The Grammar of Autonomy
In Irish

James McCloskey

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1 Introduction

THERE IS IN IRISH a form of the finite verb known as the *briathar saor* or 'free (form of the) verb'. The English term usually used for this inflectional class is the 'autonomous' form, and that is the term I will use here. Autonomous forms are derived by adding a distinctive suffix, one for each tense, to the verbal stem. From the verb *cuir* ('put, send, bury'), for example, five autonomous forms can be built.

cuir-tear	Present Tense
cuir-eadh	Past Tense
cuir-fear	Future Tense
chuir-fí	Conditional Mood
chuir-tí	Past Habitual

In origin, these forms are passives,[1] and their functional range in the contemporary language continues to be close to that of the agentless passive in English. It is thus that they are most naturally translated:

(1) a. Tógadh   suas an corpán ar bharr na haille
          raise [**PAST-AUT**] up the body   on top   the cliff [**GEN**]
          'The body was lifted to the top of the cliff'
     b. scaoileadh   amach na líonta
          release [**PAST-AUT**] out   the nets
          'The nets were let out'
     c. Cuirtear   i mboscaí iad
          put [**PRES-AUT**] in boxes   them
          'They are put in boxes.'

A broad array of intransitive verbs also accept autonomous inflection, as shown in (2), the resultant forms often difficult to render naturally in English.

(2) a. H-éirigheadh   cleachtuighthe le   daoine a bheith ag teacht
          become [**PAST-AUT**] accustomed   with people be [−**FIN**] come [**PROG**]
          'One became accustomed to people coming.'   DCA 81
     b. Do   chreidtí   insna seanscéalta sin   go léir fad
          [**PAST**] believe [**PAST-HABIT-AUT**] in-the old-stories DEMON all   long
          ó shin
          ago
          'People used to believe in all those old stories long ago.'   CFC 32

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[1] Even in the oldest recorded forms of the language, however (Classical Old Irish of the 8th century), the ancestor of the autonomous form shows a very strange mix of passive and active characteristics. See Thurneysen (1946, p. 349, §540)

    c. hItheadh,   hóladh,   ceoladh   agus ansin chuathas
       eat [**PAST-AUT**] drink [**PAST-AUT**] sing [**PAST-AUT**] and then go [**PAST-AUT**]
       a sheanchas
       storytelling [−**FIN**]
       'There was eating, drinking, singing, and then the storytelling began.'   CCC 116

    d. Tostadh   seal   leis an iongantas
       be-silent [**PAST-AUT**] a-while with the surprise
       'People went silent for a time in surprise.'   MD 19

2   Preliminaries

Despite its origin, and despite the fact that it fulfills many of the same discourse functions as short passives in English, the autonomous construction is not a passive—or not at least if by a passive form we mean one in which the underlying object of a transitive verb is rendered as a surface subject. The internal argument of an autonomous form derived from a transitive verb is indistinguishable in its behavior from any other direct object (see McCloskey, 1979; Stenson, 1981, 1989). There are at least three kinds of arguments which establish this conclusion. The first is that the internal argument appears in accusative rather than nominative case:

(3)   a. Cuirfear   é   sa   reilg   áitiúil.
       bury [**FUT-AUT**] him [**ACC**] in-the graveyard local
       'He will be buried in the local graveyard.'

    b. *Cuirfear   sé   sa   reilg   áitiúil.
       bury [**FUT-AUT**] he [**NOM**] in-the graveyard local
       'He will be buried in the local graveyard.'

Secondly, if the internal argument is a light pronominal, it may be postposed—an option permitted freely to direct objects but absolutely forbidden to subjects (Stenson (1981, 42–43), Chung and McCloskey (1987), Ó Siadhail (1989, 207–210), Duffield (1995, 66-81), Adger (1997), McCloskey (1999)):

(4)   a. Cuirfear   sa   reilg   áitiúil amárach é.
       bury [**FUT-AUT**] in-the graveyard local tomorrow him [**ACC**]
       'He will be buried in the local graveyard tomorrow.'

    b. *Cuirfidh é   sa   reilg   áitiúil siad.
       bury [**FUT**] him in-the graveyard local they
       'They will bury him in the local graveyard.'

Finally, the internal argument may be a resumptive pronoun—again an option permitted to direct objects but forbidden to subjects (see McCloskey, 1990, and refer-

ences cited there).

(5) a. fear gur bualadh le camán é
  man **c**-[**PAST**] strike [**PAST-AUT**] with hurley-stick him
  'a man that was struck with a hurley-stick'   SAT 106
  b. *fear gur bhuail sé le camán mé
  man **c**-[**PAST**] struck he with hurley-stick me
  'a man that (he) struck me with a hurley-stick'

What these observations in sum indicate is that the autonomous inflection is not associated with promotion of a direct object to subject status.[2]

The puzzle of understanding the autonomous form, then, is the puzzle of understanding what becomes of the subject argument of the verb to which the inflection applies. Or to be more precise: what becomes of the most prominent of the verb's arguments? That in turn becomes a puzzle at the syntax-morphology interface. What is it about this set of inflectional endings which licenses silence where the most prominent of the verb's arguments ought to be?

To facilitate discussion, I will use the term 'autonomous argument' in what follows for the argument corresponding to this silence—the external argument of a transitive verb, the internal argument of an unaccusative (as in (2a)), the experiencer argument of a psych-predicate and so on.

3 A Structural Subject?

Given the data presented so far, it is tempting to understand the autonomous form in terms of event quantification (in the sense, say, of Parsons (1990) and much other work growing out of Davidson (1967)) and the complete absence of the most prominent argument. That is, one could conclude that what the autonomous inflection does is to license total elimination of the external (or most prominent) argument. On that conception, one might understand (6) in terms of a semantics like that in (7):

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[2]Leaving open the possibility that the missing subject in such cases is, in some sense, like the implicit agent of a short passive. We will see below that there is something deeply correct about this identification, in that we will identify the silent subject of an autonomous verb with arbitrary subjects such as French *on* or German *man*, whose properties, in turn, are very close to those of implicit agents in passive constructions (see Koenig and Mauner (2000) especially). As we will also see below, however, the silent subject of an autonomous verb is like an arbitrary subject pronoun, but unlike an implicit agent, in being syntactically active (in binding anaphors, for example). Overt agents with autonomous forms were common in earlier stages of the language but not in modern varieties, as shown in a very careful recent study by Ó Sé (2006).

(6)   Buaileadh   le   cloch é.
       strike [**PAST-AUT**] with stone him
       'He was hit with a stone.'

(7) $\exists e$ [strike (e) $\wedge$ **Theme** (e, pro) $\wedge$ **Instr** (e, stone) $\wedge$ **Past** (e)]

On this understanding, (6) claims that a striking event took place (in the past) whose Theme was the referent of the pronoun, and whose Instrument was a stone. No information whatever is given about the striker, because the external argument of the verb (which would have provided such information) is simply absent.

Tempting as this approach may seem, Nancy Stenson (1989, 384–393, drawing in part on earlier unpublished work by Dónal Ó Baoill) has developed a suite of decisive arguments which establish that it is incorrect. More specifically, Stenson's arguments establish that verbs to which the autonomous inflection has been added have the same number of arguments as their counterparts without the inflection, and that (in the case of transitive verbs in the autonomous form) the presence of an external argument is detectable in standard ways. The presence of such an argument is demonstrated, for instance, by its ability to act as a controller (as in (8a)), and by its ability to support subject-oriented adverbials (as in (8b)):

(8)   a. Socraíodh   ar ionsaí a dhéanamh orthu.
           settle [**PAST-AUT**] on attack make [**–FIN**] on-them
           'It was agreed to mount an attack on them.'
       b. Glacadh   go fonnmhar leis   an ainmniúchán.
           take [**PAST-AUT**] eagerly   with the nomination
           'The nomination was eagerly accepted.'

