Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 20

Records of the discussions in the small conference room on 02-10-2017

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

Apologies: Elliott Lash, Tom Tynan

Practicalities
Most unusually, there are no practicalities.

***ŏ* (§59)**
Another irrelevant paragraph.

***ō* (§60)**
"Collection: Zupitza, ZCP iii. 275 ff., 591 ff." What is this and who is Zupitza? Did he collect all the forms with *ó*? It turns out that Julius Zupitza was a German scholar specialized in Old English philology, who died relatively young.

"Where *ó* is not due to the contraction of *o* and a following vowel, it frequently goes back either to the (pre-Irish) diphthong *ou*, under which IE. *ou* and *eu* had fallen together, or to *au* followed by a consonant (other than single *s*, see § 69)." Curiously, Thurneysen opens this paragraph with a negative definition (the same goes for his opening of §58, actually) which does not actually cover the most common source of *ó* in Old Irish. An odd choice. Perhaps PIE **uu̯* should also be included here, but it should not have arisen in preconsonantal position, so perhaps its absence is justified.

According to an old school of thought **ou̯* and **eu̯* were kept distinct in Proto-Celtic and were preserved in some Gaulish inscriptions, which have <eu> for expected **eu̯*. However, McCone has pointed out that most of these inscriptions are late and that it is more likely to be a Latinate graphical approximation of /ou̯/. As Latin lacked such a diphthong, the closest orthographical approximation of Gaulish *ou̯* would have been the marginal Latin diphthong <eu>, which was in turn borrowed from Greek. However, David, in an as yet unpublished article, argues that there is at least one context where **ou̯* and **eu̯* behave differently in Celtic and that the two must therefore have remained distinct at least in early Proto-Celtic.

"Whereas this *ó* is preserved in archaic texts, by the time of Wb. it has generally been diphthongized to *úa* under the accent, except before a guttural (*g*, *ch*). In Ml. and Sg. *úa* has developed before gutturals also, though not consistently." This is basically correct, but as the following shows, the reality is very messy and still poorly understood.

"The diphthongization spreads to weakly stressed words like **húare** 'because' Ml. Sg. beside (**h**)**óre** Wb.; (**h**)**úa**, prep. before its case, beside (**h**)**ó** Ml. Sg., in Wb. only **ó**, but **úa** when stressed, as in **úait** 'from thee', (**h**)**úad** 'from him', etc.; **úas** 'over' Ml. as against **ós** Wb., but **t-úas** (stressed) 'up, above', etc., in Wb. as in all other sources." We presume that Thurneysen means the preposition followed by the article when he writes 'prep. before its case'. In the Priscian glosses (Sg.) *úa* actually predominates. Thurneysen generally seems to propose that the diphthongization started in stressed position and spread over time.

David would radically reformulate this paragraph, but admits that the distribution of *ó* and *úa* remains unclear. Originally, the vowel was *ó*, over time the tendency for it to break to *úa* increases, but in some contexts it either always, or never diphthongizes. Before gutturals *ó* is indeed retained particularly long. It may be that dialect played some role in the process. In placenames one does find forms with *o* in the English reflex, whereas the Modern Irish name has the standard form in *úa*. However, there are also dialects in which *úa* turned into *ó* again, which further confuses the picture. Ideally one would like to posit a development parallel to that of *é* to *ía* through intermediate *éa* (i.e. *ó* to *úa* through *óa*), but the data does not seem to support this.

It should be noted that the breaking of *ó* is an example of where Würzburg, Milan and the St. Gall glosses show serious differences. It is not certain whether this is – as traditionally assumed – a chronological, or rather a dialectal distinction.

"There are traces of a form *óa* intermediate between *ó* and *úa*…" This is indeed found in some early sources, but we are not yet certain as to how reliable a dating criteria it is. Fangzhe notes that it is not reliable in *aue* 'descendant', but that this is in a different phonetic context. David remarks that we should also be careful to distinguish between the behaviour of original **ou̯* and **au̯* as there is a distinction there.

We now turn to what Carney wrote on this issue in his edition of the mid-8th century Poems of Blathmac.

