

ON THE OLD IRISH FIGURA ETYMOLOGICA

Commenting on the use of the nasalizing rel. clause in OIr., Thurneysen's *Grammar of Old Irish* remarks that its employment is obligatory 'when the antecedent is the verbal noun of the verb of the relative clause' (GOI §5499, 505). The construction here outlined, where two (or more) words of a similar etymology are brought into close syntactic connection, is generally referred to as the 'Figura Etymologica' and is a feature for which equivalents may be found in many other languages.¹

Gagnepain, in his *Syntaxe du nom verbal dans les langues celtiques* (i.91), says of the verbal noun 'un nom d'action se trouve être l'objet d'un verbe de même thème', and while ascribing to it a number of semantic functions he sees it in many cases as having no appreciable force. Quin (*Studia Celtica* ii.92) agrees with this noting that 'the verbal noun in this construction is simply a kind of particle, and is not to be translated literally'. McCone (*Ériu* xxx. 15, n.52) sees it as a means of marking the verbal expression and in a further study (*Ériu* xxxi.23-4) he has shown that, contrary to Thurneysen's ruling on the matter, the use of the nasalizing rel. is not mandatory in *figurae etymologicae* and gives three exx. from the OIr. glosses which do not display this supposedly obligatory nasal element.²

Quite apart from this important observation, Thurneysen's description of the construction seems not entirely satisfactory on another count, namely, its failure to define the syntactic relationship between the antecedent and the rel. verb in such clauses.

Gagnepain³ sees the object of the rel. verb in the antecedent verbal noun, and in this syntactic analysis of the *figura etymologica* he is followed by Howells (*Studia Celtica* i. 54). McCone⁴ also sees the verbal noun in these cases as the object, but points out that in the case of a following passive verb it functions as its grammatical subject. He makes the further observation that the presence of an infix pronoun in the rel. verbal complex makes for a double subject or object.

On closer examination of this question, however, it would seem necessary to distinguish three main syntactic types of *figura etymologica* as found in OIr. rel.

¹For exx. from other languages see Delbrück, *Vergleichende Syntax der indogermanischen Sprachen* Band iii Teil 1 p. 365ff; Leumann-Hoffmann-Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik* Band ii p.790ff. I owe these references to Dr. V. Capcova.

²Wb. 8 c 3, 13 a 34, Sg. 27 a 7, to which may be added Wb. 15 d 20, Ml. 30 b 2, 60 b 17, 115 b 4, Sg. 183 b 3.

³Ibid. p. 92.

⁴Ibid. p. 23.

clauses.⁵ The first of these is that in which the antecedent acts as the grammatical subject of a passive verb, e.g.

- (1) *in gním gníther foraib* 'the deed that is done upon them' Sg. 140 a 2.

In the second type the antecedent functions as the object of an active transitive verb, e.g.

- (2) *in guide ron-gádsa* 'the prayer that I have prayed' *Fél. Epil.* 421.

In the third type, however, the rel. verb., in addition to its antecedent verbal noun, already has a following or an infixed subject or object, e.g.

- (3) *a forcital forndob-canar* 'the teaching by which ye are taught' Wb. 3 b 23.

Disregarding whatever semantic function the verbal noun might have in these exx., from the standpoint of Classical OIr. syntax, *figurae etymologicae* of the first two types, consisting as they do of subj./obj. + rel. verb. are quite straightforward and cause no syntactic difficulty. They are also quite commonly found in all periods of the early language. The third type, on the other hand, would seem to be far more complex and a problem of syntax is raised in trying to accommodate the antecedent verbal noun in the syntax of the following rel. clause which already has a subject or object. The object of the present study, therefore, is to examine this tripartite type of *figura etymologica* and to try to ascertain what syntactic relationship the verbal noun has with the following verb. Before attempting any such examination, however, it will be of use to look at some more exx. of the construction on which the discussion can be based. The following collection, which is not intended to be exhaustive, has been arranged on the basis of passive v. active verb and also on that of pronoun v. noun as subject or object.