Stenson also documents a systematic set of contrasts between the behavior of transitive verbs in the autonomous form and the behavior of unaccusative verbs (for which a semantics along the lines of (7) might well be appropriate). These arguments jointly establish very clearly that transitive verbs to which the autonomous inflection has been attached differ from unaccusative verbs exactly in their ability to license an external argument.

Such observations establish that an autonomous form licenses an autonomous argument—corresponding to the most prominent argument of the base verb to which the suffix attaches. It is a different question whether or not they also establish that that argument is syntactically realized. For it remains unclear whether phenomena such as those in (8) test for the presence of a structural subject as opposed to the presence of an argument—an argument which might remain implicit or syntactically unrealized. An English example like (9), for instance, will, on many accounts, involve a controller (the implicit agent) which has no syntactic realization.

(9)   It was decided to go public.

A way to further probe the issue would be to ask if the silent subject of an autonomous form can bind reflexive or reciprocal pronouns. For it is widely accepted that such elements require syntactically realized antecedents:

(10)   a. They arranged for each other to be on the committee.
        b. *They talked about it for days. It was finally arranged for each other to be on the committee.

Initial investigation of this territory might suggest that the autonomous argument has no syntactic realization. As Stenson observes (1989, 384), reflexive pronouns may not have the autonomous argument as their antecedent:

(11)   *Gortaíodh   é   féin
        hurt [**PAST-AUT**] him [**REFL**]
        'People hurt themselves.'

There is, however, an independent reason why examples such as (11) might be impossible. Reflexive pronouns are formed in Irish by adding the suffix *féin* to a personal pronoun. In (11), for example, *féin* is added to the third person singular masculine pronoun *é*, to make the corresponding reflexive pronoun. When these composite pronouns enter into binding relations, the base pronoun must agree in person, number (and for third person singular pronouns, also gender) with the binder. If there is a null argument in (11), that element might well lack the necessary person and number features which would allow it to bind the reflexive in (11). It is hard to be sure, then, whether (11) is impossible because it contains no syntactic antecedent at all for the reflexive pronoun, or because the only available syntactic antecedent (the autonomous argument) lacks a crucial property.

No such issues arise for the reciprocal pronoun, which has a single invariant form (*a chéile*) no matter what form its binder takes:

(12)   a. Chonaic muid a chéile.
            saw   we   each-other
            'We saw each other.'
        b. Chonaic sibh   a chéile.
            saw   you [**PL**] each-other
            'You saw each other. '
        c. Chonaic siad a chéile.
            saw   they each-other
            'They saw each other.'

Among the kinds of arguments that may function as an antecedent to the reciprocal, if the conditions are right, is the autonomous argument, as shown in (13):[3]

(13)   a.   chuirtí   geall len- a chéile
            put [**PAST-HABIT-AUT**] bet   with each-other
            'People used to place bets with each other.'   GSA 25
       b.   Tógadh   suas an corpán ar bharr na haille   ansan le
            raise [**PAST-AUT**] up   the body   on top   the cliff [**GEN**] then   with
            cabhair a chéile
            help   each-other
            'The body was raised to the top of the cliff then with each other's help'
            FBF 136
       c.   Táthar   a' strócadh a chéile.
            be [**PRES-AUT**] tear [**PROG**] each-other
            'People are tearing each other apart.'   U 168
       d.   Théití   ag ithe   béile le   chéile
            go [**PAST-HABIT-AUT**] eat [**PROG**] meal with each other
            'People used to go for a meal with each other.'   IA 351

The hedge above ('if the conditions are right') is necessary because not all examples of this type are acceptable. Nor are the attested examples always judged well-formed, out of context, by consultants.[4] We will have more to say about this variability when we have gone farther in investigating semantic properties of the autonomous argument. The idea, in brief, will be that the referential properties of this element will not always support the kinds of part-whole relations which the logic of reciprocity demands (see McCloskey (2000) and references cited there for some discussion of these requirements as they hold in Irish). For present purposes, though, the important observation is that it is not difficult to find examples like (13) in ordinary usage, a fact which in turn indicates that they are not excluded in principle. From this, in turn, it seems reasonable to conclude that the reciprocals in (13) have syntactically realized antecedents and also to conclude in turn that the autonomous argument corresponds to a structural subject of some kind.

    We are brought, then, to the interim conclusion (following in the foot-steps of Stenson (1989) for Irish and of Anderson (1982) for the corresponding construction in Breton) that the autonomous inflection involves no re-arrangement of argument structure and no associated syntactic movement. Rather, that inflection, when attached to a finite verb, licenses the appearance of a silent argument with very par-

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[3] Note the ungrammaticality of the English rendering of (13b), reinforcing again the contrast between the autonomous form and agentless passives.

[4] Stenson (1989, p. 384) cites one example of this type as ungrammatical.

ticular semantic properties—close to those of elements usually called 'arbitrary' or 'impersonal'. Viewed in this light, the Irish autonomous inflection is close kin to the impersonal or arbitrary pronoun constructions commonly found in European languages (Italian *si*, French *on*, German *man*, Swedish *man*, Icelandic *maður* , Yiddish *me(n)* and so on), as in the Italian and German examples of (14) (from D'Alessandro and Alexiadou (2003) and Malamud (2005) respectively):

(14)   a. In quel ristorante si   mangiava   bene
             in that restaurant *Arb* eat [**PAST-HABIT**] well
             'People used to eat well in that restaurant.'

       b. Man wäscht   die Hände vor   dem Essen
             Arb wash [**PRES**] the hands before the meal
             'One washes one's hands before meals.'

If this identification (recognized already by David Greene 1966, 52) is correct, the extensive and rich literature on such impersonal constructions (see, among many others, Jaeggli (1986), Cinque (1988), Rizzi (1986), Authier (1989), Condoravdi (1989), Chierchia (1995), Kratzer (1997), Koenig (1999), Koenig and Mauner (2000), D'Alessandro and Alexiadou (2003), Egerland (2003), D'Alessandro (2004), Malamud (2005)) can be brought to bear on our understanding of the Irish construction, and reciprocally the Irish construction can make its own contribution to the study of arbitrary subject constructions more generally.

4   Parallels

A standard description of the arbitrary subjects of French, Italian or German is that they are used 'when the intention of the speaker is to remain vague about the exact identity of the subject' (D'Alessandro (2004) cited in Malamud (2005)). This description corresponds closely to descriptions of the autonomous form found in Irish grammars such as that of the Christian Brothers (1960, §418, p. 204):

> Úsáidtear iad nuair nach mian nó gach gá nó nach féidir an gníomhaí a lua.

> [They are used when it is not desirable, not necessary, or not possible to specify the agent.]

(13) can now be seen as parallel to the German (15) (Kratzer (1997)):

(15)   Man redete   mit einander
       Arb speak [**PAST**] with each other
       'People talked to each other.'

or the Italian (16) (Cinque (1988)):

(16)   Si   era   parlato l'uno   con l'altro
       Arb be [**PAST**] spoken the-one with the-other
       'People talked to each other.'

And German (17) (Kratzer (1997)) is possible (in contrast with (11)) because the reflexive pronoun in German is invariant *sich*—like the Irish reciprocal, but unlike the Irish reflexive:

(17)   Man erkundigte   sich   nach mir.
       Arb inquire [**PAST**] [**REFL**] after me
       'They/one inquired about me. '

If we push beyond this very general characterization, the range of interpretations open to the autonomous argument (and some of the restrictions on its use) can be seen to parallel closely the range of interpretations that have been documented for arbitrary subjects.