> "The internal evidence in this matter in our poems is difficult to assess, and at times appears contradictory. I would, however, suggest the following tentative conclusions: … that in the Blathmac poems we are at a point where diphthongisation has taken place, but recognition of it in writing is perhaps not quite complete…
>
> The diphthongisation of *ó* is quite a different problem. *ó* is normally diphthongised only when accented. The following are the Biblical names, with *ó* in the final syllable, that occur in the Blathmac poems, together with their rhyming words, the latter being always in the first line of the couplet: *Bëóir: móir,* 46*; Gabón: mór,* 368*; Baibilóin: bróin,* 376*; Iäcóib: Póil,* 992*; Iäcób: mór,* 998*; Enóch: fót,* 1030.
>
> It will be observed in this group of words that in names borrowed from Latin, with *ó* in the final syllable, rhyme is always with an *ó* that, for one reason or other, was not subject to dipthongisation. There is thus no rhyme corresponding to that of *ón: Sión* which we have observed in the *Poem on the Virgin Mary*.
>
> It is clear from these facts that when the Blathmac poems were written *ó* had been diphthongised. It is not, however, equally clear that the diphthongisation of *ó* had reached its final stage…
>
> In non-rhyming position we find *Heroaid,* 53, *Heróid,* 79, *Erouidh* (MS.), 83 (= *Eroaid*). In rhyming position not merely is the ending fully accommodated to rhyme with the *ua*-diphthong, but *Her-* appears as *Hir-: Hiruaid* (: *uaill*), 50, *Hiruaith* (: *tuaith*), 72… On the whole I would regard the non-rhyming instances as better exemplifications of the original orthography than the others. The rhyming words (*uaill, tuaid, tuaith*) are common and will naturally, in the course of transcription, be adapted to the orthographical preferences of successive scribes. In rhyming position, scribes will tend to accommodate the spelling of proper name to that of the common word with which they rhyme… [further examples are given]
>
> As has been stressed above the situation in the Blathmac poems in this respect seems confused and somewhat contradictory. But such a confused situation is perhaps exactly what we would expect in poems composed about 750."[1]

It appears to us that Carney holds two contradictory opinions: the evidence would both suggest that *ó* had already broken to *úa* and that *ó* (since Biblical names in *ó* only rhyme with Old Irish *ó*, never with *úa*) and that *ó* had not yet been broken to *úa* (the presumed originality of non-rhyming spellings in *o*). This is very confusing. We wonder to what extent the Poems of Blathmac are useable as a source for

[1] Carney, James, *The poems of Blathmac son of Cú Brettan* (Dublin 1964), xxiii-xxvi.

this aspect of the phonology of Old Irish, as it is very difficult to decide to what extent the manuscript forms reflect the language of the poet himself. It is nonetheless curious that there are many forms with <*o*> for later *úa* in the manuscript as these can hardly be the result of some later scribe and would therefore appear to be original to the text.

Fangzhe adds that there are ten cases of *ó* in the names in the *Vita Columbae*, including some before a palatal consonant. These are never broken to *úa*.

Returning to the remainder of §60, we note that the sheer variety of conflicting examples means that there cannot as yet be said to be an apparent system to the distribution of the breaking of *ó* to *úa*.

The German original of the GOI has a very different version of these paragraphs. The English version has been put in a different order and much expanded, although some examples from the *Handbuch* are missing in the GOI.

Medial *ó* < *ou̯V* (§61)
Another source of *ó* in Old Irish is found in *córae* 'peace', which is an abstract formation from *coäir* 'even, proper' < **kou̯ari/i̯os*. It might be best to reconstruct **kou̯are* > **kou̯re* > *córae*.

Another source is found in *oöl* 'drinking', which was disyllabic in Early Old Irish, but was contracted to *ól* in Classical Old Irish (possibly this is what Thurneysen meant with his opening lines of §60). Another example: *loön* 'provision, food' > *lón*. This happened in the 8th century at the earliest and was therefore too late for diphthongisation.

The example of *córae* < **kou̯re* raises the matter of whether or not **ou̯* was retained in Primitive Irish. Probably not, as we never find spellings like *tout* for *tóth* > *túath* in the *ogam*-inscriptions. However, there may be some early spellings with *-ou-*, aren't there? *lour* > *lór* is no example of this, as there is a hiatus here.

"Here too dipthongization may take place, but is often prevented by the influence of related words. Thus the prepositions *to* + *fo* (*tow'*) become *túa-* where they are no longer felt as prepositions (as in **túachil** 'sly', to **fochell** 'heed')." But we never find *cúarae* for *córae*, do we? At this stage it is also noted that Thurneysen only mentions part of the sources of Old Irish *ó* and therefore does not offer a complete overview of the matter. As to *túachil*, this comes from **tou̯okᵘēlli-* and would have been expected to yield *tóchaill*.

