Laoghaire's published works, we are often dealing with the decisions of his editors where and where not to insert lenition. Editors such as the English noblewoman Norma Borthwick, Irish scholars such as Osborn Bergin, Eleanor Knott and Gerald O'Nolan, and other enthusiasts, such as the journalist Shán Ó Cuív and the Connachtman and Church of Ireland clergyman Feardorcha Ó Conaill, played a sterling role in editing Ua Laoghaire's works, and after Ua Laoghaire's death a similar role was played by Risteárd Pléimeann and Dómhnaill Ó Mathghamhna. Aside from Ó Conaill, who was taught Irish by his parents from the age of six, all of these were learners of Irish in adult life, and none was a native speaker of West Muskerry Irish.

The extensive correspondence between Shán Ó Cuív and Risteárd Pléimeann on the one hand and Ua Laoghaire on the other held in the G 1,276 and G 1,277 manuscript collections in the National Library of Ireland shows the lengths to which Ua Laoghaire's editors went to edit his works correctly. Nevertheless, many typographical errors are found in Ua Laoghaire's works. There is great variation in his published works in usages such as *ar bruach* and *ar bhruach* and also in the use of lenition with placenames governed by *ar*. It is also challenging to arrive at a theoretical approach that would explain the pattern of lenition of nouns following each instance of *thar* and *gan* in Ua Laoghaire's works. By way of an example of the variation in lenition in Ua Laoghaire's published works, compare the insertion and omission of lenition before *Gleann Daimh* in the following two sentences from Ua Laoghaire's *Mo Sgéal Féin*, edited by Norma Borthwick:

1. *Sa n-am gcéadna san bhí 'n-a chómhnuighe thuaidh ar Ghleann Daimh, ag bun Mhullach an Ois, fear n-ar b' ainim dó Diarmuid ua Tuathaig. (Mo Sgéal Féin, p8)*
2. *Bhí Diarmuid ua Tuathaig, athair Mháire ní Thuathaig, athair mo sheana mháthar-sa, 'n-a*

chómhnuighe ar Gleann Daimh. (Mo Sgéal Féin, p58)

The problem for learners of Cork Irish is to work out what the correct dialectal forms are. Ua Laoghaire's works form the largest corpus of West Muskerry Irish. I aim to clarify the correct usage of lenition after the prepositions under consideration by examining a number of Ua Laoghaire's works, taking into account the likely incidence of typographical errors. Occasional comparison with the Irish of other Muskerry natives is also made here, including the Irish of Amhlaoibh Ó Loingsigh, whose Irish was studied in depth by the Irish Folklore Commission. The following works by Ua Laoghaire have been fully scanned for use and non-use of lenition after *ar*, *thar* and *gan*, amounting to a corpus of around 382,000 words:

Niamh
Séadna
Críost Mac Dé, Vol 1
Aesop a Tháinig go hÉirinn, collections 1 and 2
Aithris ar Chríost, Book 1
An Soisgéal Naomhtha Íosa Críost do réir Mhaitiú
Mo Sgéal Féin

Other works by Ua Laoghaire were also consulted when specific examples were being sought. I have been aided in such searches by the availability of digitised versions prepared by the Royal Irish Academy of many of Ua Laoghaire's works and also of *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh* and *Seanachas Amhlaoibh*, the Irish Folklore Commission's transcriptions of Amhlaoibh Ó Loingsigh's Irish.

1. What is the role of lenition in the Irish language?

It is difficult to determine where lenition is being marked correctly or incorrectly without a fundamental understanding of the role of lenition in the Irish language. I am not here referring to a historical understanding of how lenition developed over the centuries in Irish, but to its role in the modern language as it is experienced by native speakers, and particularly speakers of West Muskerry Irish such as Peadar Ua Laoghaire. Why lenite a word? Is this governed by purely random rules—rules that could be “abolished” in a future recension of the Official Standard drawn up by the Irish government—or does lenition have a significance in the language, possibly a significance felt and interpreted differently in the various dialects of Irish, but one that would allow the issue to be treated in a non-arbitrary way, one where the rules made internal sense?

This is a large subject area: there is more than one role played by lenition in Irish sentences, including grammatical lenition (e.g. in *an bhean*) and medial lenition (e.g. in *léirmheas*). I'm interested here in lenition as it touches on the grouping of words in a sentence. I've been unable to locate a good academic treatment of the role of lenition. O'Nolan and Ó Cadhlaigh did not, as far as I can determine, discuss the subject in depth. Ua Laoghaire responded to questions from his acolytes on the correct use of lenition, but his responses are generally one-line explanations that do not go into great analytical detail. His comments on individual words and phrases in the *Cork Weekly Examiner* collated in 1926 by Dómhnall Ó Mathghamhna in *Notes on Irish Words and Usages* often touch on lenition, but once again only briefly.

There is the following comment in Ua Laoghaire's *Mion-chaint* that relates to the fundamental significance of lenition, indicating that the use or absence of lenition is often connected with the mental arrangement—the parsing—of phrases. This comment also shows that use of lenition is highly variable, depending on the transient mental parsing of phrases by a speaker, and consequently that more than one usage may be accepted as correct in a given instance:

Dachad cloch mhine. Forty stone of meal. *Dachad cloch mine*. Forty stone of meal.

The learner will perceive that in one of these phrases the *m* of *mine* is aspirated, in the other it is not. Here is the reason. If *dachad cloch* be taken as *one thing*, it is a phrase-noun and *not* feminine. If the words be taken *singly*, then the word *cloch* aspirates *mine*, because the word *cloch* is feminine. The speaker is at perfect liberty to say *dachad ... cloch-mhine*, or *dachad-cloch ... mine*. This different grouping of the words is, of course, made merely in the mind. It need not be expressed by the voice. (*Mion-Chaint, Cuid a I*, pp46, 47)

We may note in passing that Ua Laoghaire's spelling of *daichead* as *dachad* is suboptimal, given that the medial consonant is /h/ and not /x/. Be that as it may, both *daichead {cloch} mhine* and *{daichead cloch} mine* are legitimate (mental) groupings of the words in this phrase, but they occasion varying patterns of lenition.

Gerald O'Nolan's presentation of Irish grammar in connection with the declension or non-declension of the genitive is also relevant to the grouping of words and the consequent pattern of lenition. He stated in his *Studies in Modern Irish: Part I* (pp158-160) that the Unbracketed Construction, where all nouns are given in their logical cases, and the Bracketed Construction, where a noun that is part of a wider phrase is often undeclined for the genitive (and, potentially, other cases), were both found in traditional Irish. One example given there is *a d'iarraidh na n-aoir do sheachaint agus a d'iarraidh {an moladh do thuilleamh}* from Ua Laoghaire's *Guair* (Vol 1, p2), where *aoir*, "satire, lampoon", stands in the genitive plural, and yet *an moladh* is given in the nominative absolute in the same sentence. What O'Nolan calls the Bracketed Construction in that work he later calls Absolute Construction in his *New Era Grammar* (see §171 and §179), referring to the standing of phrases in the Bracketed Construction in the nominative absolute, and not in their logical cases.

O'Nolan does not spell out the significance of the bracketing of phrases off in such Absolute Construction for lenition. He would not have known that later reference works would, after his death, standardise on the Bracketed Construction. However, the significance is this: in the Unbracketed Construction, where words stand in their logical cases, lenition is not required to mark a concatenation of genitives. However, where a phrase is bracketed off in the nominative absolute and stands in a genitival relationship with a preceding noun, it is lenited. Take these examples from Ua Laoghaire's works:

3. *Le lán toil fir an tige*. (*Críost Mac Dé*, Vol 1, p63)
4. *Neart slógh tíre Lochlann*. (*Niamh*, p142)
5. *... agus gan ar chumas mhuíntir Shasana aon chur isteach a dhéanamh ortha ná aon chosg do chur le n-a ngnó*. (*Mo Sgéal Féin*, p2)

In (3) and (4) there is no need to mark the grouping of words. Two or three nouns stand in succession in the genitive, and the case marking itself reveals the relationship between the words. Yet in (5) we do not read *gan ar chumas muíntire Shasana*, but *gan ar chumas {mhuíntir Shasana}*, where *muíntir Shasana* stands in the Bracketed Construction and is given in the nominative absolute, despite being governed by *ar chumas* in a genitival relationship. The relationship between the noun-phrase in the nominative absolute and *ar chumas* is indicated by lenition. Compare the examples given in *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí* (a reference grammar of "Standard Irish") in §4.17: *mac fhear an tí, obair bhean an tábhairne*, etc. This is not specifically labelled Absolute Construction or the Bracketed Construction in that reference work—and no indication is given there that the Unbracketed Construction is good Irish too—but what is being recommended is a parsing of the phrases in the following way: *mac {fhear an tí}* and *obair {bhean an tábhairne}*. I do not intend to claim that all mental arrangements of phrases require lenition in Irish; lenition also

follows the historical development of the Irish language. For historical reasons, some prepositions or constructions require lenition and some do not. However, where there is, for historical reasons, a choice between use and non-use of lenition, to create various nuances or distinctions of meaning, the mental arrangement of phrases may come into play. We can use this principle in our study of lenition after *ar*, *thar* and *gan*.