In the context of habitual aspects, the interpretation can be quasi-universal or gnomic, as in (18):

(18)   a. éinne   go bhfeicfí   breoiteacht farraige ag teacht   air,
           anyone **c** see [**COND-AUT**] sickness   sea   come [**PROG**] on-him
           déarfaí   leis   …
           say [**COND-AUT**] with-him
           'anyone who you would see getting sea-sick, you would say to them … '
           CFC 130
       b. tugtar   'madadh uisce' (go minic) ar an dobharchú
           give [**PRES-AUT**] dog   water (often)   on the otter
           'The otter is often called a water-dog.'
       c. Gaeilge a labhartar   anseo.
           Irish   **c** speak [**PRES-AUT**] here
           'It's Irish that people speak here.'

In the context of an episodic tense or aspect, however, the quantificational force is usually closer to that of an existential:

(19)   a. léiríodh   drámaí leis   san   Abbey
           produce [**PAST-AUT**] plays   by-him in-the
           'Plays of his were produced at the Abbey.'   IA 22
       b. Labhradh   go hiongantach, go buadhach, go feargach
           speak [**PAST-AUT**] wonderfully   victoriously   angrily

‘People spoke wonderfully, victoriously, angrily’   MD 151

c. Tógadh   scoil   úr   bliain ina dhiaidh sin
   raise [PAST-AUT] school new year   after that
   ‘A new school was built a year later.’

Finally, the autonomous argument frequently has a pseudo-specific use. By this, I mean that it can occur in a narrative in the course of which the reference of the autonomous argument has been clearly and unambiguously established before the autonomous form itself is used. In (20a), for example, the reference of the autonomous argument is established in the preceding temporal clause. (20b), which is typical of a wide range of such uses, comes towards the end of a fairly long narrative in which it is established in an unambiguous, exhaustive, and specific way who the participants are in the events being described.

(20)   a. Nuair a bhímis ag dul   thairis siúd arís   chaití
           when c we-were go [PROG] by-this-guy again throw [PAST-HABIT-AUT]
           clocha le ceann an tí
           stones at roof   the house
           ‘When we'd be going by this guy again, stones would be thrown at the roof of the house’   GSA 26
       b. Bhí sé an-deireanach faoin am ar fágadh   an Castle agus a
           was it very-late   by-the time c leave [PAST-AUT] the   and c
           ndeachthas   abhaile
           go [PAST-AUT] home
           ‘It was very late by the time people left the Castle and went home.’   IA 384

Anyone familiar with recent work on arbitrary pronoun subjects will recognize that the kind of variability just documented is typical of arbitrary subject constructions generally. It is exactly this property which has been at the heart of discussions of what the semantics of such pronouns might be. Krifka et al. (1995, 124) summarize that body of work in the following terms:

> *Recent research …points towards the view that arbitrary interpretations are essentially like a general indefinite referring to persons; if the sentences have a generic flavor, then this is due to additional generic operators in them.*

Chierchia (1995) in particular (see also Authier (1989), Koenig (1999), Koenig and Mauner (2000), Malamud (2005)) argues extensively that arbitrary pronouns should be understood as indefinites in the sense of dynamic semantics, or Discourse Representation Theory (Heim (1982), Kamp (1981), Kamp and Reyle (1993))—essentially as restricted variables whose ultimate contribution to the larger structures of which

they are a part depends on the operators with which they happen to interact. The appeal of this line of analysis is exactly that it provides a unified understanding of the apparently disparate range of interpretations shown by arbitrary subject pronouns. They tend to have quasi-universal force in habitual contexts like (21), but existential force in episodic contexts such as (22).

(21) a. Man spricht   Englisch in Amerika.
Arb speak [**PRES**] English   in America
'People in America speak English.'   **German**, Malamud (2005)
b. In Italia si   beve   molto vino.
In Italy *Arb* drink [**PRES**] much wine
'In Italy, everybody/people drink wine.'   **Italian**, Chierchia (1995)
c. Man måste arbeta   till   65.
Arb must work [**–FIN**] until 65
'People have to work until the age of 65.'   **Swedish**, Egerland (2003)

(22) a. Man tanzte   auf der Party.
Arb dance [**PAST**] at   the party
'People danced at the party.'   **German**, Malamud (2005)
b. In Italia ieri   si   è   giocato male
In Italy yesterday *Arb* have [**PRES**] played badly
'In Italy yesterday people/they played badly. '   **Italian**, Chierchia (1995)
c. Man arbetade i   två månader för att lösa   problemet.
Arb worked for two months to   solve the problem
'People worked for two months to solve the problem.'   **Swedish**, Egerland (2003)

Notice that these possibilities parallel closely the interpretive possibilities just documented for the autonomous argument in Irish. Arbitrary subjects also have pseudo-specific uses much like the Irish patterns of (20) (see especially Kratzer (1997), Chierchia (1995)).

An additional characteristic of arbitrary subjects that has been the focus of theoretical attention is the fact that they exhibit a very curious and very distinctive set of anaphoric properties. It is possible (as we have seen) for an arbitrary pronoun to bind a reflexive or a reciprocal, and also to enter into anaphoric relations with other arbitrary pronouns, as in (23) (Chierchia (1995, (8b), p. 109)):

(23) Ieri,   si   è giocato male e   si   è perso.
yesterday *Arb* is played badly and *Arb* is lost
'Yesterday, people played badly and they/people lost.'

However, the pattern in (24), in which the arbitrary subject enters into a forward anaphoric relation with a personal pronoun, is firmly excluded. Italian (24) is from Chierchia (1995), French (25) and German (26) from Koenig and Mauner (2000).

(24) *si$_j$ è detto che loro$_j$ hanno sbagliato
      Arb is said that they have   erred
      'People$_j$ said that they$_j$ were wrong.'

(25) *On$_j$ a   assassiné la   présidente. Il$_j$ était du   Berry, paraît-il.
      Arb has killed   the president   he was from-the Barry seems-it
      'Someone$_j$ murdered the (woman) president. He$_j$ comes from the Berry, it seems.'

(26) *Man$_j$ hat die Präsidentin erschossen. Er$_j$ kam aus   Bayern.
      Arb   has the president   shot   he came from Bavaria
      'Someone shot the (woman) president. He comes from Bavaria.'

The corresponding patterns in Irish are exactly parallel, as seen in (27):

(27) a. do   stadadh   agus scaoileadh   amach na líonta
         [PAST] stop **[PAST-AUT]** and release **[PAST-AUT]** out   the nets
         'One stopped and let out the nets'   LDS 73
      b. *Dúradh   go rabhadar   bocht.
         say **[PAST-AUT]** C be-**[PAST]** -**[P3]** poor
         'People$_j$ said that they$_j$ were poor.'

To express the intended meaning of (27b), one would have rather (28):

(28) Dúradh   go rabhthas   bocht.
      say **[PAST-AUT]** C be-**[PAST-AUT]** poor
      'People$_j$ said that they$_j$ were poor.'

Our general conclusion, then, is that the properties of the autonomous argument parallel point for point the established properties (interpretive and anaphoric) of arbitrary subject pronouns.[5]

Consider a final parallel. One of the threads which runs all through the literature on arbitrary pronouns is the intuition that such pronouns are similar to, or identical with, the 'arbitrary' understanding of PRO—the silent subject of controlled infinitival clauses. It is striking, then, that examples such as that in (29) are possible

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[5]Chierchia (1995) argues that the impossibility of (27a) derives from the sortal restrictions which limit the possible reference values of the arbitrary subject. Given the observations of the next section, however, this proposal seems insufficiently general, since it will not extend to the Irish (28b), even though the facts seem to be largely parallel and to deserve parallel explanation.

in Irish.