The first exx. are of the same syntactic pattern as (3) above, thus:

- (4) *nach molad rundam-moladsa a dóe* 'every praise wherewith I have been praised, O God' *Ml.* 88 a 17.
- (5) *is díguin dom-gonar imaib* 'it is a violation of my honour that I suffer in regard to you' *MU*² 1014.
- (6) *amal tofunn dotsésta⁶* 'as [though it were] a pursuit wherewith thou wert pursued' *Ériu* i 200. §25.
- (7) *na(ch) fōcre fond[o]t-ocerthar* 'irgendeiner Mahnung, durch die du gemahnt wirst' *Bürgschaft* 22 §65.b (antecedent + passive verb + pron. subj.).

⁵ A fourth type, where the antecedent is the subj. of an active trans. verb, is also found (e.g. *cech gabail rusgob* 'every conquest which has conquered it' *Ériu* iv 128 §9). This type, however, would not seem to be of such common occurrence and is not considered in the present study.

⁶ The form *dotsésta^e* is an emendation on the part of the editor. The mss. have *dotesta, testa* and *teasda*.

- (8) *tuarcain do-fuaircitis inna grán* ‘the grains used to be crushed by pounding’ Sg. 184 b 3.
- (9) *In comrac conrecatar in da lleth* ‘the meeting wherewith the two halves meet’ Thes. ii 253. 20.
- (10) *in fobdod fombaiter in da lled* ‘the submersion with which the two halves are submerged’ Thes. ii 254. 1.
- (11) *din menbugud menbaigthe cach tūara chathes duine* ‘of the chewing whereby every food that a person eats was chewed’ Corm. Y 518.
- (12) *imdergad imdergt[h] ar duine* ‘the blushing whereby a person is caused to blush’ ibid. 826.
- (13) *Indar lat ba indarcán⁷ asnortt cach foiltne ina chend* ‘you would think that it was a hammering wherewith each hair had been driven into his head’ TBC² 391.
- (14) *is coll ro coillead ar tarbfeis* ‘it is a spoiling wherewith our bullfeast has been spoiled’ BDD² 160.
- (15) *is focruic fo crenaiter na mna so dia finib* ‘it is by a fee to their kin that these women are compensated’ Ériu xii 26 §32 (BCrólige).
- (16) *ecubus cach ndī(u)mus⁸ do-midider mamu* ‘Gewissenlosigkeit ist jedes Mißachten, mit dem Obliegenheiten mißachtet werden’ ZCP xiv 386 §51. (antecedent + passive verb + noun subj.)
- (17) *is cúrsagad rond-cúrsagusa* ‘it is a reprimand with which I have reprimanded him’ Wb. 19 a 6.
- (18) *in firinne⁹ rond-fīrianaigestarsom dia* ‘the justice wherewith God justified him’ Ml. 19 d 16.
- (19) *a llethe rissan ingrainn ata-rograinn saul* ‘as to the persecution wherewith Saul persecuted them’ Ml. 30 b 2.
- (20) *ni arindí bed n-aipert asind-robradsom* ‘not that it was as a word that he said it’ Ml. 50 b 8.

⁷Note the reading *tinnarcán* (of LU) which is the verbal noun of the synonymous *do-indoing*.

⁸*DIL* D col.154.69, keeps the reading of the MS. and accordingly enters the word under *diwmus* (* dí-uss-mid) ‘arrogance, pride, overestimating’. Two considerations would speak against this however. First, none of the meanings which *diwmus* usually has would suit the context here and, second, the idiom involved usually calls for the VN of the verb of the following verb (cf. *GOI* §499). It would seem far better to follow Thurneysen and to read *dīmus* (*dí-mid) taking it as the otherwise unattested VN of the following *do-midider*, with the meaning ‘contempt, disregard (Germ. Mißachten)’ This, if correct, would suit the context better and would render the suggestion of *DIL* (cf. *do-midithir*), that the verbal form *do-midider* (*dí-mid) might be taken as a form of *do-midithir* (*to-mid), unnecessary.

⁹Strictly speaking the VN of *fīriánaigedar* is not *fīrinne* but *fīriánugud*.