2. Lenition and non-lenition after *ar*

Sections §4.7 and §4.8 of *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí* discuss the use of lenition after *ar*. The rules laid down there may be summarised as follows:

- i. Nouns and verbal nouns are generally lenited after *ar*, with examples cited including *ar bhád*, *ar dheis*, *ar dhul amach*.
- ii. Where a state is being indicated, there is no lenition after *ar*. Here examples include *ar bith*, *ar crochadh*, *ar fónamh*.
- iii. Some phrases have no lenition where the noun is unqualified, referring to a general situation, such as *ar barr*, *ar cairde*, *ar tosach*. But such phrases are lenited when the noun is qualified, as in *ar bharr an tí*, *ar chairde fada*, *ar thosach an tslua*.
- iv. *Ar bord loinge* remains unlenited, despite the addition of the qualification *loinge*.
- v. Compound prepositions do not contain lenition, including *ar feadh*, *ar fud*, *ar son*, *ar tí*, etc.
- vi. No indication is given that placenames follow any special rules.

This is helpful to readers of Ua Laoghaire's works, and many, but not all, of his usages conform to the above rules. As far as ii) is concerned, the fact that states are generally used without lenition after *ar* reflects, historically, the conflation of the Old Irish prepositions *for*, "on", which did not lenite, and *ar*, "before, for", which did lenite. There are numerous relevant examples of states used without lenition after *ar* in Ua Laoghaire's works, including *ar bailchrith*, *ar bith*, *ar bogadh*, *ar buile*, *ar bun* (*rud do chur ar bun*), *ar cos' in áirde*, *ar crith*, *ar crochadh*, *ar deargbhuile*, *ar dearglasadh*, *ar dianleathadh*, *ar dibirt*, *ar doimhneas*, *ar dúbailt*, *ar dúchéalacan*, *ar fad*, *ar fán*, *ar fiuchaidh* ("boiling", pronounced in the dialect /er' f'uxig'/), *ar fónamh*, *ar fosaíocht* ("grazing"), *ar guagadh*, *ar marcaíocht*, *ar meisce*, *ar saothar*, *ar seachrán*, *ar sileadh*, *ar siúl*, *ar sodar*, *ar suathadh*, *ar tarrac*, *ar teitheadh*. A further example from another writer of Muskerry Irish, Diarmuid Ua Laoghaire, Peadar Ua Laoghaire's second cousin, is *agus a dhá chluais ar coilg-sheasamh aige* ("his two ears bolt upright", referring to a fox) in *An Bhruinneall Bhán* (p25); the abbreviation Ua Laoghaire will refer to Peadar Ua Laoghaire throughout this article. A good example from Ó Loingsigh's Irish is *uí chuir ar gor* ("to incubate/hatch eggs") in *Seanachas Amhlaoibh* (p117). The list I have given of such unlenited states used with *ar* is not exhaustive.

It seems that the following, while not being states as such, could be included in this group, being adverbial or prepositional in meaning: *ar ball* ("by and by, presently"), *ar dinnéar*, *ar maidin*, *ar margadh*, *ar measc*. A phrase that seems like it ought to belong in this list is *ar chuaird* ("visiting"), which could bear comparison with *ar dinnéar*. Yet *teacht ar cuaird chun mo rígh-theaghlaigh-se* in *Guaire* (Vol 1, p57) seems to be the only example in Ua Laoghaire's works of an unlenited *ar cuaird*, set against many dozens of counterexamples of *ar chuaird* (including ten instances in *Guaire*). Logically, *ar cuaird* would mean "visiting" and *ar chuaird* "on a visit", but no trace of such a distinction is found in Ua Laoghaire's works. We read *do tháinig duine uasal eile ar cuaird a' triall air seo* in *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh* (p271), showing that Ó Loingsigh did have an unlenited *ar cuaird*. As an unlenited *ar cuairt* is shown in *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*, it may be that there was something idiosyncratic about Ua Laoghaire's apparent preference for *ar chuaird*.

More difficult to explain is *ar deasláimh*. Ua Laoghaire has *ar dheis* and *ar chlé*, but normally has an unlenited *ar deasláimh*. I've found numerous examples of *ar deasláimh* in Ua Laoghaire's works, but only two of *ar dheasláimh*, which therefore seem to be typographical errors. This has

nothing to do with whether the phrase is further qualified, as all examples contain a qualification. See the following examples:

6. *Chífidh sibh 'n-a dhiaidh so Mac an Duine 'n-a shuidhe ar deasláimh nirt Dé. (Na Cheithre Soisgéil, p79)*
7. *... agus é n-a shuidhe anois ar dheasláimh a Athar. (Na Cheithre Soisgéil, p272)*
8. *Ach bhí sé lán de 'n Spioraid Naomh agus d'fhéach sé suas ins na flathais agus chonnaic sé glóire Dé agus Íosa 'n-a sheasamh ar dheasláimh Dé, agus dubhairt sé: féach chím na flathais ar osgailt agus Mac an Duine 'n-a sheasamh ar deasláimh Dé. (Gníomhartha na n-Aspol, p308)*

Sentence (6) shows the general use found in Ua Laoghaire's works. The two identifiable examples of *ar dheasláimh Dé* are given above in (7) and (8), but note that in (8) the clause with *ar dheasláimh Dé* is immediately followed by a subsequent clause with *ar deasláimh Dé*. It seems therefore that *ar deasláimh Dé* is correct and that the two examples of *ar dheasláimh Dé* must be editing or printing errors. Dr Seán Ua Súilleabháin informs me that the usage *ar deasláimh Dé* was probably reinforced by the phrase used in a version of the Creed and that the Muskerry native Donncha Ua Buachalla insisted on the correctness of the form *ar deasláimh Dé* in one of his manuscripts.

Compound prepositions without lenition in Ua Laoghaire's works mirror those listed in rule v) in *Graiméar Gaeilge* and include *ar feadh*, *ar fuaid*, *ar fuid*, *ar son* and *ar tí*. (Ua Laoghaire wrote that *ar fuaid* should be used for broad areas, such as *ar fuaid na paróiste*, and *ar fuid* for small areas, such as *ar fuid an tí*. See *Notes on Irish Words and Usages*, p54. However, there are numerous instances in Ua Laoghaire's published works where this distinction is not made, and Brian Ó Cuív stated in *Cnósach Focal ó Bhaile Bhúirne*, p273, that he had never heard *ar fuid*, and so it seems *ar fuid* should be regarded as a historical by-form of *ar fuaid*, both corresponding to *ar fud* in Standardised Irish.) Finally, we may note here that *ar fáil* is not found in Ua Laoghaire's works; the Canon uses *le fáil*, generally given as *le fághail*.

Nuances created by use or non-use of lenition after *ar*

The more interesting cases concern those covered by rules iii) and iv), where lenition can be, but is not always, found. This is sometimes because, unlike the examples in ii) above, a state is not always indicated by the noun and so use or non-use of lenition can create nuances of meaning, or even totally different meanings. See the following:

9. *Chuir sé ar bhórd iad i n-aice Chathail. (An Craos-Deamhan, p76)*
10. *Cuirfad ar bórd loinge í. (Aesop a Tháinig go hÉirinn, p12)*
11. *... ar bhóthar Átha Cliath. (Niamh, p108)*
12. *Chuir sé dírim marcach ar bóthar. (Niamh, p244)*
13. *Feic an nóta ar Chaib. xiv. 26. (Na Cheithre Soisgéil, p273)*
14. *Bhíos i gCeann Tuirc ar Caibidiol. (Mo Sgéal Féin, p120)*
15. *Bhí an bogh dhá shlait ar faid. (Niamh, p15)*
16. *Dá machtnuightheá níos mó ar do bhás 'ná ar fhaid do shaoghail. (Aithris ar Chríost, p41)*

Ar bhórd in sentence (9) above is the ordinary use of the noun, “on a table”; *ar bórd*, by contrast, is an adverbial state, “on board”, or a compound prepositional phrase in *ar bórd loinge* (“on board a ship”). *Ar bórd loinge* here shows that it makes no difference whether *bórd* is qualified or not. Thus it seems the key to the use or non-use of lenition with *ar* is not the qualification of the noun (an arbitrary rule), but rather whether a specific indefinite noun is being referred to (“a table”) or whether a generic adverbial state is being indicated.

English has a three-way distinction between use of the definite article, use of the indefinite article and lack of any article at all. “On board”, “on a board” and “on the board” all make sense in English in the right context, as do “on top”, “on a top” and “on the top”. “On board” and “on top” use the noun generically (“on board ship” just means “on a ship” and “on top of the book” just means “on the book”). Sometimes this generic use of the noun is found in English words starting with “a-”, such as “aback”, “abed”, “aboard”, “abreast”, “afoot”, “afield”, “afloat”, “ahead”, “ashore”, “aside”, “asleep”, and “atop” (we may also consider “across”, “afore”, “alive” and “among”, where the second element doesn’t seem to be a noun). The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains under *a-* that this prefix is a worn-down form of an Old English preposition meaning “on, in”.

We can now look back over categories ii) to v) outlined above and reinterpret the lack of lenition of adverbial states after *ar* shown above as (often) being the Irish equivalent of the plain, generic use without an article in English. The differences between English and Irish idiom often make this hard to illustrate, but *ar díbirt* is glossed in *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* as “in banishment”. It is not specifically “in a banishment” or “in the banishment”, but rather a state that is being referred to. Similarly, the compound prepositions do not contain lenition after *ar* because the nouns are used generically: *ar tí* means “about to”; it doesn’t mean “on a point/on a spot”. In *ar bórd loinge*, *ar díbirt* and *ar tí*, the nouns *bórd*, *díbirt* and *tí* are being used in a generic sense comparable to the use of “board” in “on board” or “aboard” in English.