(29)   D'iarr sí   peann agus páipéar a thabhairt   chuici. Tugadh.
          asked she pen   and paper   bring [−**FIN**] to-her bring [**PAST-AUT**]
          'She asked that pen and paper be brought to her. They were.'   CDC 20

(29) exemplifies an ellipsis construction in Irish which mimics point for point the
properties of VP ellipsis in English. It has been standardly analyzed as ellipsis of
the complement of one of the functional heads to which the finite verb raises (for
detailed discussion see McCloskey (1991), Goldberg (2005) and references cited
there). A crucial property of this ellipsis, and one that is useful for our present
purposes, is that (by contrast with English) the post-verbal subject forms part of
the elided material. Hence only the raised verb (along with any adverbial elements
which attach high enough) survives to pronunciation.

The importance of (29) in the present context, however, lies in the fact that here
the verb which has survived ellipsis (*tugadh*) is in the autonomous form. From that it
follows, on our present assumptions, that the elided material contains an occurrence
of the autonomous argument. The elided material, including the autonomous argu-
ment, must then meet the requirement of identity with an antecedent by which the
ellipsis is licensed. The antecedent in (29) is a nonfinite clause whose subject is 'arbi-
trary PRO'. And it is arbitrary PRO which corresponds to the autonomous argument
within the ellipsis-site. From this in turn it follows that the autonomous argument
must be similar enough in relevant respects to 'arbitrary PRO' that it counts as being
identical to it in whatever sense is necessary for the licensing of ellipsis. [6]

Such observations provide support for the position of Stenson (1989), Anderson
(1982) and Harley (2002), all of whom identify the null subject of a verb in the
autonomous form with the null subject of Control structures (i.e. with so-called

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[6]The claim that the nonfinite clause in (29) has an arbitrary PRO subject probably requires some
comment. Such a possibility would not be allowed in English in the complement of a verb such as 'ask'.
However it is allowed freely in Irish (as also in Polish, see Bondaruk (2004)), as can be seen in (i)–(iii).

(i)   ar mhaith leat   an carr beag a ghléasadh   duit?
        would-you-like the car   small get-ready [−**FIN**] for-you
        'Would you like the small car to be readied for you?'   SS 192

(ii)   Ní maith le   haoinne é   a náiriú
        does-not-like anyone   him shame [−**FIN**]
        'Nobody likes to be shamed'   OT 343

(iii)   go raibh glanchuimhne aige   ar Phucslaí a mharú
        C   was   pure-memory at-him on Puxley   kill [−**FIN**]
        'that he had the clearest memory of Puxley being killed'   CFC 166

PRO). If the autonomous argument just *is* arbitrary PRO, then obviously it will count as 'similar enough' to arbitrary PRO to allow the kind of ellipsis exemplifed by (29).

We will return to the issues raised by these observations. For the moment, and in the larger frame, they serve as a final strand of confirmation for the general thesis that the autonomous argument of Irish shares the essential properties of the arbitrary pronoun subjects of Romance and Germanic.

5 Contrasts

There is also, however, one important respect in which the Irish autonomous argument goes its own way. Arbitrary pronouns in Germanic and Romance are subject to a sortal restriction that they are semantically plural (refer to groups) and refer only to humans. No such restriction holds of the autonomous argument in Irish. (30) occurs as part of a narrative about the murder of Robert Kennedy in which it is clear that only one attacker is involved:

(30) Siúladh   suas go dtí Robert Kennedy …
     walk [**PAST-AUT**] up   to
     'Somebody walked up to Robert Kennedy …' Ó Curnáin (1996, Vol.2:693)

In the case of (31), the immediate linguistic context also makes it clear that the intended referent of the autonomous argument is singular.

(31) Scríobhfad   chuig lucht stiúrtha   Chonradh na
     write [**FUT**] [**S1**] to   people direct [**GEN**] League   the [**GEN**]
     hÉireann.   Scríobhadh   chuig Conradh na Gaeilge   i
     Ireland [**GEN**] write [**PAST-AUT**] to   League   of Irish language in
     mBaile Átha Cliath.
     Dublin
     'I will write to those who run the Irish League. The Gaelic League in Dublin were written to.'   CDC 64

Such observations indicate that there is no requirement of plurality. The examples in (32) indicate that the autonomous argument is further not restricted in its reference to human, or even animate, individuals. Inanimate causes appear routinely:

(32) a. níor   dóghadh   na nótaí
         NEG–PAST burn-[**PAST-HABIT**] the notes
         'The notes were not burned.   IAE 86
      b. Raiceáladh   ar chósta na   Síne   é   tráth
         wreck [**PAST-AUT**] on coast the [**GEN**] China [**GEN**] him time

'He was wrecked on the coast of China once.'   IAE 105

c. Nuair a dhearcaimid ar an méid   léinn,   litríochta, agus ceoil a
   when C we-look   on the quantity learning literature and music C
   tháinig as   áit   chomh beag leis, cuirtear   iontas orainn
   came from place as   small as-it put [PRES-AUT] wonder on-us
   'When we look at the quantity of learning, literature, and music that
   came from such a small place, we are amazed'   PNG 138

d. tháinig   lá millteanach gaoithe   móire   agus
   come [PAST] day terrible   wind [GEN] great [GEN] and
   rinneadh   smionagair den   choláiste adhmaid
   make [PAST-AUT] little-pieces of-the college   wood [GEN]
   'There came a day of terrible storms and the wooden college was smashed
   to pieces.'   PNG 139

What these observations cumulatively indicate is that there is no intrinsic require-
ment that arbitrary pronouns be subject to sortal restrictions on possible referents.
This should hardly be a surprising conclusion, given the arbitrary character of such
restrictions and given the historical origins of the lexical material out of which the
Romance and Germanic pronouns have mostly been constructed (based on words
which in origin mean 'human being' or 'man' or else, as in Italian, on reflexive pro-
nouns). It would surely be a strange thing if arbitrary pronouns were universally
subject to such strange and arbitrary restrictions.

6   Interim Summary

We have seen so far, then, that the autonomous inflectional ending on a finite verb
licenses the appearance of a syntactically active but phonologically null element in
the position of the most prominent of the verb's arguments. We have also seen that
this element is close in its interpretive and anaphoric properties to the impersonal
subject construction of Germanic and Romance languages. Being syntactically ex-
pressed, the null subject can bind anaphoric elements such as reciprocals. However,
given the particularities of its interpretation (in particular, its failure to introduce
a discourse marker, in the analysis of Koenig and Mauner (2000)) it may not func-
tion as an antecedent for subsequent definite pronouns. Such arbitrary subjects we
in turn take to be indefinites in the sense of dynamic semantics or Discourse Repre-
sentation Theory ('ultra-indefinites' or 'a-indefinites' in the terminology of Koenig
(1999), Koenig and Mauner (2000)). The autonomous argument in Irish differs from
its European kin only in not being associated with sortal restrictions of any kind. We
have seen, in addition, that the element licensed in this position is either identical
to PRO in one of its uses (the so-called 'arbitrary' use), or else is similar enough in

relevant respects to arbitrary PRO to make ellipsis of a containing constituent possible.

There is much here that deserves closer investigation. For now, my limited goal is to flesh out empirically the widely held intuition that the autonomous form represents a species of arbitrary subject construction, and further to provide reason to believe that at the heart of this construction is the licensing of a null element similar in its essentials to the arbitrary pronoun subjects of Romance and Germanic.