"Otherwise they become *tó-*; e.g. **tóbe** 'shortening', vb.n. of **do·fui-bnimm**." The verbal noun *tóbae* < **tou̯obii̯o* may be compared to prototonic *·tuiben* < **to-u̯o-ben* (clearly not *·tóben*). In this regard it should be noted that prototonic forms are not always relatively archaic. It is important to realise that the prototonic forms were not marginal, but were presumably more commonly used than the deuterotonic forms in spoken Old Irish.

At any rate, there seems to have been a lot confusion in the system here as well. It may be that – rather than Thurneysen's suggestion that the influence of related words affected the system – the following consonant also had some influence on the realisation of the vowel.

Compensatorily lengthened *ó* (§62)
"*ó* representing compensatorily lengthened *ŏ* (whether original *ŏ* or lowered *ŭ* § 73) is sometimes diphthongized, sometimes not; the reasons for this variation are obscure." That was not very helpful.

Thurneysen offers the examples *·cúalae* from *ro·cluinethar* from < **cochl-* < **cu-cl-*, *dúal* 'tail' < **doklo-*, *brón* 'grief', W. *brwyn* from < **brugno-* and *srón* 'nose', W. *ffroen* from < **srongnā-*. If we take these reconstructions at face value, it could be that a compensatorily lengthened *ó* arising out of **-okC-* yields *úa* in Old Irish, whereas *ó* arising out of **-ogC-* yields *ó*. But this is very uncertain, not merely for being based on very few examples, but also for the uncertainty of the etymologies of *brón*

and *srón*, which might also be reconstructable with **-okC-*. In the case of *srón* the case for **g* seems strongest: there is a related verb *srennaid* 'to snore' with a possible etymological link with Greek *ῥέγχειν / ῥέγκειν*, but this is not very strongly established, as the only cognate associated with it in Greek etymology is this very Celtic word.

The form *fo·ló* of *fo·loing* may be compared to last week's subjunctive *·té*, with non-breaking in the 3sg. of a verbal paradigm.

It is also possible to compare *srón* < **srognā* with *búain* 'harvest' from < **bou̯gnā* (derived from the verb *bongaid* < **bug-*). Perhaps the difference has to do with the distinction between underlying **ŏ* and **ou̯* in this phonetic context?

In terms of sources of *ó* in Old Irish, there is also the form *móin* 'turf', W. *mawn*, Breton *meun* (very weakly attested even in Favereau). This may be compared with the unexpected *ó* in *mór*, as opposed to W. *mawr*, Breton *meur* < **māro-*, *moinethar* < **manî̯etar* and *moín* 'treasure', which is often written *máin* in Milan. It would seem that the distinction between *o* and *a* could be neutralised after *m* (/m_) in Old Irish and that this went both ways, as shown by Milan.

It is noted that Thurneysen does not mention the word *áur* < Latin *aurum* here. He discusses it in §69, but should have mentioned it here as well.

"*ó* besides *ŏ* in **ómun** (later also **úamun**) **ŏmun** (confirmed by rhyme) 'fear', W. *ofn* (with *ŏ*), is probably due to the influence of the synonym **úath** (arch. ***ōth**) 'terror'." As this is a case of analogy, this is yet another source of *ó* in Old Irish, albeit a very limited one.

"For **cóic** 'five' see § 392." This is again a very different context entirely.

In general, it may be stated that we would need to be much more careful in distinguishing the sources from which these forms derive. We also wonder whether all this should be included in a synchronic grammar at all, since there appears to be no clear, synchronic pattern behind it. However, if we treat all sources of *ó* separately we can at least say whether forms always, sometimes or never diphthongise, which is probably worth doing. In this case a diachronic analysis is necessary to discuss the synchronic phonology of the language.

It seems likely that there were two, or more distinct long *ó*'s in Early Old Irish, which behaved differently. This may be compared to the two, or perhaps three types of long *é* discussed last week. This clearly requires further investigation.

***ó* before u-quality consonants (§63)**
We would most likely scrap this paragraph, or at least reformulateit entirely, as we do not operate with *u*-quality anymore. It may nonetheless be worth considering whether or not *u*-infection might have had some effect on a long vowel in this messy context. Not for the example given by Thurneysen however: *óthud* comes from **au̯tītо-*.

Pages read in this session: 2