- (21) *iardsint soirad sin rond-sóer* 'after that deliverance wherewith He delivered him' *MI.* 52.
- (22) *dond fritobairt maill frita-taibret na dorche don soillsi* 'from the slow opposition with which the darkness opposes itself to the light' *Sg.* 183 b 3.
- (23) *cid guin nodgonam*¹⁰ 'even if I were to kill you' *TBC*² 3640.
- (24) *is cor roda lláus immudu* 'I have lost it' *Fraech* 154.
(antecedent + active trans. verb + pron. obj.)
- (25) *deirchóinteá de-rochóinet a n-icc* 'of the despair wherewith they despair of their salvation' *Wb.* 21 b 1.
- (26) *in roithiud roithes a laithe alaill riam* 'the impulse wherewith the day impels another before it' *MI.* 42 b 27.
- (27) *in aimsir in tindnacuil sin didiu du-n-ecomnacht dia inní saúl* 'at the time of that giving whereby God delivered Saul' *MI.* 55 c 1.
- (28) *combad cutrummae frisin seirc*¹¹ *ro-car crist in n-eclais* 'that it should be equal to the love wherewith Christ loved the Church' *MI.* 65 d 5.
- (29) *derchoiniud do-rochóinsemni ar n-ic* 'the despair wherewith we had despaired of our salvation' *MI.* 89 a 6.
- (30) *air is cuit adaill ad-n-ellatsidi in fini* 'for it is only a passing visit that they make to the vine' *MI.* 102 a 15.
- (31) *im-folngi inducbail do in molad ro-mmolastar dia* 'the praise wherewith he has praised God causes glory to him' *MI.* 126 b 16.
- (32) *in failsigud failsigetar aitrebhacha persin* 'the demonstration wherewith possessives demonstrate person' *Sg.* 198 a 24.
- (33) *in mesad mesas in sacart in cailech* 'the examination wherewith the priest examines the Chalice' *Thes.* ii 253.14.
- (34) *int ammus admidethar a combach* 'the effort which he essays to break it' *ibid.* 253.14..
- (35) *don t-seirc ro char Mac in Oicc Chaire hEabarbatthi* 'of the love wherewith Mac in Oicc (had) loved Caire hEabarbatthi *RC* vi 191.10.
- (36) *clóenad clóenfatsa*¹² *mo chend fair* 'the nodding I shall nod (my head) at him' *TBC*² 705.

¹⁰Sic. C. O'Rahilly (*TBC* Rec. 1, 1976, p. 123) suggests reading *nodgonaimn* in a note on the form.

¹¹*Serc* acts as a suppletive VN to *caraid*. As there is no etymological connection between the two forms it is not fully correct to speak of a 'figura etymologica' here. Cf. further exx. (35) & (51) and *Quin*, op. cit. p. 92.

¹²Although the verbal form is *MÍr.* the syntax is unmistakably the same. The original probably had *clóenad no-clóenubsa*, the form which is restored by Strachan in his *Stories from the Táin*.

- (37) *asbert is marbad ro marb in fer* 'he said that he had killed the man' LL 37032.
- (38) *māth bēoguin rogonae nech banscál* 'if it be a life-wound any one inflicts on a woman' Cáin Ad. §44.
- (39) *scrūdan scrūdas in file a n-airc[h]etal* 'the examination wherewith the poet examines the poem' Corm. Y 1275.
(antecedent + active trans. verb + noun obj.)

In the following exx. only two of the three elements, i.e. antecedent and verb, are to be found. Here, however, we find that the verb is either passive or intransitive and the antecedent can therefore not function as its grammatical object. Considerations of sense or of syntax also rule out the possibility of its being its subject. For these reasons it would seem appropriate to consider them with the foregoing exx.¹³

- (40) *dun elled ass-lentar huanaib salaib corpthaib* 'for the pollution whereby a man is defiled by bodily stains' Ml. 92 d 12.
- (41) *bádud ro báded* 'he was drowned' LL 2526.
- (42) *in ternam terna Ionás* 'the escape with which Jonas escaped' PH 3432.
- (43) *masu badud ro báded* 'si elle se serait noyée' RC viii 152.23.
- (44) *Acht is firiu conid badud ra badit* 'but it is more true (to say) that they were drowned' LL 31909.
- (45) *conid teasarcain rotheasarcthe asin tenid*¹⁴ 'so that it was a deliverance wherewith they were delivered out of the fire' *Ériu* v 32.33.
- (46) *dibugud rodibaighi in mathair* 'the mother has died' *Corp. Iuris Hib.* 215.29.
- (47) *in tairissem do-n-airissid indi* 'the steadfastness with which ye abide in it' Wb. 14 c 43.