7 Licensing the Autonomous Form

Given this much, the analytical task is to construct an understanding of the licensing of a null pronominal element (with interpretive properties similar to, or identical with, those of arbitrary PRO) by a set of verbal endings which are associated with finite tenses. Framed in these terms, the task is simplified both by theoretical commitment and by knowledge of the larger patterns governing such licensing in the language.
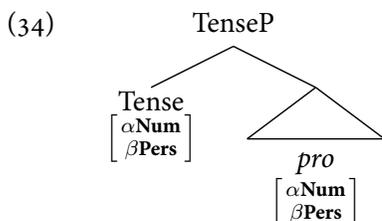
The general syntactic configuration underlying agreement in Irish is that seen in (33):

(33)
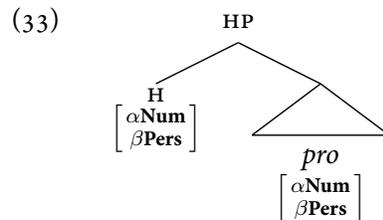
Here, the relation between H and *pro* is that of local command (i.e. *pro* is the most prominent nominal in the domain of H and is not contained within a phase which excludes H). H itself is a member of one of the four or so functional (closed-class) categories of the language which may bear person and number marking morphology. Specifically, H can be any of:

- Finite Tense (giving rise to subject-verb agreement)

- D (giving rise to possessor agreement)

- v (giving rise to various species of object agreement)

- P (giving rise to agreement between a preposition and its object)

The first of these sub-cases is the one that is principally relevant to our present concerns. This is the case seen in (34) (in which Tense is the closed-class category which encodes finiteness and to which the verb raises in finite clauses).
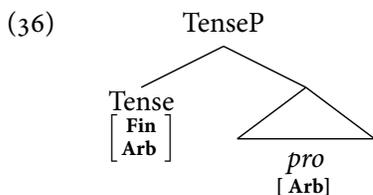
(34)   TenseP

   Tense
   $\begin{bmatrix} \alpha\mathbf{Num} \\ \beta\mathbf{Pers} \end{bmatrix}$
                        pro
                    $\begin{bmatrix} \alpha\mathbf{Num} \\ \beta\mathbf{Pers} \end{bmatrix}$

Schematic structures such as (34) surface in the form of examples like (35):

(35)   a. Labhradar   *pro* leis na ceoltóirí.
            speak-[**PAST**] -[**P3**]   with the musicians
            'They spoke to the musicians.'
        b. Ní   abraim   *pro* a dhath.
            NEG say-[**PRES**] [**S1**]   anything
            'I don't say anything.'

in which the inflected verb occupies either the position of Tense or a position further
to the left than Tense.

   This overall view of the syntax of agreement represents a natural updating of
McCloskey and Hale (1984) and is very much in harmony with current thinking
about the generalized syntax of agreement relations. It is defended and amplified
in McCloskey (2005). Since the autonomous argument is a null pronoun licensed
only in the domain of a finite verb bearing the appropriate morphology, we are al-
most required to extend (34) to the current case, by assuming that features of person
and number are not the only ones which can figure in the relationship of (34). Let
us assume, more specifically, that the autonomous argument is a null pronominal
which agrees with a finite Tense bearing the feature *Arb*. The null pronominal will
in turn bear an occurrence of that same feature. The feature *Arb* is clearly uninter-
pretable on Tense, and equally clearly interpretable on *pro*, triggering, as it does, the
interpretation in terms of a pure Heimian indefinite:

(36)   TenseP

   Tense
   $\begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{Fin} \\ \mathbf{Arb} \end{bmatrix}$
                        pro
                    [**Arb**]

Routine as this proposal is (almost forced by current theoretical commitments), it
brings with it some real analytical gains. In particular:

   • It allows us to understand why autonomous forms are restricted to 'subject'

position. This restriction is a reflection of the general requirement of locality on the syntax of the relation AGREE. Once the feature *Arb* appears on Tense, it is determined that there must be a null pronominal within its domain with respect to which it can act as a Probe (in the sense of Chomsky (2001)). That null pronominal must, in addition, be the most prominent nominal in the domain of Tense; otherwise the crucial relationship of (36) will be blocked and the uninterpretable *Arb* feature on Tense will not be eliminated as required. The restriction to subjecthood thus follows from very basic design principles of language (as does the same requirement on agreement more generally).

- In addition, we understand the requirement that the autonomous argument be null. Or at any rate we understand that requirement as being one facet of a larger pattern, since it is a general fact about this language that only null pronominals may participate in the agreement relation (see McCloskey and Hale (1984) and much subsequent work, especially Andrews (1990), Legate (1999), Ackema and Neeleman (2003), McCloskey (2005)).

- It provides the right level of generalization to state the distribution of autonomous forms. That is, these patterns are available for all finite verbs— exactly the level of generality which is achieved by associating the crucial licensing feature with finite Tense.[7]

- We understand the impossibility of (11), since the complex reflexive formed by combining a personal pronoun with *féin* requires an antecedent with person and number features which match those of the pronoun—something which the autonomous argument lacks, given the analysis of (36). We also understand the possibility of (13), since arbitrary pronouns in general are known to be able to bind reciprocals and the Irish reciprocal imposes no additional featural requirements on its antecedent. What remains then is the more delicate empirical challenge of understanding the somewhat marginal character of the phenomenon represented by (13). For this, I think that we need to assume that the autonomous argument may be (but is not required to be) se-

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[7] As noted by Stenson (1989), some unaccusative verbs resist the autonomous inflection. For some of these (the so-called 'salient unaccusatives' whose only visible argument is prepositional), the presence of a null expletive pronoun would block the crucial relationship of (36). Others, for instance (i),

(i)   a.   *Taitnítear   liom.
            please [**PRES-AUT**] with-me
            'Things in general please me/I am easily pleased.'

I suspect are to be understood in the same context as Cherchia's 1995, 108 observation that arbitrary *si* in Italian is incompatible with kind-denoting predicates.

mantically plural. The task for a speaker asked to judge the well-formedness of (13), then, is first to determine (from whatever context is supplied or can be conjured up) whether or not the (variable of the) autonomous argument has singular or plural reference. If plural, the example will be judged well-formed; if singular, the example will be judged ill-formed.[8]

- Finally, these proposals allow us to make a link with a larger typological property of Irish. Like most verb-initial languages, Irish is a massively head-marking language, in the sense of Nichols (1986). That is, in grammatical relationships which link a head with a phrasal dependent (a probe with a goal in minimalist terms), the language marks the head (the probe) rather than the dependent (the goal). The contrast between Romance and Germanic on the one hand and Irish on the other now emerges as a contrast between languages which mark the licensing of the arbitrary pronoun on the licensed pronoun (Romance and Germanic languages) and those which mark it on the licensing head (Irish). Put another way, Irish emerges as the head-marking counterpart of the dependent-marking pattern found in other European languages, and this trait emerges as but one aspect of a much larger typological pattern.

There is at least one large issue left open in the partial analysis developed here. This issue emerges as a seeming contradiction at the heart of the proposal. On the one hand, it treats the autonomous argument as being licensed by the same kinds of mechanisms as license null personal pronouns in finite clauses (the mechanisms of *pro*-drop in the classic sense). On the other hand, it points to evidence that the autonomous argument is deeply similar to, or identical with, the null subject of arbitrary control infinitivals–the evidence of (27) in particular. Put differently, the discussion to date seems to identify the autonomous argument both with *pro* and with PRO, something which indeed was, in classic Government and Binding theory, a contradiction.

It is unclear to me whether or not this seeming contradiction is real. In the changed theoretical context, it is very unclear what the difference between *pro* and PRO might consist of, and the classic treatment of the limited distribution of PRO (that it can appear only in un-governed positions) is not available. The correct characterization of the element called PRO is at present, as far as I know, an open theoretical issue.