In many such phrases, the distinction between the generic and the individual use of the noun reflects the parsing of the sentence in a way that sometimes allows for more than one approach. This is clear from Peadar Ua Laoghaire’s comments in a letter to Risteárd Pléimeann dated December 3rd 1919 (also in the G 1,277 manuscript collection). Apparently discussing the phrase *biolar ag fás ar bhruach an tsrutháin sin* in *Ár nDóithin Araon* (p4), he wrote:

It is *ar bhruach* here, but *ar bruach* would do just as well, because I may wish to tell where the *biolar* was with regard to the stream or I may merely wish to confine my mind to the *biolar* itself and just tell where it was. It is a nice distinction but I have heard it made.

Phrases that use a noun generically are bracketed off in the mind: *{ar bórd} loinge*. *{Ar bórd}* functions in Irish sentences as an adverbial or prepositional phrase (“on board” or “aboard”). By contrast, *ar bhórd* is to be parsed as *ar {bhórd}*, a preposition followed by a noun. *{Ar bruach} an tsrutháin sin* is thus subtly different from *ar {bhruach an tsrutháin sin}*: the latter focuses more clearly on *bruach* in its specific sense as a noun. One could bring out the difference by translating the one as “by the stream” and the other as “on the bank of the stream”. It may be that when there is a further qualification of the noun, the specific nature of the noun tends to become clearer, producing a noun phrase, the whole of which is governed by the preposition, as in *ar {bhruach an tsrutháin sin}*, but as Ua Laoghaire makes clear in his letter to Pléimeann, the presence of a qualifier would not mean that *{ar bruach} an tsrutháin sin* would be grammatically incorrect. There are two ways in which this phrase could be parsed and thus divided up.

Ua Laoghaire also dealt briefly with this point in *Notes on Irish Words and Usages* (p144):

Ar bruach na faraige, on the sea-shore.
Ar bhruach na faraige, on the shore of the sea.

Na faraige provides a qualification of *bruach* in both phrases. The presence or absence of a qualifier is therefore a red herring. The distinction between the two phrases lies in the mental parsing of the phrase: *{ar bruach} na faraige* means, fundamentally “by the sea, by the seaside”, with the word *bruach* used no more specifically than the word “shore” is used in the English word

“ashore”. By contrast, *ar {bhruach na faraige}* makes *bruach* a specific noun and *ar* governs the whole noun phrase *bruach na faraige*, with the resultant phrase meaning, literally, “on the shore of the sea”. It should be noted that variation in lenition of phrases with *bruach* is frequently found in Ua Laoghaire’s printed works. Compare *ar bruach glaise bige* (*Niamh*, p205) and *ar bhruach na glaise bige* (*Niamh*, p209) and *ar bruach abhann Iórdain* (*Seanmóin agus Trí Fichid*, Vol 1, p18) and *ar bhruach abhan Iórdain* (*Críost Mac Dé*, Vol 1, p101). It’s impossible to be sure that each printed phrase corresponds to the form the Canon originally intended when he wrote the phrase, but his explanation of the use or non-use of lenition in such phrases means that both forms are, in any case, acceptable. However, it is worth noting that Ó Loingsigh had *ar bhruach an chuain* in *Scéalaíocht Amhlaobh* (p31).

Consequently, we see that the difference between *{ar bruach} X* and *ar {bhruach X}* is of the same nature as the distinction between *daichead {cloch mhine}* and *daichead {cloch} mine*. The difference lies in the parsing of the phrase. The other examples from Ua Laoghaire’s works listed in (11) to (16) above illustrate the same point. *Ar {bhóthar Bhaile Átha Cliath}* is a specific use of *bóthar* (“the Dublin road, the road to Dublin”), whereas *chuir sé dírim marcach {ar bóthar}* is a generic use (“he sent the troop of horse off, he sent them on their way”). *Ar {chaibidiol}* (Ua Laoghaire had a masculine *caibidiol*) is the specific use of the noun (“in a chapter of a book”); *{ar caibidiol}* corresponds to the English “at chapter” (of priests), where, once again, there is no article in the English. *{Ar faid}* takes the noun *faid* generically, whereas *ar {fhaid do shaoghail}* uses the noun in its specific sense, “[to think of] the length of your life”.

17. *Thug gach aoinne fé ndeara go raibh an capall dubh buille beag ar tosach.* (*Séadna*, p32)
18. *Nuair a bheidh an mór-chath ar siubhal beidh tusa ar shluagh Chonchobhair agus bead-sa i bhfriothghoin ar thosach slógh Fear Éirean agus an Caladhcholc agam.* (*Táin Bó Cuailnge 'na Dhráma*, p138)
19. *Ach beidh a lán d’á bhfuil ar tusach ar deire, agus d’á bhfuil ar deire ar tusach.* (*Na Cheithre Soisgéil*, p55)
20. *... ag déanamh amach ar dheire na h-aimsire.* (*Mo Sgéal Féin*, p95)

{Ar tosach} in sentence (17) above means “in front, in the lead, ahead”, and is once again a non-specific use of the noun. *Ar {thosach slógh Fear Éirean}* means “at the front of the army”, a specific use, corresponding to a usage with “the” in English. Similarly, *{ar deire}* means “last, behind”, whereas *ar {dheire na h-aimsire}* means “at the end of the period”, rendering the noun specific.

21. *An dá lá 's an fhaid a bheidh grian ar spéir agus daoine ar talamh.* (*Niamh*, p320)
22. *Do h-innseadh dóibh ná raibh rígan óg eile ar thalamh na h-Éirean an uair sin chómh breagh ná chómh dathamhail léi.* (*Niamh*, p182)
23. *Ní mór dóm-sa imtheacht agus neart slógh Lochlanach na h-Éirean do chur sa n-inead atá ceapaithe dhóibh ar talamh an chatha.* (*Niamh*, p302)
24. *Bhí buadh ag Iúdás agus agá bhuidhin bheag, agus bhí acu an fhoghail go léir a dh’fhan i ndiaidh na Suiriánach ar thalamh an chatha.* (*Sgéalaidheachta as an mBíobla Naomhtha*, Vol 6, p727)
25. *Ní raibh sé sásta leis an saidhbhreas san féin, agus chrom sé ar bheith ag déanamh foghla agus ag creachadh na gcómharsan ar an uile thaobh, ar muir agus ar tír.* (*Sgéalaidheacht na Macabéach*, Vol 1, p57)
26. *Do thuig sé gan aon dabht gur bh’é deire bheadh ar an sgéal dó ná rígh dhéanamh de ar thír mór leathan éigin; nó impire, b’fhéidir, ós cionn na h-Euróipe go léir.* (*Don Cíochóté*, p6)

{Ar talamh} in sentence (21) above can be understood as an adverbial phrase that corresponds to “on earth” in English, where there is no article. But once a qualification is added, the specific

meaning of the noun comes to the fore, as in *ar {thalamh na h-Éirean}*, “in the land of Ireland”. This is not at all *because* the noun is being qualified, but rather because it is no longer being used in a generic sense, although qualification of the noun does often mean the noun is being used in a specific sense. *Ar {talamh an chatha}* in sentence (23) above, found later in the same novel, *Niamh*, is therefore clearly a typographical or editing error. *Ar {thalamh an chatha}* in sentence (24) gives the correct usage. *{Ar muir} agus {ar tír}* in sentence (25) is analogous to *ar talamh*, and once the noun becomes more specific, as in *ar {thír mór leathan éigin}* in sentence (26), lenition is correctly given. No examples in Ua Laoghaire’s works have been found of *ar muir* with a further qualification. *{Ar domhan}* also belongs here: it seems unlikely that *ar domhan* could be found with a qualification, but in other respects it is similar to *ar muir* and *ar tír*.

We can use this theoretical approach to analyse Ua Laoghaire’s use of *ar muin*. Logically speaking, where *muin* is used in its specific sense of “back (of a horse or other animal)”, it should be lenited after *ar* (in other words, if a sentence such as *chuir sé iallait ar {mhuin an chapail!}* were attested, it could be expected to contain *mhuin* with lenition), whereas when *muin* is taken in a generic sense to create an adverbial phrase meaning “riding, on horseback”, there would be no lenition. It is as if “riding a horse/on horseback” were phrased something like “‘aback’ of the horse” in Irish (the rare use of “aback of” in English in this meaning is given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*). As Ua Laoghaire pointed out above, this has nothing to do with whether the noun *muin* is qualified or not: the example he gave of *{ar muin} a bheithíg féin*—Ua Laoghaire’s clear statement that *ar mhuin* would be incorrect in such a sentence is of much greater authority than anything written in *Graiméar Gaeilge*—is a qualified use of the noun, but the noun *muin* is still used in its generic sense (“aback of his own beast, riding his own beast”). How then can we interpret the variation in lenition in the published texts of the following passages?

27. *Agus annsan go bhfaighinn le cur umam brat ioldathach de líon an rúdháin ealla, agus go suidhfinn ar muin an eich sin, agus go mbeinn ag crónán rómham go Dhurlas [sic] Ghuaire. (Guairé, Vol 1, p56)*
28. *Do cuireadh Buime na Cléire ar mhuin an eich riabhaigh láithreach agus an brat ioldathach uímpi aici. (Guairé, Vol 1, p60)*
29. *Bhí each aige, agus nuair a bhíodh sé ar mhuin an eich sin ní fhéadadh eachra Chúig’ Uladh go léir teacht suas leis. Thagadh sé ar mhuin an eich sin isteach sa n-áit ’na mbíodh tiugh slógh Chonghail. (Cúán Fithise, pp33-34. Tiugh here, Ua Laoghaire’s spelling of *tiubh*, is used as a noun, where *tiugh slógh* means “the thick of the army”, referring to a concentration of military forces.)*
30. *Bheirim-se mo bhriathar duit-se go daingean, a rí, ná suidhfidh Ultach ar mhuin an eich seo ag creachadh Laighean agus mise am’ beathadh! (Cúán Fithise, p36)*

Go suidhfinn ar muin an eich sin in (27) above might appear to be the specific use of the noun: “that I would sit on the back of that horse”, and so logically requiring lenition. Yet Ua Laoghaire’s *chuir an Samarítánach fóghanta an duine créachtmuighthe “ar muin a bheithíg féin”* shows that to sit on the back of an animal is to ride it, and therefore in Irish all such uses must be regarded as generic phrases, and consequently sentences (28), (29) and (30) above contain typographical errors: in each case *ar mhuin an eich* should have been edited as *ar muin an eich*.