¹³ Some of the verbs in the exx. listed here may also be used transitively and one therefore might see an accusative relationship between the antecedent and the verb. In all of these exx. however, the intransitive use of the verb seems to be by far the more common. If we take for example the verb *as-luí* 'escapes' we find that while it sometimes is used transitively it governs the accusative of the person, place or thing escaped from, and obviously such a meaning would not suit here. Alternatively one might suggest that some of these verbs were originally transitive and that the VN was used as a 'cognate accusative' when the object of the verb was not otherwise expressed. This is not an infrequent occurrence in OIr., e.g. *amail bith gait nogatad* 'as if he had stolen' *Ériu* vii 156 §11. One might then see this VN being used pleonastically with such a verb when it had another object, much in the same manner as infixes or suffixed pronouns (Cf. *GOI* §421; *Breatnach Celtica* xii pp 87–91) may be used in such a role. Such an explanation, however, would only account for some of the exx. above. The syntactic problem with others would have to remain.

¹⁴Note the variant reading, *conid de tesaircti rontesaircc* given by the editor of the text.

- (48) *dun genim ro-n-genairsom hua athir* 'of the birth whereby He was born of the Father' *Ml.* 85 b 11.
- (49) *is sercud sercas-si la suide* 'it withers with him' *Ériu* xxiii 28.124.
- (50) *ar ba hēlud as-lōe fadessin a bás* 'denn er entrann selber dem Tode' *ZCP* xv. 343 §34.
(antecedent + intrans. vb.)

As has already been pointed out, the problem with the *exx.* given above is one of defining the relationship between the antecedent and the relative verb. The possibility of the antecedent verbal noun functioning as the subject or as the object must, I think, be discounted as none of the *exx.* (3)–(39) can be reconciled with any of the constructions in OIr. where the verb may have a double subject or object.¹⁵ Furthermore in the *exx.* listed (40)–(50) the passive or intransitive nature of the verb would rule out the possibility of the verbal noun functioning as object, while the sense or the syntax of the rel. clause would preclude its being the subject. However, the use of this tripartite type of *figura etymologica* is not confined to relative clauses as it is also to be found in non-rel. construction (with the verbal noun following the verb). An examination of this latter construction may, I think, afford a clue to the solution of the syntactic problem already discussed. Consider therefore the following:

- (51) *rot-carusa seirc lelbhán* 'I have loved you with the love of a babe' *BDD*²54.
- (52) *ata iiii[ar] hi tuaith folongaiter folug mboairec* 'there are three persons in the territory who are maintained according to the (standard of) maintenance of a *bóaire*' *Ériu* xii 40 §51 (BCrólige).
- (53) *dī-renar cach <n>idan ógdír[iu]* 'every pure person is paid with full *díre*' *Celtica* vi 226.25.
- (54) *rechtairi, techtairi folongtar lethfolug a flaithe* 'stewards and messengers are maintained at half the (standard of) maintenance due to their lords' *Crúth Gabl.* 484.
- (55) *fer gaibes fer béogabáil* 'a man who captures (another) man alive' *ibid.* 555.
- (56) *fer benas dam óenbéimmim* 'a man who kills an ox with one blow' *ibid.* 556.
- (57) *tus-nena nadmuim ānChrimthand* 'glorious Crimthand shall bind her with a bond' *Ériu* xvi 146.19.

¹⁵Cf. *GOI* §§249.2, 421, 422, 423.