That being so, it is reasonable, it seems to me, to interpret facts like those considered here as revealing part of the truth about PRO. That truth I take to be something

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[8] If this optionality has a syntactic correlate, we will asssume that the autonomous argument bears a specification for number, as well as *Arb*. The crucially missing feature that makes (11) impossible must then be person. Compare Kratzer (1997) on German *man*. Note, however, that there is no requirement that the binder of a reciprocal pronoun in Irish be syntactically plural, as shown in McCloskey (2000)

like this: among the very limited range of items which nonfinite Tense can license in its domain is a null pronominal whose interpretive properties mirror those of the autonomous argument in Irish and the arbitrary subject pronouns of Romance and Germanic. That is the fact that we need to understand.[9]

8   The Lexically Restricted Cases

In the final part of the paper, I try to show that the simple proposal developed in the previous section lets us understand an aspect of the syntax of the autonomous construction that seems initially very strange.

The initial observation here is that there are lexically restricted uses of the autonomous inflection. These are cases in which verbs exhibit the form of the autonomous but not its particular interpretation. Rather, the meaning of these structures is unpredictable from their apparent subparts. The verb *caill*, for instance, means 'lose'. But in its autonomous form, it means 'die' as in (37a). The base meaning of the verb *cas* is 'turn' or 'twist' (transitive and intransitive). But in the autonomous form, it means 'to meet' (accidentally), as in (37b,c).

(37) a. Cailleadh   dhá bhliain ó shoin é.
          lose [**PAST-AUT**] two year   ago   him
          'He died two years ago.'
      b. Casadh   orm é   aréir.
          turn [**PAST-AUT**] on-me him last-night
          'I met him last night.'
      c. Casadh   ar a chéile   iad   ar an aonach.
          turn [**PAST-AUT**] on each other them on the fair

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[9]Stenson (1989) (like Anderson (1982) and Harley (2002)) analyses the autonomous argument as an instance of PRO—a proposal which I take to be consistent with the discussion of this section. Stenson also, however, presents arguments that the autonomous argument is distinct from the null pronominals licensed by agreement morphology. The core argument is that the various tests which indicate the presence of a null pronominal (those identified in McCloskey and Hale (1984)) fail with respect to the autonomous argument. These diagnostic tests are of two kinds. One shows that null *pro* can be coordinated with other (overt) nominals. A second class shows that certain suffixes (demonstrative, reflexive, contrastive) which attach to overt pronouns also attach to null *pro*. None of these diagnostics identify *pro* in the position of the autonomous argument.

I think, though, that we can understand this failure within the context of the current proposals. For the coordination facts, I believe it to be systematically true even of the overt arbitrary pronouns of Romance and Germanic that they cannot be coordinated with other nominals. For the suffixes, I think that in all cases there is a semantic incompatibility between the requirements of the suffix and the semantic character of the autonomous argument. Demonstratives attach only to definite nominals. Contrastive suffixes attach only to focused pronouns. And so on. If this interpretation is maintainable, the failure of such diagnostics is understandable even in the context of (36).

'They met (each other) at the fair.'

Similar, though in a less obvious way, is the case in (38):

(38) Báitheadh   anuraidh é.
      drown [**PAST-AUT**] last year   him
      'He drowned last year.'

There is a transitive verb *báigh* meaning 'drown,' of which the verb in (38) is its
past autonomous form. Thus, a possible interpretation of (38) is: 'He was drowned
last year by individuals or forces unspecified.' However, this is not the only possi-
bility. The more common interpretation for (38) is that suggested by the translation
offered, one corresponding to an English sentence with intransitive unaccusative
drown—a verb with a single (internal) argument and one which as a consequence
supports no entailment about the existence of an agent or cause of the drowning.

    There is a semi-productive extension of this phenomenon. Verbs denoting psy-
chological states may appear in the autonomous form, in which case their experi-
encer argument is expressed not as a nominative subject, but rather as a dative—
marked with the preposition *do*. This is illustrated for various pairs in (39)–(43).

(39) a. Chonaic mé go raibh   sé seo   iontach contúirteach.
          see [**PAST**] I   **C** be [**PAST**] he **DEMON** very   dangerous
          'I saw that this guy was very dangerous.'
      b. Títhear   domh go bhfuil   sé seo   contúirteach.
          see [**PRES-AUT**] to-me **C** be [**PRES**] he **DEMON** dangerous
          'It seems to me that this guy is dangerous.'

(40) a. ón   uisce a samhlaigh   mé ba cheart a bheith glan
          from-the water **C** imagine [**PAST**] I   should   be [**−FIN**] clean
          'from the water that I imagined ought to be clean'
      b. ón   uisce a samhlaíodh   dom   ba cheart a bheith glan
          from-the water **C** imagine [**PAST-AUT**] to-me should   be [**−FIN**] clean
          'from the water that I imagined ought to be clean'   LG 235

(41) a. Cheap   mé go raibh   cuma ghruama orthu.
          think [**PAST**] I   **C** be [**PAST**] look gloomy   on-them
          'I thought that they looked gloomy.'
      b. ceapadh   dom   go raibh   cuma ghruama orthu
          think [**PAST-AUT**] to-me **C** be [**PAST**] look gloomy   on-them
          'It appeared to me that they looked gloomy.'   AT 70

(42) a. Thuig   mé ná   raibh   an geimhreadh fós ann.
          understand [**PAST**] I   **C NEG-PAST** be [**PAST**] the winter   yet in-it

'I understood that it wasn't the winter yet.'

b. tuigeadh   dom ná   raibh   an geimhreadh fós
    understand [**PAST-AUT**] to-me C **NEG-PAST** be [**PAST**] the winter   yet
    ann
    in-it
    'I gathered that it wasn't the winter yet.'   AII 112

(43) a. an t-athrú a mheas   siad a bheadh   acu
          the change C think [**PAST**] they C be [**COND**] at-them
          'the change that they thought they would have'

      b. an t-athrú a measadh   dóibh   a bheadh   acu
          the change C think [**PAST-AUT**] to-them C be [**COND**] at-them
          'the change that it seemed to them they would have'   DII 91

Not all of the autonomous uses in (39)–(43) are available in every dialect or for
every speaker, this being an area in which there is considerable lexical variation,
it seems.[10] But the general pattern is that illustrated in (44). Informally speaking, a
psychological verb which can appear in the syntactic frame (44a) may also appear
in the frame (44b).

(44)   a. [V   DP   CP]
              [Nom]

        b. [V   [_PP_ *do* DP] CP]
              [Aut]

The range of verbs which actually participate in the alternation in (44) (those which
allow both variants) must be listed in an idiosyncratic way, it seems, for different
varieties of the language. Here too the appearance of autonomous inflection is asso-
ciated with a shift in the base meaning of the verb to which the inflection attaches.
Although it is hard to be exact about the matter, the variants in (44a) and (44b) (the
pairs in (39)–(43)) are not completely synonymous. The difference is subtle, but I
suspect that the key notion in explicating it is evidentiality—the speaker has less

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[10] The b-examples of (39) and (42), though, are, I think, available in every variety. There is in addition
at least one impersonal psych-predicate which participates in the alternation illustrated in (37)–(43):

(i)   a. Thaibhsigh   sé dom   go gcuala   daoine ag caint.
           appear [**PAST**] it to-me C hear [**PAST**] [**S1**] people talk [**PROG**]
           'It seemed to me that I heard people talking.'
       b. Taibhsíodh   dom   go gcuala   daoine ag caint.
           appear [**PAST-AUT**] to-me C hear [**PAST**] [**S1**] people talk [**PROG**]
           'It seemed to me that I heard people talking. '   NCN 62

warrant for the truth of the embedded proposition in the b-examples than in the a-examples.

Besides understanding the morphosyntax of the alternation in (44), then, we must in addition link a semantic difference with the syntactic alternation. In this sense, the task for these cases is the same as the task for (37).