Frequent variation in usage of *ar bárr/barra* and *ar bhárr/bharra* is found in Ua Laoghaire’s works (compare *ar bara ríghtheighlaigh Shitric* and *ar bhara an ríghtheighlaigh* in *Niamh*, pp325, 333). *Bárr* is one of the few nouns where the Irish distinction between *{ar bárr}* and *ar {bhárr}* can be mirrored in English, as we have both “on top of” and “on the top of” something in English. There is not a great distinction between “on top of” and “on the top of” in English, although the distinction is perceptible, and the nuance of distinction is similarly small in Irish. In sentences like *bhí sé ar {bhara mo theangan} dhá uair a dh’fhiafraighe dhé* (found in *Niamh*, p203) lenition must be used;

in this case, the sentence means “on the tip of my tongue”, and not “on top of my tongue”.

An interesting passage using both *{ar bárr} uisge* and *ar {bhárr an uisge}* can be found in Ua Laoghaire’s translation of Matthew 14:28-29:

Agus d’fhreagair Peadar: A Thighearna, ar seisean: má’s tusa atá ann, órduigh dómh-sa teacht ag triall ort ar bhárr an uisge. Agus dubhairt seisean: Tar chúgham. Agus tháinig Peadar anuas as an luing, agus bhí sé ag siúbhal ar bárr uisge, ag teacht chun Íosa. (*Na Cheithre Soisgéil*, p40)

Yet the Douay version of the New Testament has

And Peter making answer, said: Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters. And he said: Come. And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus.

Both “upon the waters” and “upon the water” appear definite in the English, but Ua Laoghaire translates the one by *ar bhárr an uisge* and the other by *ar bárr uisge*. The Latin Vulgate version of the Bible has *super aquas* and *super aquam* (*aquas* being accusative plural and *aquam* being accusative singular) in the two passages respectively. It is perhaps understandable that Ua Laoghaire was reluctant to use the rare plural *uisgeacha* here (*uisgeacha* is found in Ua Laoghaire’s *Na Cheithre Soisgéil*, p3, and *uisgiacha* in his *Sgothbhualadh*, p95; *uiscí/uisgí* is not attested in his works), and chose to translate the two distinct Latin phrases in distinctive ways. The text is identical in both passages in the Greek New Testament (plural in both cases). It seems that the variation between *ar bhárr an uisge* and *ar bárr uisge* is one of the many instances where use or omission of the definite article is used as a stylistic device in Irish. Omission of the definite article before *uisge* underscores the genericised meaning of the phrase.

The only use of the unlenited form I can find by Ó Loingsigh is *gan gráinne ar barra* in *Seanachas Amhlaoibh* (p95), where *ar barra* stands without a subsequent noun. With a subsequent qualification, Ó Loingsigh had *ar bhárr* in *ar bhárr an bhota* (*Seanachas Amhlaoibh*, p199). This particular example accords with the rule given in *Graiméar Gaeilge* about lenition of nouns after *ar* when qualified, but there are too few instances of *ar bárr* and *ar bhárr* in *Seanachas Amhlaoibh* and *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh* to draw firmer conclusions about Ó Loingsigh’s usage of these forms.

31. *Ní chuireann rud de’n tsórd san aon iongnadh ar dhaoine go bhfuil taitheghe acu ar shlighe Dé.* (*Aithris ar Chríost*, p79)

32. *... agus go mbeidh Brian agus Dál gCais “ar sligh na firinne”.* (*Niamh*, pp294-295)

Phrases such as *ar {shlighe Dé}* are frequently found in Ua Laoghaire’s works, and are correctly found with lenition. *Ar sligh na firinne* (meaning “dead”) might then be expected to have lenition also, but it seems here we are dealing with a calcified phrase.

Ar fleasg a dhroma is also consistently unlenited (as in *d’fhágar Don Cíochóté sínte ar fleasg a dhroma ar an mbóthar* in *Don Cíochóté*, p45), contrasting with phrases such as *ar {mhullach a gcinn}* (in, for example, *Mo Sgéal Féin*, p112). It seems the *f* resists lenition, as is often the case with an *f*. No examples of *ar cháirde fada* or any other phrase with qualification of *ar cáirde* are found in the works by Ua Laoghaire that I’ve searched.

Use of *ar* with placenames

Finally, use of *ar* with placenames is category vi). *Graiméar Gaeilge* has nothing to say on this

subject. As shown above, there is great variation in Ua Laoghaire's published works on lenition of placenames after *ar*. Examples without lenition include:

33. ... *ar Bán an tSeana Chnuic* (*Mo Sgéal Féin*, p12)
34. ... *ar Prothus, i bparóiste Thuath na Droman* (*Mo Sgéal Féin*, p77)
35. ... *ar Gleann Mháma* (*Niamh*, p20)

The grammatical rule that applies here was explained by Ua Laoghaire in *Notes on Irish Words and Usages* (p8):

Ar does not aspirate the initial of a word beginning a definite place name. *Tá Seán Ó Griobhtha 'n-a chómhnuidhe thuaidh annsan ar Cathair Druinne* (*Mo Sgéal Féin*, p. 180). Similarly, *ar Cnoc Áine*; *ar Carraig na Madraí*, etc. *Cnoc*, etc., in these expressions is part of the proper name. Hence it is not aspirated.

Ua Laoghaire here makes a quotation from his *Mo Sgéal Féin*, indicating that *Cathair Druinne* is correctly unlenited. And yet *ar Charraig na Madraí* (as it is found in the published text of *Mo Sgéal Féin*, p6) was printed with lenition, once again evidently by way of an editing error. *Ar Ghleann Daimh* in sentence (1) that we began with above is therefore also an error.

The principle that *ar* does not lenite placenames only applies when *ar* is used to mean “in or at” a place (generally a small place, as larger placenames would be used with *i*). Where *ar* has any other meaning, lenition is occasioned. See the following examples:

36. *Bhí radharc siar aige ar Chlaedigh*. (*Séadna*, p256)
37. *Thugadar aghaidh soir óthuaidh ar Theamhair*. (*Niamh*, p153)
38. *Bhí aghaidh na h-Éirean ar Cheann Cora*. (*Niamh*, p163)

All these are examples of the use of *ar* to mean things other than “in or at” a place. *Ar Gleann Daimh*, “in Glendav”, and *aghaidh a thabhairt ar Ghleann Daimh*, “to head for Glendav” (a clause not specifically attested), would contain different uses of the preposition *ar*. Finally, there is a chapter heading *Ar Mhullach na Mangartan* in *Mo Sgéal Féin* (p85) that may illustrate this point well. This means “on the summit of the Mangerton”. Had there been a townland in Ireland called *Mullach na Mangartan*, however, *ar Mullach na Mangartan*, without lenition, would mean “at or in the townland called Mangerton Ridge”.

Other speakers of Muskerry Irish also have unlenited placenames after *ar*. Examples include *ar Cúil Aodha* in Dónall Bán Ó Céileachair's *Sgéal mo Bheatha* (p8) and *ar Carraig na bhFear* in *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh* (p95). Some published works in Muskerry Irish, including Diarmuid Ua Laoghaire's *An Bhruinneall Bhán* lenite such placenames (e.g *ar Dhaingean na Saileach*, on p19; numerous similar usages are found elsewhere in that work). This may reflect the hand of an editor, or Diarmuid Ua Laoghaire may have regarded Muskerry dialectal forms as incorrect colloquialisms.

3. Lenition and non-lenition after *thar*

Lenition after *thar* is discussed in §4.11 of *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí*, where it is stated that nouns are lenited after *thar*, apart from certain phrases where an indefinite noun is unqualified and has a general meaning. Examples include *thar barr*; *thar cnoc (soir)*, *thar droichead* and *thar muir/thar sáile*. By contrast, *thar bharr an chnoic* and *thar dhroichead na habhann* are shown with lenition.

This suggests that in Standardised Irish it is recommended that the pattern of lenition after *thar*, at

least in the small number of phrases where the noun may or may not have a generic meaning, bear a comparison with that after *ar*. In other words, it is suggested that the mental parsing of the phrase be used to determine the use or non-use of lenition. According to this, *{thar bárr}* contains a generic use of the word *bárr* to make an adverbial phrase, and there is no reference to a specific or the specific *bárr*. By contrast, *thar {bhárr an chnuic}* contains a preposition governing a noun phrase. Phrases such as *{thar muir}* and *{thar sáile}* could then be seen as generic phrases along the same lines as *ar muir* and *ar tír*, incidentally mirroring the generic nature of the English phrase “overseas”, where the word “sea” is not used in its specific sense.