- (58) *nosgabha gabail gerta*¹⁶ 'take them with a champion's grasp' *Ériu* i 202. §28.
- (59) *ros-gab in gaim cumgabáil*¹⁷ 'winter has begun to raise it' Murphy, *Lyrics* p. 78 §15.
- (60) *bennaid gabail i siuidiu óenbēm cona c[h]loideb* 'there he cut down a forked branch with one blow of his sword' TBC² 304.
- (61) *is ē nobenfad a crand óenbēim dia bun* 'it is he who would have cut down the tree with one blow from its root' *ibid.* 338.

and note further

- (62) '*Nā bad ed bas machtad lat*', *ol Fergus*; '*Bad bēim na gabla dia bun óenbēm*' 'do not think that marvellous', said Fergus, 'but rather the cutting of the forked branch from its root with one blow' *ibid.* 319.

with a verbal noun construction replacing the construction with a finite verb found in the preceding two parallel *exx.*

In these *exx.* too the use of the verbal noun is exceptional from the standpoint of Classical OIr. syntax. However, it is well known that in Archaic Irish the 'independent' dative case of the noun is frequently found without any governing preposition, and it is by taking the verbal noun as such an independent dative, mainly in its function an instrumental case, that its position in the foregoing *exx.* is best explained.¹⁸ If this be so then it might seem logical to see the relationship between the antecedent verbal noun and the rel. verb in the other *exx.* I have given as again a dative one.

These *exx.* are of two types (a) emphatic cleft sentences with the verbal noun being brought forward in periphrasis with the copula (e.g. *exx.*5, 13, 14 etc.) or (b) adjectival rel. clauses following their antecedents which are not stressed (e.g. *exx.*3, 4, 11 etc.) In the case of the former, a dative relationship in Classical OIr. would normally be denoted by means of a cleft sentence with a prepositional phrase brought forward in periphrasis with the copula, e.g.

- (63) *is ho suidib ropu esartae* 'it is by these he has been smitten' Tur. 94.

¹⁶The translation here is conjectural and is based on following the editor's suggestion that *gerta* is g.sg. of *gera(i)t* 'a champion'.

¹⁷O'Brien, *ÉC* iii. 372, takes the inf. pron. here as having genitival force (referring to the word *tonn* 'a wave' which occurs in the previous line of the poem, i.e. *is labar tonn mara máir/rusgab in gaim comgabáil*). In view of the other *exx.* I have collected of vb. + obj. + VN, however, I do not think this suggestion is necessary. The line could be translated literally: 'winter has seized it with a lifting'.

¹⁸This explanation runs into immediate difficulties in *ex.* (52) above where the verbal noun *folug* (o, n) is followed by nasalization, a fact that would suggest its being understood as a nom. or acc. sg. I can only suggest that the scribe, not understanding the old idiom properly, added the nasalization after the neuter noun. Such an explanation is not at all improbable as instances of superfluous nasalization in such late MSS are not rare.

- (64) *Ba dóig laisseom tra combad ó lémun dochúatár ind laith gaille tairse* ‘he thought that the warriors had cleared it by leaping’ LU 9131.

This construction is also to be found in the earlier stages of the language, e.g.

- (65) *is tre fír flathemon ro-saig cech dán mochtide mind suíthi* ‘It is through the justice of the ruler that every great man of art attains the crown of knowledge’ AM §24.

The relationship involved in the second type is denoted in Classical OIr. by the prepositional rel. construction, e.g.

- (66) *cote in rinnd dia-ruba vitam omnis hominis* ‘where is the sting wherewith thou hast struck *vitam* etc.’ Wb. 13 d 25.
- (67) *in molad trissa-nétar inducbál a deo* ‘the praise through which glory is obtained *a Deo*’ ML. 126 c 1.

In a recent important study, however, Liam Breatnach (*Ériu* xxxi 2–6) has shown that in Archaic OIr. the relative marker itself could discharge the functions of the dative without any need for a preposition, and it is this dative use of the relative that I would see in the exx. of the tripartite figura etymologica listed (3)–(39) and in the other exx. listed (40)–(50). At a time in the history of the language when this use of the relative marker had been replaced by prepositional constructions like those listed (63)–(67) it is quite possible that it was preserved in this type of figura etymologica, which after all was an idiom and as such would have been highly resistant to change. In the same way one may compare the survival of the archaic independent dative in certain common expressions in Classical OIr. and indeed in the later language, e.g. *écin* ‘indeed’ (dat. sg. of *écen* ‘need’), (*h*)*úaraib* ‘at times’ (dat. pl. of *úar* ‘a time’). Of interest here is the fact that *GOI* (§251.3) includes *óenbémmim* (dat. sg. of *óenbéimm*) among the exx. given of such survivals of the independent dative. It should be noticed, however, that it seems to be found in use only with the verb *benaid*, as in exx. (56), (60)–(62), a feature that would suggest that it owes its preservation to its use in this idiom.