Concerning these special uses of the autonomous inflection, there are two puzzles to be solved. The first is how we link the special meaning that they express with the appearance of the autonomous inflection. The second is a little more challenging, at least initially. Notice that in the examples of (37)–(43), there are no silent arguments. That is, all of the required arguments of the predicates in question are expressed overtly by way of the normal morphosyntactic means that the language makes available (accusative case-marking in particular, and by way of the dative preposition *do*). There is every reason to believe, that is, that examples such as (37)–(43) contain no instance of the autonomous argument, even though the 'normal' function of the autonomous inflection is exactly to license such an argument.

These two puzzles are linked in a way that is worth stressing since it is not obvious. For every case that I know of in which the autonomous inflection is used to express idiomatic meanings of this kind, it is also true that in the idiomatic use, it does not license a null arbitrary pronominal within its domain—even though it does so in all more routine uses. This linking is a property which any adequate analysis must aim to capture.

Let us examine how these puzzles might be understood.

The obvious (and I think also correct) analysis within our frame of reference is to assume that in such cases also there are two instances of the feature *Arb* (just as in the regular uses of the autonomous inflection). One instance of the feature resides on finite Tense and gives rise ultimately to the appearance of autonomous morphology on the finite verb. Being an uninterpretable feature it is obliged to enter into an agreement relation with another instance of the same feature. That second instance resides on the lexical verbs of (37)–(43) and it is this feature which, by way of the AGREE relation, eliminates the *Arb* feature on Tense. It is also this feature which acts as a diacritic to trigger construction of the special meanings of (37)–(43). That is, we treat these special cases in much the same way that deponent verbs in Latin (passive in their morphology, active in their syntax and interpretation) are treated by Embick and Noyer (2001). The second (lower) occurence of *Arb* in cases such as (37)–(43) is uninterpretable in the technical sense, since in this position, it is dissociated from its normal semantic content (that of introducing a 'pure indefinite', if the discussion earlier is on the right track). Its function is entirely diacritic, in that it serves only to formally mark in the lexicon the special meaning in question.

This line of analysis too is almost forced given the framework as developed so far. To provide for the morphology, finite Tense in (37)–(43) must bear the feature we

have called *Arb*. But that means that there must in turn be another instance of the same feature in its command-domain with which it can interact so as to be eliminated before the structures of which it is a part are transferred to the semantic-pragmatic interface. But as we have seen, there is no occurrence of arbitrary *pro* in examples (37)–(43) which could perform this crucial function.

But there must also be some feature on the verb which forces the special interpretations exemplified in (37)–(43) and which distinguishes such uses from more routine uses. Considerations of analytical parsimony will now lead us to identify these two features (the uninterpretable *Arb* of Tense and the diacritic feature of (37)–(43)) if possible. The problem of the uninterpretable *Arb* feature on Tense is thereby resolved.

We now hold, then, that there are two distinct interactions which the defining feature of the autonomous morphology may enter in to—the one we saw earlier in (36) and the one seen in (45).

(45)   TenseP

Tense
$\left[\begin{array}{l} \textbf{Fin} \\ \textbf{Arb} \end{array}\right]$

                V
              [**Arb**]
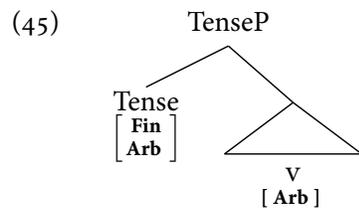
It is the structure of (45) which gives rise to (37)–(43).

We now have a way of understanding the puzzle laid out earlier. The *Arb* feature of Tense must interact with some element in its domain (in order to ensure its own elimination). But it can interact with only one such feature. Once it has entered into an agreement relation with one element or the other, it is checked (valued, as in Chomsky (2001) or as in Pesetsky and Torrego (2001, 2004)) and will be inactive—unavailable for further interaction. Hence, it can have within its domain either arbitrary *pro* or one of the special verbs in (37)–(43), but never both. This is the linking that we had hoped to ensure.

The results, then, are what we want—in accounting for the core facts and also in accounting for the various puzzles connected with the idiosyncratic uses of the autonomous inflection.

It may seem, however, that too much is being made of this. Would it not be much more straightforward to simply assume that the feature *Arb* occurs on suitably inflected forms of the verbs in (37)–(43) to indicate their special interpretation? Any further talk of an agreement relation between a disembodied Tense element and a feature on those verbs might seem to represent a spurious and un-necessary complication. My final effort here will be to try to show that such scepticism is unwarranted and that the interpretation offered earlier is in fact the right one. There are

cases in which the autonomous inflection which (ultimately) licenses the special interpretations of (37)–(43) does not in fact appear on the verb, but rather in a higher inflectional position. Nonetheless, the special interpretations of (37)–(43) persist.

9   Two Periphrastic Aspects—Progressive and Perfect

The crucial observations involve two periphrastic aspects—the progressive and the perfect. For the progressive in (46) we have the particle spelt *ag* preceding a nonfinite form of the verb.

(46)   Tá   siad ag tógáil   tithe   ar an Mhullach Dubh.
       be [PRES] they raise [PROG] houses on the
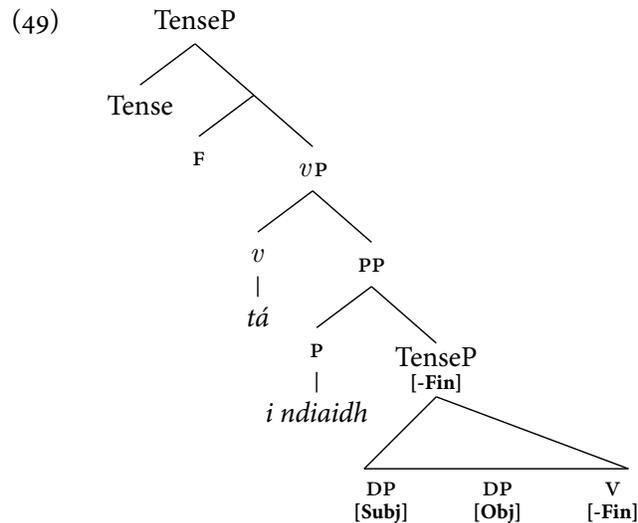   'They're building houses in Mullaghduff.'

Historically this particle is the preposition meaning 'at' but in the modern language it has been grammaticized (brought into the closed class vocabulary) as an aspect marker (for extended discussion, see McCloskey (1983)). For such structures, we can assume a structure something like (47).

(47)
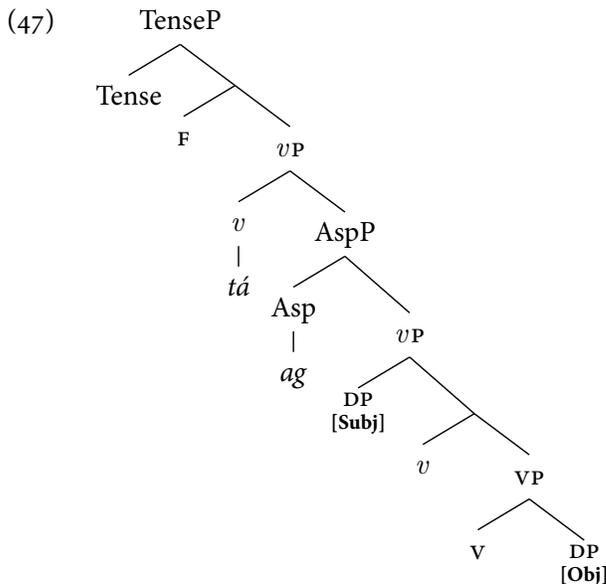
In (48) is seen an instance of the perfective aspect.

(48)   Bhí   siad (díreach) i ndiaidh an baile   a fhágáil.
       be [PAST] they (just)   after   the home leave [–FIN]
       'They had (just) left home.'