However, this ignores the fact that the preposition *tar* did not occasion lenition in Old Irish. The pattern of lenition after *ar* developed owing to the conflation of two prepositions. Although lenition after *thar* has crept in over the centuries, my search of Ua Laoghaire’s usage shows that *thar* is much less frequently and consistently found with lenition of the initial consonant of a following noun. We shall see that this means the Bracketed Construction gives us more limited assistance here. Let us first take *{thar teórainn}* to illustrate generic use:

39. *Roimis seo, dá dtéadh ba thar teorainn ba ghnáthach go n-éileofí scot ar an té n-ar leis iad.* (*Seanachas Amhlaoibh*, p15)
40. *Táid na ba thar teórainn ar Thadhg ua Mhurchú.* The cows are over bounds upon Thade Murphy, i.e., upon his land. (*Mion-Chaint, Cuid a III*, p68)

Sentence (39) is one of a large number of such uses found on p15 of *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh*, where *teórainn* in *{thar teórainn}* seems generic in meaning. Sentence (40) gives an example from Ua Laoghaire’s *Mion-Chaint*, together with his own translation of *thar teórainn*, “over bounds”, showing the phrase to be generic.

Harder to understand as generic usages are the *thar cnoc soir* and *thar droichead* given in *Graiméar Gaeilge*. Where is the generic sense in *{thar cnoc soir}* and *{thar droichead}*? We could compare the English phrase “over hill and down dale”, where “hill” and “dale” are used generically: the meaning is just “over rolling countryside”. Yet examples of use of the Irish phrases below appear in context to relate to specific nouns.

41. *Bhí sgoil Laidne ar an dtaobh thall de’n drochad, i Maghchromtha, an uair sin, díreach ag bun an chaisleáin, ag firín beag d’ár bh’ainim Mac Nally. Do raghfá thar drochad anonn i dtreo an chaisleáin, agus nuair a bheifeá ag an gceann thall de’n drochad, díreach ag ceann slaite an drochaid, d’iompófa isteach i leith do lámha deise agus do raghfá síos cúpla ciscéim staighre nó trí.* (*Mo Sgéal Féin*, pp61-62)
42. *Síos liom chun na glaise agus anonn thar glaise, agus suas, ar an dtaob [sic] theas de’n ghlaise agus de’n bhóthar, chun tíghe mhuintir Thuama.* (*Mo Sgéal Féin*, p79)

In sentence (41), *thar drochad* appears to mean “you would go over the bridge”. That this is no typographical error is shown by the fact that there are numerous instances of *thar drochad* in Ua Laoghaire’s works. I cannot find any examples in Ua Laoghaire’s works of *thar cnoc* or *thar cnuc*, but sentence (42) has another apposite example of non-lenition after *thar*: *thar glaise* appears to mean “over the stream”. The best resolution is see these generic uses as *genericised*: while a specific bridge and stream has been mentioned, the specificity of the noun subsequently loses focus. This reflects a pattern of omission of the definite article where specificity of the noun is not required. *Thar drochad* and *thar glaise* can then mean, in context, just “crossed over”.

In *Mion-Chaint, Cuid a III*, Ua Laoghaire gives the following illustrations of the use of *thar* and provides his own translations of them:

43. *Ní'l ann dul thar doras*. He cannot go outside the door. It is not in him to go outside the door. (p67)
44. *Dul do léim thar geata*. To jump over the gate. (p67)
45. *Thar calaith*. Across the ferry. (p68)
46. *Dul thar glaise*. To cross the stream. (p68)

In (43) *dul thar doras* means “go outside, go outdoors”. The door itself is not being focused on, although in any given context it may be clear which door is meant. It seems such genericised nouns are not lenited after *thar*. I therefore propose for the purpose of discussion the following four-way distinction.

1. *{thar muir}*: generic phrases without lenition, often corresponding to the plain use without the article in English (“overseas”).
2. *thar ghlaise*: phrases containing indefinite nouns with lenition (“over a stream”).
3. *thar an nglaise*: phrases containing definite nouns where the article intervenes (“over the stream”).
4. *{thar glaise}*: phrases containing a genericised noun, whose specificity has lost importance for stylistic reasons, found without lenition (“crossed over”).

We can use this four-way distinction to analyse recorded uses of *thar* with *clái* in published Muskerry Irish.

47. *Nuair a léimeadh Iorusán thar chloidhe nó thar abhainn, “Ó”, adeireadh Seanachán, “nách iongantach an léim atá ag Iorusán!”* (Guaire, Vol 2, p142)
48. *Nuair a bhíodar ag gluaiseacht fê dhéin an chatha do ráinig go raibh ortha dul thar shruth a bhí ar an slighe rómpa.* (Cómhairle Ár Leasa, p192)
49. *Léimt, léimrig: a' léimt thar chlaí.* (Seanachas Amhlaoibh, p394)
50. *Do léim sé thar claidh agus chuir sé an réidh ó thuaidh dé.* (Aesop a Tháinig go hÉirinn, p30)
51. *Nuair a chonaic sé an obair agus an fhuil go léir, chua sé isteach sa pháirc, isteach thar clái chútha.* (Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh, p68)

In sentence (47), *thar chloidhe* is an indefinite use (“over a fence”). In (48), *thar shruth* is indefinite in reference too. In sentence (49), Amhlaoibh Ó Loingsigh defines the word *léimrig*, and the context is also indefinite, and so we read *a' léimt thar chlaí*. Sentence (50) is interesting, because the 1902 edition of Ua Laoghaire’s *Aesop* had *thar claidh*, being corrected in the 1931 edition produced by Domhnall Ó Mathghamhna to *thar chloidh* (see p61 in that edition). No fence had previously been mentioned in context, and so the use of a genericised *thar claidh* might seem unwarranted. Nevertheless, Ó Mathghamhna’s correction may be unjustified, as the intention was simply to relate that the wolf made off, with no focus on the specificity of the fence. In sentence (51), Ó Loingsigh uses an unlenited *thar clái*. A fence had not previously been mentioned, but the reader/listener may presume that the field was fenced off in some way. The intention is to relate that a tinker came into the field; the fence is not being specifically focused on.

Let us take some further examples.

52. *Fear cruaidh láidir cródha ab eadh Antipater féin. Bhí sé ar an gcéad fhear do léim isteach thar falla sa chathair an lá a tógadh í.* (Sgéalaidheacht na Macabéach, Vol 1, p89)
53. *Do bhuail go cruinn agus do mhairbh é sarar fhéad sé dul thar doras.* (Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh, p180)
54. *Do bhí an cailín titithe agus an tseanabhean do mháthair dó titithe isteach thar táirsig chuige.* (Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh, p252)

55. *Níor bhéas aige aon bhacaig a leogaint isteach thar geata, ach bhíodar so a' gabháil isteach go dána. (Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh, p171)*
56. *Má thagann duine eile isteach ann lena bheithig is féidir do mhuintir an chuimín scot a chur air sin. Ach ní léothadh éinne teacht isteach thar baile orthu. (Seanachas Amhlaoibh, p17)*
57. *As go brách leo ar maidin an bóthar soir, agus bhí an bóthar so a' gabháil síos do cheann thig Sheáin Í Chuill. Ar ghabháil thar tig dóibh is amhlaig a bhí Seán marbh, á thórramh istig ar an mbórd. (Seanachas Amhlaoibh, p259)*
58. *Bhí sé ag gabháil thar thigh, is do léim gadhar amach chuige, agus thug ulfairt fé. (Sgéal mo Bheatha, p163)*

In sentences (52) to (57) above, the use of *thar* is with an unlenited genericised noun. *Thar dorus* and *thar tairsig* just mean “indoors”, without focusing on the door or the threshold in any specific way. In sentence (57) *gabháil thar tig* just means “passing by”, contrasting with *thar thigh* in Dónall Bán Ó Céileachair’s autobiography in sentence (58), where no house had been mentioned and so the genericised meaning would be confusing. Yet some published uses do not match the pattern outlined here:

59. *Agus cad é an mhaith an bhreághthacht ná téidhean thar chroicean isteach? (Aesop a Tháinig go h-Éirinn, 1931 edition, p133)*

Cnósach a dó of Aesop’s fables was not included in the 1902 edition and I don’t have a copy of *Cnósach a dó* in an edition produced during Ua Laoghaire’s lifetime. Sentence (59) above is taken from the 1931 edition edited by Domhnall Ó Mathghamhna, and it seems likely, given that the context is genericised rather than indefinite, that *thar croicean isteach* (where there is no focus on the skin as a specific noun) would have been advisable in this sentence.

The discussion above relates to the use of *thar* with singular nouns. Usage of *thar* with noun phrases, which by their nature tend to be definite and thus difficult to interpret as genericised, deserves separate mention. Usage in Ua Laoghaire’s writings and in Ó Loingsigh’s Irish varies, but the majority of examples are found without lenition. This contrasts with the assumption in *Graiméar Gaeilge* that all such phrases be used with lenition, indicating that the mental arrangement of phrases is of less significance here than with *ar*, possibly owing to the different historical development of lenition after *thar*. The following examples all have noun phrases governed by *thar* without lenition.