A parallel for this construction, where the syntagm of non-rel. verb + substantive (dat.) is replaced in rel. construction by substantive (nom.) + nas. rel. clause, may be found in Classical OIr. in the formation of adverbs. As is well known, the normal manner of forming an adverb from an adjective in OIr. is simply to use the dat. sg. neut. of the adjective preceded by the article (*GOI* §379). When such an adverb is brought forward for emphasis, however, we find the adjective in the nom. sg. followed by a nas. rel. clause (*GOI* §383). In fact one might look on the two constructions as being closely related, for, in the exx. of the figura etymologica we have so far discussed, the function of the verbal noun seems to be purely adverbial. Outside of Irish there are parallels for such a use of an instrumental case in figurae etymologicae in Greek, Latin, Lithuanian.

Slavic and in some other languages.¹⁹ Here the use of the instrumental alternates with that of the accusative in this construction.

There is a certain amount of evidence, however, that in Classical OIr. and in the later language this type of *figura etymologica* was on the decline. A few exx. are to be found of the independent dative of the verbal noun in non-rel. *figurae etymologicae*, such as exx. (51)–(62), being replaced by a corresponding prepositional construction. Thus

- (68) *cotob-sechfider di chossc* ‘ye will be corrected by a correction’ Wb. 9 a 23.
 (69) *ní fuil aitreib nime do anmain duine nád baithister ó baithius dligt|h|ech* ‘there is no heavenly abode for the soul of a person who is not baptised according to lawful baptism’ *Ériu* i. 219.1.

In this context it is of interest to note what corresponds to exx. (60)–(62) in the later versions of TBC.

- (70) *tópacht gabal cethri mbend bun barr d’óenbéim* ‘he cut a forked pole of four prongs, whole and entire, with one stroke’ TBC LL 561 (=60).
 (71) *ba coru machtad 7 ingantas dontí ro tesc in ngabail atchí d’óenbéim bun barr* ‘rather should you marvel and wonder at him who cut, whole and entire, the forked pole that you see with one stroke’ TBC LL 630 (=62).
 (72) *benais gabail ceithri mbenn bun barr d’aonbem* ‘he cut a fork of four prongs whole and entire with one blow’ TBC St. 583 (=60).
 (73) *ba cora duit iongnadh do denamh iman ngabail do thescadh bun barr d’aonbeim* ‘rather should you marvel that the pole was cut, whole and entire, with one stroke’ TBC St. 653 (=62).

Here one can observe the abandoning of the old prepositionless dative in favour of a more modern construction using the instrumental preposition *de*, and a further innovation may be seen in the replacement of *bennaid* (60) and *béim* (62) by completely different verbal forms, e.g. *tópacht* (70), *ro tesc* (71) and *do thescadh* (73), a feature that would point to the complete abandoning of this type of *figura etymologica* in the later versions of TBC. Only ex. (72), from the Stowe version of the text, preserves anything of the old idiom.

While the use of the instrumental rel. survived in the tripartite rel. *figura etymologica* until well into the Classical OIr. period, there is strong evidence that by the end of the OIr. period this surviving archaism was in the process of being modernized, as had seemingly occurred somewhat earlier with the corresponding non-rel. construction using the independent dative which has just been discussed, and that it was being replaced by the prepositional construction outlined in exx. (63)–(65) above. So

¹⁹For exx. see Delbrück, *op. cit.* p.256, Leumann-Hofmann-Szantyr, *op. cit.* p.124.

(74) *tre airtin*²⁰ *ar-foim tórmag fair* 'by an assumption it takes an addition upon it' Sg. 201 b 17.