60. *Ansan d'imthigheas isteach tar [sic] claidh an bhóthair agus thugas m' aghaidh ó-thuidh tríd an sliabh. (Mo Sgéal Féin, p81)*
61. *Ag gabháil thar tigh cómharsan dó bhí beirt leanbh ag spórt sa chlós. (Séadna, p91)*
62. *Nuair a bhí an breitheamh a' dul chun dinnéir do ráinig dò gabháil thar doras an tí seo. (Seanachas Amhlaoibh, p232)*
63. *An uair sin iseadh is usa an buadh dh'fhagháil ar an namhaid, nuair ná leigtear dó teacht thar dorus na h-aighe isteach, ach bheith 'n-a choinnibh lasmuich de'n tairsigh chómh luath agus a bhuaileann sé an chéad bhuille. (Aithris ar Chríost, p22)*
64. *Do tháinig aniar thar teora na cúntae isteach go Baile Mhúirne ar a lorg. (Seanachas Amhlaoibh, p263)*

Counterexamples are fewer in number:

65. *Níor leig sgannradh dhom dul thar fhocal an mhargaidh. (Séadna, p296)*
66. *Is gur cuireag go hárd í thar mhnáibh eile an tsaeil seo. (Seanachas Amhlaoibh, p312)*

In *thar {teora na cúntae}* in (64) we see the Bracketed Construction (*teora* stands in the

nominative). Compare frequently encountered usages such as Ua Laoghaire's *ná tagaidís thar teórainn m'uaighnis isteach* (Lúcián, p122), where *teórainn* is declined for the dative case and the phrase following *thar* is therefore not given in the Bracketed Construction. This shows that the presence or absence of lenition of a noun phrase after *thar* is not dependent on the mental division of the sentence into phrases. We are left to conclude that the pattern of lenition after *thar* cannot be aligned fully with the pattern of lenition after *ar*, however much *Graiméar Gaeilge* attempts to align them.

A further difficulty is found in the contrast drawn in *Graiméar Gaeilge* between *chuaigh an bhanaltra {thar ceann} an dochtúra*, where *thar ceann* is analysed a compound preposition meaning “on behalf of”, and *chuaigh an pileár thar {cheann an dochtúra}*, where *ceann an dochtúra*, “the doctor’s head”, is effectively given as a bracketed-off noun phrase. Consider the following sentences:

67. *Le n-a linn sin do baineadh barr-thuisle as an gcat i dtreó gur caitheadh tón tar ceann é féin agus an luch.* (*An Cleasaidhe*, p62)
68. *... thar cheann a raibh láithreach d'uaislibh Gaedhal.* (*Niamh*, p47)
69. *Do dhíoladar an cíos thar cheann an fhir a dh'fhan siar.* (*Mo Sgéal Féin*, p26)
70. *Fear imig síos amach agus d'fhill sé i gcionn tamaill, agus ar chuma éigint, ghoibh sé thar ceann a thí ag fear go mbidís ana-mhuar lena chéile.* (*Seanachas Amhlaoibh*, p285)

In the meaning “head over heels”, *tón {tar ceann}*, *tar* does not lenite *ceann*. *Ceann* has a generic meaning here, just as “head” and “heels” do in the English phrase. Yet Ua Laoghaire consistently has lenition where *thar cheann* means “on behalf of”. Comparing *thar cheann an fhir* (“on behalf of the man”) and *thar ceann a thí* (“past the end of his house”), it seems that *thar-cheann* in the meaning “on behalf of” has become fused in Muskerry Irish as a single hyphenated word. Where *ceann* forms part of a following noun phrase (*ceann a thí*), there is no lenition, fitting the pattern whereby lenition is rarely found with noun phrases after *thar*. This leaves us with the awkward conclusion that, in regard to Ua Laoghaire’s published Irish, the *chuaigh an bhanaltra thar ceann an dochtúra* given in *Graiméar Gaeilge* appears to contain a reference to a nurse doing somersaults over a doctor’s head. In Ua Laoghaire’s Irish, the correct sentence would be *chuaigh an bhanaltra thar-cheann an dochtúra*.

4. Lenition and non-lenition after *gan*

There is also considerable variation in lenition after *gan* in Ua Laoghaire’s works in a way that is hard to reconcile with Standard explanations without resort to the assumption that numerous typographical errors stand in his published works. Let us review the explanation given in §4.9 of *Graiméar Gaeilge*:

- i. Lenition of nouns and verbal nouns is generally found after *gan*. Examples given include *gan mhaith* and *fear gan phósadh*.
- ii. A qualified noun is not lenited: *gan cúis ar bith aige leis*.
- iii. Where *gan* stands in a noun phrase, there is no lenition. Examples include *abair leis gan pósadh* and *mol dó gan pingin a chaitheamh*.
- iv. The letters *d*, *f*, *s* and *t* are not lenited: *gan dabht*, *gan freagra*, but an exception is indicated for *d'éalraig sé gan fhios [dom]*.
- v. A proper noun is not lenited: *gan Micheál [sic]*.

This presentation correctly shows that *gan*, ending in a dental consonant, does not lenite dental consonants. The only non-dental consonant so unlenited after *gan* is *f*, presumably owing to the obliterative effect of lenition on the pronunciation of an *f*. However, is *gan fhios* a genuine

exception? This phrase is uniformly found in Ua Laoghaire's works with the preposition *i*, although he uses the spellings *a gan fhios*, *a ganfhios* and *i gan fhios* (reflecting the fact that the pronunciation of *i* tends towards /ə/ in a broad environment). *Gan fhios* on its own with no preceding preposition is not found in Ua Laoghaire's works. Once the preposition is given, it seems clear that *ganfhios* is a noun, and is thus better written as a single word, and that consequently we are dealing here with medial lenition within a word, and not with lenition of *fhios* after the preposition *gan* (although we don't see eclipsis of *ganfhios* after *i*, possibly because *ganfhios* is a substantivisation of *gan+fhios*). Once the decision is taken to standardise, not on *i ganfhios*, /ə'ganəs~ganəs/, but on *gan fhios*, then an arbitrary exception is generated as the deletion of the preposition *i* appears to leave a preposition *gan* governing a noun *fhios* with lenition. This is important, because, *i ganfhios* aside, *gan* does not lenite *fhios* or any other word starting with *f*, as we see in the following examples from Ua Laoghaire's works and from the stories of Ó Loingsigh. There is therefore no "exception".

71. *Gan fhios an méid sin a bheith acu ní ró fhuirisde iad do chur suas chun na hoibre. (Táin Bó Cuailgne, p181)*
 72. "Fear feasa isea é sin." Gháir sé. "Tá sé gan fhios!" aduairt sé. (Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh, p270)

Verbal nouns after *gan*

The main difficulty in addressing Ua Laoghaire's use of lenition after *gan* relates to rules i) to iii). The presentation in *Graiméar Gaeilge* argues that, not just nouns, but verbal nouns too, are generally lenited after *gan* (*fear gan phósadh*), unless the verbal noun stands in a noun clause (*abair leis gan pósadh*, where presumably the point being made is that *gan pósadh* could be replaced by *é* and is therefore a noun clause). Yet there is no evidence of any such "rule" in Muskerry Irish (although it seems *fear gan phósadh* is accepted in other dialects of Irish). See the following examples:

73. *An driotháir léi a bhí gan pósadh d'imthigh sé i n-aonfheacht leó, ag brath air go bhfaghadh sé inead i n-arm an rígh. (Séadna, p242)*
 74. *Fear singil a b'ea é, gan pósa, agus bhíodh seó daoine ag obair aige. (Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh, p112)*

Sentences (75) to (79) below show that verbal nouns are not lenited in Muskerry Irish after *gan*:

75. *Nuair a tháinig na Lochlanaigh níor fhághadar [recte: fhágadar] aon nídh i bhfuirm leabhair, d'ár tháinig fé n-a súilibh, gan cur sa teine nó sa n-uisge. (Niamh, p9)*
 76. *Ní h-aon iongnadh nár fágadh Tadhg Óg abhfad gan breith soir go Ceann Cora. (Niamh, p13)*
 77. *Do cuireadh a leithéid de sgárd i gcroidhe an bhuachala gur fhan sé ar an ait sin gan coruige as ar feadh abhfad. (Niamh, p154)*
 78. *Nuair a rith Amhlaoibh do rith Connla 'n-a dhiaigh, agus ansan do rith an méid a bhí gan marbhughadh de mhuintir Shíguird. (Niamh, p333)*
 79. *Do fágadh an túr gan críochnú agus d'imthigh na daoine ó n-a chéile 'n-a mbuidhnbh fé leith. (Sgéalaidheachta as an mBíobla Naomhtha, Vol 1, p20)*
 80. *Nuair a dhúisigh sé as a chodla is amhlaidh a fuair sé é féin agus é ag rádh na bhfocal úd d'fhág sé gan chríochnughadh nuair a bhí sé ag caint leis an mnaoi chosnochtaithe ar an gcnuic. (Séadna, p288)*

Sentence (80) is a counterexample that may contain a typographical error: *gan críochnughadh* would seem a better choice in this sentence, as is shown by the example of sentence (79) from Ua

Laoghaire's account of the confusion of tongues during the building of the Tower of Babel.

Yet the principle that verbal nouns are not lenited after *gan* in Muskerry Irish is rendered somewhat murky by the availability of examples where nouns that are verbal nouns are lenited after *gan* when they are used as ordinary nouns. The following examples, which show lenition of *cosg* and *codla* after *gan*, appear to illustrate the use of these nouns as ordinary nouns, and not as verbal nouns:

81. ... *ag dul ar aghaidh go breagh réidh gan chosg gan cheataighe.* (Niamh, p107)
82. *Ins na mainistiribh agus ins na h-eagailsibh, ar fuid na h-Éirean, bhí sagairt agus manaigh agus mná riaghalta, do ló agus d'oidhche, gan bhia gan deoch gan chodla gan suan, ag briseadh a gcroíde ag glaothach go h-árd ar Dhia...* (Niamh, pp275-276)

Gan chodladh means “without any sleep”. By contrast, *gan codladh* means “not to sleep” (e.g. as in *b'fhéidir go mb'fhearra dhuit gan codladh ar an gcluais sin* in Ua Laoghaire's *Seanmóin is Trí Fichid*, Vol 1, p238). While such verbal noun phrases are often noun clauses, this has nothing to do with whether the verbal noun is in a noun clause or not, and relates to the dual status of many verbal nouns as ordinary nouns.

Bracketed-off phrases after *gan*

In the rules set out in *Graiméar Gaeilge*, it is stated that a qualified noun is not lenited after *gan* and that where *gan* stands in a noun phrase there is no lenition. This confused presentation fails to grasp that rules ii) and iii) are the same rule: in *gan {cúis ar bith aige leis}* and *mol dó gan {pingin a chaitheamh}*, we are dealing with the bracketing off of phrases. This was pointed out in an undated note by Ua Laoghaire to Shán Ó Cuív held in the G1,276 collection of manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland, in which Ua Laoghaire explained that in *níor fhéadas gan {gáire dhéanamh}* there is no lenition of *gáire* because *gan* governs the entire phrase *gáire dhéanamh*. The Bracketed Construction can be seen with qualified nouns and nouns in a noun-verbal noun construction. Compare lenition and non-lenition after *gan* in the following sentences:

83. ... *gan cead ó Mhurchadh nó ó Niamh.* (Niamh, p147)
84. *Ní fhéadaim gan grádh do'n Mhaighdin Mhuire do mhothughadh ag lasadh istigh am' chroíde nuair fheuchaim ar an ímhágh sin!* (Niamh, p105)
85. *Ní'l rígh cúige againn ná measan go bhféadfadh sé féin a bhfuil de Dhanaraibh i n-Éirinn do mharbhú' nó do dhibirt amáireach dá mba mhaith leis é, gan cabhair ná congnamh ó aon rígh cúige eile.* (Niamh, pp33-34)
86. *Má fuaradh isé rud a dhein gach rígh des na ríghthibh thuaidh 'ná cúbadh chuige agus M'lsheachlainn a dh'fhágáil gan chabhair gan chongnamh.* (Niamh, p98)
87. *Is é a mhairbh na fir seo, agus do mhairbh sé iad le n-a láimh féin gan chabhair gan chongnamh ó aoinne.* (Táin Bó Cuailgne, p69)
88. *Bhí claidhmhte agus tuaghana agus píci agus sleághana agus clogaid, agus gach aon tsaghas gleus cogaidh, caithte anso agus ansúd, cuid des na neithibh sin geall le bheith críochnuighthe, agus gan cuid acu ach ar éigin tusnuighthe.* (Niamh, p61)
89. *Ní raibh lá gan priúnsa éigin, nó buidhean éigin, d'uaislibh nó de mhaithibh móra, ó cheanntar éigin de'n tír, ag teacht go ríghtheighlach Bhriain, a d'iaraidh cómhairle, nó ag socarughadh cúise.* (Niamh, p163)
90. *Ní gan mórán trioblóide agus mórán cogaidh a chuir sé an méid sin de thír na h-Éirean fé smacht a láimhe.* (Niamh, p19)

There is a difference between *gan chead* (e.g. *bhí Cormac istigh cheana féin, gan chead* in *Séadna* p160) and *gan {cead ó Mhurchadh}*. *{Cead ó Mhurchadh}* is an entire phrase governed by *gan* without lenition in the Bracketed Construction. Some usages are a little harder to explain definitively. For example, *thánag isteach uaim féin, gan chead ó aoinne* in Ua Laoghaire's *An*

Cleasaidhe (p3). Here, *gan chead ó aoinne* appears to have *cead* as part of a wider phrase, but *gan chead ó aoinne* seems vaguer and less specific in meaning than *gan {cead ó Mhurchadh}* as it essentially means the same thing as *gan chead* with no further qualification, and so may possibly be accepted as it stands in the published text of *An Cleasaidhe*. We can also compare *gan {cead uaimse}* in *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh* (p72) and *gan chuire gan chead uaimse* in the same source (p15): in the latter example *gan chead* is part of the stock generic phrase *gan chuire gan chead*, with lenition on both nouns, and the subsequent addition of *uaimse* does not throw the whole into the Bracketed Construction.

Gan {grádh do'n Mhaighdin Mhuire do mothughadh} exemplifies the principle that bracketed-off phrases, governed as a whole by *gan*, are not lenited. I can't find attestation of *gan ghrá(dh)*, but the theoretical approach being outlined here would anticipate *duine gan ghrá* as being the correct form where *grá* did not form part of a bracketed-off phrase. Sentence (85) shows that bracketed-off phrases do not need to contain a verbal noun: the qualification of *cabhair* and *congnamh* in *gan {cabhair ná congnamh ó aon rígh cúige eile}* is sufficient. The general unqualified use found in Ua Laoghaire's works, *gan chabhair gan chongnamh*, is illustrated in (86). Once again, sentence (87) shows there are instances with lenition that are harder to definitively rule as typographical errors: it may be that *gan chabhair gan chongnamh ó aoinne* is correct, because it essentially means the same as *gan chabhair gan chongnamh*. It seems difficult to deny that a certain amount of variation in usage is found, defying precise categorisation of usage in each case.

In sentence (88) *gan {cuid acu}* gives the Bracketed Construction. Compare *duine gan chuid*, “one who has nothing”, in Ua Laoghaire's *Papers on Irish Idiom* (p36), where *cuid* does not form part of a wider phrase. In (89) *gan {priúnsa éigin ... ag teacht}* *priúnsa* stands in the Bracketed Construction either because of qualification by *éigin* or because of the noun's standing in a wider phrase with *ag teacht*, or both. Sentence (90) is given above to show that *gan mórán*, *gan puinn* and *gan pioc* and similar phrases are found without lenition because *mórán*, *puinn* and *pioc* always form part of wider phrases (*gan {mórán trioblóide}* here) that therefore stand in the Bracketed Construction.

Dynamic lenition

A further issue with lenition or non-lenition after *gan* that is entirely overlooked in the Standard grammars is the concept of “dynamic lenition”. Gerald O’Nolan explains in his *New Era Grammar* (p113) that dynamic lenition is “employed to mark certain psychological distinctions”. He argues that *duine gan cos* means “a person without legs”, whereas *duine gan chos* means “someone deprived of a particular leg”. This seems to draw on Ua Laoghaire's own explanation of the use of lenition after *gan*:

Chuadar abhaile gan creach gan cath, they went home without battle or spoils. In this form the words *creach* and *cath* are taken in a generic sense, and the English is “without spoil, without battle”. Aspiration of the words would signify that they were used in an individual manner, and the English would be “without a spoil, without a battle”. The use of the initial aspiration in the Irish has the effect which the use of the indefinite article has in English. It turns “battle” in general to an individual “battle”. (*Notes on Irish Words and Usages*, pp140-141)

Once again, we are back to the distinction in English between the noun with the indefinite article and no article at all. The “generic” use can sometimes be easier to grasp, and rendered more idiomatically in English, with the use of the word *any*: *duine gan cos*, “a person without *any* legs”, i.e. a person without legs in general, a person with no legs; whereas *duine gan chos* is “a person without a (particular) leg”. The distinction between generic and indefinite usages (*gan cos* vs. *gan*

chos) can be harder to read in the case of abstract nouns, as nouns like *creideamh* are nearly always found in generic use (Ua Laoghaire nearly always writes *gan creideamh*), and yet *ciall* and *meabhair* are consistently found lenited (*gan chiall*, *gan mheabhair*), despite the fact that, as abstract nouns, they appear generic too.

The comparison with the use of “any” in English idiom is not always helpful. While in *gan cos*, “any” can bring out the generic sense (“without any legs”), it seems this is only the case with countable nouns. By contrast, with uncountable nouns, use of the English word “any” seems to correspond to the Irish indefinite, non-generic usage, as in *gan chostas*, “without any cost”. This seems clear from Eleanor Knott’s explanation in the notes to Ua Laoghaire’s *Lughaidh Mac Con* (p77 therein) that lenited use after *gan* often corresponds to an indefinite article “any” in English (“*gan chosdas*, ‘without any expense’, but *gan cosdas*, ‘not under expense’”), where apparently the generic sense of the uncountable noun “expense” is shown in the Irish by lack of lenition in the latter phrase. We can now see how the comparison with the English word “any” confuses the issue by setting out the usages as follows:

- i. Countable nouns used generically: *gan cos* (“without any legs”).
- ii. Countable nouns used indefinitely: *gan chos* (“without a particular leg”).
- iii. Uncountable nouns used generically: *gan costas* (“without cost”).
- iv. Uncountable nouns used indefinitely: *gan chostas* (“without any cost”), which can be seen as a truncation of *gan aon chostas*.

Let us in passing use the concept of indefiniteness to analyse usage with personal nouns. In *conus fhéadfainn mo thaobh de’n obair a dhéanamh anois agus gan Brian anso?* (Niamh, p194) we see that personal names are not lenited after *gan*. We could argue that *gan {Brian anso}* is essentially an elliptical truncation of *gan {Brian do bheith anso}* and thus stands in the Bracketed Construction. But we could also use the distinction between *gan costas* and *gan chostas* to argue that *gan Bhrian*, were it attested, would mean “without any person called Brian”, with an indefinite sense.