(75) *do coimpert fhir 7 mna cotamaipred* 'of the conception of man and woman I have been conceived' *Ériu* ii 102 §9.

One can further see this process of modernization at work in one of the variant readings given by the editor of the text for ex. (45) above, i.e.

(76) *conid de tesaircti rontesaircc.*

where, despite evident scribal corruption, the fronted prepositional phrase clearly has replaced the older construction.

This modernization, however, would seem only to have been an intermediate step in the ultimate decline of the tripartite type of *figura etymologica*. As we have already seen, in exx. (70), (71) and (73), the later versions of TBC have not only replaced the independent dative of the verbal noun by using the preposition *de* but, by the use of verbal forms having no etymological connection with the verbal noun, they have abandoned the old idiom completely. It is therefore of interest to note what corresponds to ex. (36) in the LL and Stowe versions of the text:

(77) *dáig in fégad fégfat-sa forna echaib* 'for with the look that I shall give the horses' TBC LL 1173.

(78) *uair in fhechain do-ber-sa forsna heachaib* 'for with the look that I shall give the horses' TBC St. 1209.

Ex. (77), while using a different verb and verbal noun (i.e. *fégad*, *fégfat-sa* for *clóenad*, *clóenfatsa*), retains something of the old idiom although the relationship between the verbal noun and the relative verb is accusative. Ex. (78), by employing an auxiliary verb which has no etymological connection with the verbal noun, has done away with the old idiom completely.

Thus it can be seen that the tripartite *figura etymologica* was largely a feature of Archaic and Classical OIr. Examples of it in texts of Mid.Ir. origin are extremely few and very far between. Indeed the six exx. (41)–(46) I have collected from such texts consist of the antecedent followed by a passive intransitive verb and no fewer than three of these consist of the verbal noun *bádud* followed by a passive form of the verb *báidid* which seems to have been a stereotyped manner of recording death by drowning just as the common phrase *éc atbath*²¹ was used to denote a natural death.

It should be noted that the exx. given to illustrate the construction in GOI 5499 are all exx. of the tripartite *figura etymologica* (exx. (3), (21) and (27)

²⁰*Airtiu* acts as VN to both *ar-eim*, and *ar-foim*. In origin it seems to belong to the former. Cf. *DIL*, *ar-eim*.

²¹Lit. 'he died a death'. For exx. cf. *DIL*, *éc*.

above), and this alone may have been the 'very common idiom' that Thurneysen had in mind. Even within these narrower confines, however, while the use of the nasalizing rel. is the norm in the OIr. glosses, it is not used in two of the exx. I have collected from them (exx. (19) and (22)). Thus it seems that even here the use of the nasalizing rel. was not entirely obligatory.

Finally we may note that while the verbal noun of the relative verb is usually found in this idiom, it does seem to have been possible to use other nominal forms which are both semantically and etymologically very close to the verb, instead of its actual verbal noun.²²

To summarize, I suggest that in the tripartite type of figura etymologica Classical OIr. preserves the old dative (instrumental) use of the relative when that usage in most other instances was obsolete. I have also pointed out that, corresponding to this instrumental use of the relative, a non-relative construction is found where the independent dative of the verbal noun is used instrumentally. This construction is much rarer as it was largely superseded by the instrumental prepositional construction in the classical period and is unknown in the Irish of the Glosses. The tripartite figura etymologica itself would also seem to have fallen into disuse, being first replaced by the corresponding prepositional construction and finally being abandoned completely, a development that seemingly took place in the early Mid.Ir. period.²³

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²²As in ex. 18. Cf. note no. 9 above.

²³This article is based, in part, on a chapter of an unpublished thesis entitled 'Srónaíl Choibhneasta na Sean-Ghaeilge' which was presented to University College Dublin for the degree of Master of Arts (1980). An earlier version of the article was read at a colloquium at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies on 21 March 1981. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Mac Cana for his help and guidance in the preparation of the original thesis and for his advice in the preparation of this article. I would also like to thank Professor Quin whose helpful criticism of an earlier draft of this work corrected numerous errors. To Liam Breatnach and to Dr A. Ahlqvist I owe a similar debt. For any errors or omissions that may remain I alone am responsible.