We can apply the generic/indefinite distinction to analyse the following sentences:

91. *Bhí fhios ag Brian go maith, agus bhí fhios ag an uile dhuine des na h-oidíbh a bhí ag stiúruighadh na h-oibre sin, ná fuil ach diabhal ó ifrean sa bhfear a geóbhaidh sgoilugheacht gan Creideamh.* (Niamh, p180)
92. *Ó, a dhaoine gan mheabhair, gan chreideamh i nbhúr gcroidhe, is daingean atáthaoi sáidhte sa tsaoghal so nuair nách féidir libh aon bhlas fhagháil ach ar neithibh colnaidhe.* (Aithris ar Chríost, p44)
93. *Ní dóich liom gur deineadh éagcóir aigne riamh ar dhaoineibh óga, i n-aon pháirt de’n domhan, chómh mór agus a deineadh ar aos óg na h-Éirean nuair a cuireadh ortha an saghas múineadh sin a dh’fhág sa deire iad gan Bhéarla gan Ghaeluinn.* (Mo Sgéal Féin, p54)
94. *Dá gcaithidís an chéad deich mbliana de d’shaoghal-sa, a Thaidhg, ag imirt na céirde ort chun na Gaeluinne mhúine dhuit bheidhfá gan Gaeluinn i n-aois do dheich mblián duit agus bheidhfá ar bheagán Gaeluinne indiu.* (Sgothbhualadh, p48)

In sentence (91) we see Ua Laoghaire’s typical use of *gan Creideamh* without lenition. As with the English phrase “without Faith”, the Christian faith is being referred to in a genericised way—the specificity of the Christian faith as a definite noun is not being highlighted. By contrast, *gan chreideamh* in (92), the only identifiable instance of *gan chreideamh* in Ua Laoghaire’s works, is an indefinite use (“faithless, without any faith”): both *gan mheabhair* and *gan chreideamh* are given with lenition, giving *gan mheabhair* the sense of *gan aon mheabhair* and *gan chreideamh* the sense of *gan aon chreideamh* (and the tendency in Irish where *gan* governs two nouns starting with

lenitable consonants is for both or neither of the words to have lenition). Similarly, *gan chiall*, as regularly found in Ua Laoghaire's works, can be understood to mean *gan aon chiall*. The fundamental meaning of the phrases *gan chiall* and *gan mheabhair* tends to demand the indefinite use, as someone who is "senseless" and "mindless" is always someone "without *any* sense".

In (93) *gan Bhéarla gan Ghaeluinn* seems to have an indefinite sense ("without any English or Irish"). This usage is regularly found in Ua Laoghaire's works, but Ua Laoghaire occasionally writes *gan Gaeluinn* elsewhere, as in (94). This may be a typographical error, as it becomes a little forced to read in a nuance of distinction between "without Irish" and "without any Irish/with no Irish", or, alternatively *Gaeluinn*, as with *gan Creideamh* above, can be parsed as a genericised usage that doesn't show the article.

95. *Do shroiseadar Mágh Faithlinn gan brón gan báth. (Eisirt, p27)*
96. *Agus an chéad lá de laethibh an aráin gan giost nuair a deintí idhbirt na Cásga, dubhairt a dheisgiobuil leis: Cár mhaith leat go raghmís agus go ndéanfaimís an Cháisg d'ollamhú dhuit le n-ithe? (Na Cheithre Soisgéil, p127)*
97. *Chuir sé an dréimire suas de gan congnamh, agus do crochadh é. (Séadna, p123)*
98. *Táim annso gan mac gan ua. (Lughaidh Mac Con, p68)*
99. *Dá mbeinn choíche gan bean, ní thógfainn í. (Seanachas Amhlaoibh, p276)*
100. *Is fada ar fán me gan bhean gan pháiste ó thugas grá don liún so. (Seanachas Amhlaoibh, p332)*
101. *Donchadh: ... Ar ball beid siad gan caint, gan teanga. Tadhg: 'Seadh, agus gan fiacala. (Sgothbhualadh, p40)*
102. *Is maith atá 'fhios ag an Yank gur 'mó obair de'n tsórd san atá bainte aige, thall i n-America, as an mbeithigheach mbocht gan chaint gan fiacala, le cheithre fichid blian. (Sgothbhualadh, p40)*

Gan brón gan báth in (95) above, literally "without sorrow or drowning", means something like "without mishap", but we see here that neither the ordinary noun *brón* nor the verbal noun *báth* in this alliterative phrase is lenited. The generic meaning is brought out by leaving the nouns unlenited. A further consideration may be the desirability of balance in *gan X gan Y* alliterative phrases where either neither or both of the nouns would tend to be given lenition.

In (96) we see that *arán gan giost* ("unleavened bread") contains a generic noun that is therefore unlenited (*gan ghiost* would mean "without any yeast, with no yeast"). In (97) the example of *gan congnamh* appears at first glance to be an error, contradicting numerous examples of *gan chongnamh* in Ua Laoghaire's Irish, but *gan chongnamh* may mean "without *any* help", whereas *gan congnamh* means "unaided". The slight difference in nuance may be justified. *Gan mac gan ua* in (98) has the generic meaning: "with no sons or grandsons". *Gan bean* in (99) from the folklore of Amhlaoibh Ó Loingsigh has a similar generic meaning: "with no wife". *Gan bhean* in (100) from the same source appears similarly generic and so must be considered a counterexample illustrating variation in the dialect: the contrast between generic and indefinite usages seems the most tenuous of the principles governing usage of lenition after *gan*, producing greater attested variation in usage.

Examples (101) and (102) on the same page of Ua Laoghaire's *Sgothbhualadh* are interesting because the context is the same, and so it is probable that one of the sentences contains a typographical error. Ua Laoghaire's works frequently have *gan caint* of someone struck dumb ("speechless"), and consequently this form seems preferable. Otherwise, we would be forced to claim a nuance of distinction, with *gan chaint* meaning "without *any* speech, with *no* speech" (*gan aon chaint*); the distinction might seem forced.

It seems logical that "without food" would be *gan bia*. Yet usage in Ua Laoghaire's works evinces variation (phrases such as *gan {biadh ag á chlainn}* in *Séadna*, p48, are excluded from

consideration here, as *biadh* stands in the Bracketed Construction in such sentences):

103. *B'fhearr liom é dhéanamh 'ná bheith aon oídhche amháin gan biadh.* (*An Craos-Deamhan*, p69; numerous similar examples can be found throughout this work)
104. *Do chloiseas thú, anois beag, 'ghá rádh go rabhais gan bhiadh, gan deoch, gan airgead.* (*Séadna*, p9)
105. *Daoine ag teacht abhaile ar meisge. Tighthe gan compórd. Clann gan bhia, gan eudach, gan slacht, gan áird, gan múine, gan tabhairt suas, gan phaidir gan Chré.* (*Cómhairle Ár Leasa*, p142)

One could attempt to shoehorn usages in sentences (104) and (105) into the theoretical framework outlined by Knott and O’Nolan, but dynamic lenition as a theoretical approach may at times become little more than an attempt to explain instability in Ua Laoghaire’s grammatical usages. Compare also the following two sentences:

106. *Raghad go h-ifrean gan crích gan fóirchean mura ndéinir-se, a rígh Caisil, mé shaoradh ó'n mallacht so a chuir muintir Chorcaighe orm!* (*An Craos-Deamhan*, p69)
107. *... i radharc an Athar Síoruidhe, i gcaitheamh na síoruidheachta gan chrích gan fóirchean.* (*Seanmóin is Trí Fichid*, Vol 2, p27)

There seems very little reason to come down in favour of either *gan crích* or *gan chrích* as the preferable form. *Gan crích* makes slightly more sense, but it seems we are dealing with an area of grammar here that allows for considerable variation in usage.

Finally, use of *gan mhoill* and *gan moill* deserves attention.

108. *Agus gan mhoill d'fhágadar ansan na líonta, agus do leanadar é.* (*Na Cheithre Soisgéil*, p8)
109. *Bhéarfadh an chú air gan mhoill.* (*Seanachas Amhlaoibh*, p126)
110. *Do bheadh té agus na sóláistí eile acu gan moill t'réis dinnéir, agus na nithe céanna tímpal a héinnéag a chlog istoíche.* (*Seanachas Amhlaoibh*, p406)

Sentence (108) shows the regular use of Ua Laoghaire with lenition in *gan mhoill*. No examples without lenition have been identified in Ua Laoghaire’s works. Sentence (109) shows this usage can also be found in Ó Loingsigh’s folklore, but an unlenited variant is also attested, in sentence (110). As “without delay” means more or less the same thing as “without any delay”, Ua Laoghaire always has lenition in this phrase, but it may also be that his editors standardised on such usage when presented with manuscripts with many of the dots for lenition missing.

Conclusion

Ua Laoghaire’s works are an indispensable source of information on Cork Irish, but need to be used with care owing to the failure of the editors of the original works to ensure that each instance of lenition, or the lack of it, was given correctly. It seems Ua Laoghaire’s views on the role of lenition in parsing a sentence evince a feel for the language that may have been more common in the days when there were many monoglots around. Rules and exceptions to those rules given in modern grammar books such as *Graiméar Gaeilge* tackle variation in the use of lenition, but without much insight into the fundamental meaning of such things in the language itself. Some of the rules given in *Graiméar Gaeilge* appear to be incorrect, unless they can be substantiated with reference to other dialects. Ua Laoghaire’s brief comments on the rules of lenition in Irish provide the basis for learners to begin to appreciate the grammatical structure of the Irish language, not in terms of a list of rules, but rather as a language with its own internal logic, the way native speakers come to the

language themselves.

One of the roles played by lenition in an Irish sentence is to show how the sentence is put together in terms of its grouping into phrases. The Bracketed Construction first explained by O’Nolan is useful in understanding this. In addition to this, the fact that Irish has only one article, and thus needs to express in a different way from English the distinction between generic uses of nouns and indefinite and definite uses adds a further layer of complexity. The stylistic dropping of the article in Irish needs to be taken account of too. Even when all these things are taken together, it remains clear that many printing errors stand in Ua Laoghaire’s works, leaving numerous sentences where the desirability of the use or non-use of lenition could be debated.

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