Here we have the preposition (ungrammaticized, it seems) meaning 'after', a preposition which in turn takes a nonfinite (Raising) complement. I will therefore assume a syntax along the lines of (49).[11]

(49)

```
              TenseP
             /      \
        Tense        \
            \         \
             F        vP
                     /   \
                    v     \
                    |      PP
                   tá     /   \
                         P     TenseP
                         |     [-Fin]
                    i ndiaidh   /\
                               /   \
                              /      \
                          DP     DP      V
                         [Subj]  [Obj]  [-Fin]
```

The interaction between such periphrastic structures and the autonomous form is initially unremarkable. For the progressive, we have (50a) and for the perfect (50b).

(50) a. Táthar   ag iarraidh airgead a bhailiú.
          be [**PRES-AUT**] try [**PROG**] money gather [–**FIN**]
          'There is an attempt to raise money.'
      b. Bhíothas   i ndiaidh airgead a bhailiú.
          be [**PAST-AUT**] after   money gather [–**FIN**]
          'Money had been raised.'

In such cases, the feature *Arb* on finite Tense licenses the appearance of the autonomous argument in the most prominent argument position within its domain (the subject of the complement of the aspectual marker in each case) and the morphology is ultimately realized on the finite verb after it has fused with Tense.

A more interesting interaction, though, is visible when we ask how the periphrastic aspects interact with autonomous forms of the second kind—idiomatic verbs such

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[11] The specifics here are by no means crucial for the larger point under discussion. Both (47) and (49) presupppose raising of the subject to a position in the inflectional layer to the right of the surface position of the finite verb. The label F does duty for whatever structure beyond Tense is to be postulated for the inflectional layer.

as we saw in (37)–(43). The relevant examples are given in (51).[12]

(51) a. tláthar   a' mo   chailleadh
          be [**PRES-AUT**] [**PROG**] –[**S1**] lose [**–FIN**]
          'I'm dying.'   UMI 23
      b. Bhíothas   i ndiaidh an bheirt bhan   a chastáil   ar a chéile.
          be [**PAST-AUT**] after   the two   women turn [**–FIN**] on each other
          'The two women had just met (each other).'   DCA 204
      c. nach rabhthas   ag casachtáil aon duine   de na buachaillí óga
          NEG C be [**PAST-AUT**] turn [**PROG**]   any person of the boys   young
          air
          on-him
          'that he wasn't meeting any of the young boys'   PMB 205
      d. na créatúir a bhíthear   a bháitheadh
          the creatures **C** be [**PRES-AUT**] drown [**PROG**]
          'the poor creatures who were drowning'   CDC 49

Similar patterns are found with the psych-predicates, as shown in (52):

(52) a. toisigheadh   a thaidhbhsiughadh rudaí mar sin domh-sa
          begin [**PAST-AUT**] seem [**–FIN**]   things like that to-me
          'I began to imagine things like that.'   UMI 23
      b. go rabhthas   ag samhladh   an ama a bhí   le theacht díthe
          C be [**PAST-AUT**] imagine [**PROG**] the time **C** be [**PAST**] to-come   to-her
          'that she was imagining the time that was to come'   I 120
      c. an rud   a bhíthear   a shamhailt   damh
          the thing **C** be [**PAST-AUT**] imagine [**PROG**] to-me
          'the thing that I was imagining'   EMIT 213
      d. bhíthidhe   ag taidhbhreamh damh in mo shuan go …
          be [**PAST-HABIT-AUT**] seem [**PROG**]   to-me in my sleep **C**
          'it used to seem to me in my sleep that … '   EMIT 229

The structures of (51) and (52) are very easy to document in published sources from the 1920s, 30s and 40s and earlier, but seem to be largely unavailable to contemporary speakers.[13] The analytical task, then, is twofold—the theory must be such as to provide for the possibility of (51) and (52), and it must also provide a way of understanding the mechanisms of variation and change which lie behind the diachronic fragility of the structure behind (51) and (52).

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[12]For more detailed discussion and a larger collection of examples, see Mac Cana and Ó Baoill (1997), McCloskey (1998).

[13]There are speakers who have (52) but not (51).

Consider (51a) as a typical instance of the phenomenon. We have here an instance of the special interpretation of the verb 'lose' in which it expresses the meaning 'die' (just as in (37))—an intransitive verb with a single internal argument. The expression of this meaning, as we have seen, is normally linked with the appearance of autonomous morphology. And in (51a) that licensing morphology is indeed present. However, it does not appear on the verb itself (it is morphologically impossible to have a nonfinite autonomous form). The morphology appears, rather, exactly where we would expect it to appear given (45)—on the Tense element, realized ultimately on the raised auxiliary *tá* ('be'). The structure is as in (53).

(53)
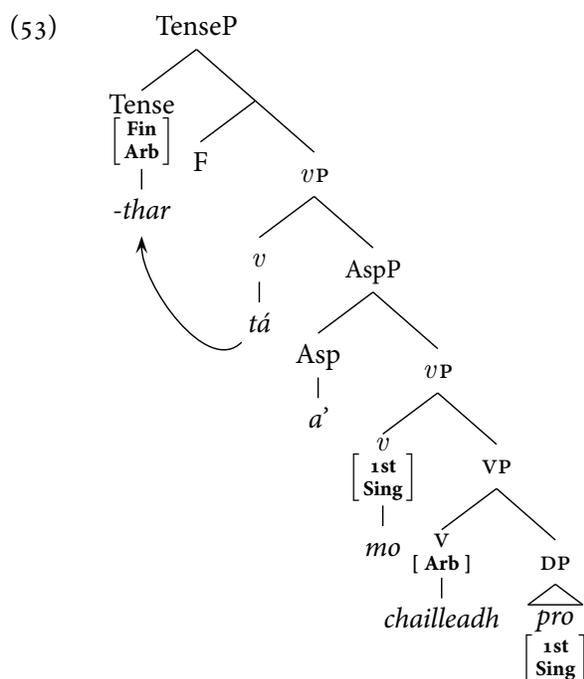
The featural interactions in (53) are routine. The *Arb* feature of Tense agrees with the corresponding feature on the verbal root *caill* (since this latter is the most prominent occurrence of *Arb* in the domain of Tense and the unaccusative v is not a phase-defining head). *Arb* is thus eliminated from Tense, as required (just as in (45)). The occurrence of the diacritic *Arb* on the verbal root forces construction of the special meaning 'die'. The verb, then, has just one argument—a single internal argument since it is unaccusative. That argument in turn is realized as *pro*, which enters into an agreement relation with the governing v, as required. That is, the interactions are what we would expect given (45). In each case, the inflectional morphology which indicates presence of the feature *Arb* (a presence required ultimately by the special

meanings of (51) and (52)) appears not on the lexical verb itself but rather on a higher (but still accessible) Tense element—just as we would expect given (45) and the theoretical context associated with it.

We understand, then, why (51) and (52) are possible in principle. What is the source of the variation reflected in the loss of these structures in very recent times? A notable feature of these structures is that the single argument of the unaccusative verb is realized as a direct object (see McCloskey (1998) for more discussion). In (51a), for instance, the morphosyntax which licenses the internal argument of 'die' is the morphosyntax of object agreement, and in (51b) the internal argument is in the pre-verbal Object Shift position typical of direct objects in transitive nonfinite clauses. This is, in a sense, the only option open to the language for the licensing of such structures. Finite Tense (whose responsibility it would normally be to license the internal argument of an unaccusative verb, given Burzio's Generalization) is unavailable. It must bear the feature *Arb* in order to license the special meaning of the main verb. But that in turn renders it incapable of licensing an argument (by way of the interaction of nominative case and subject verb agreement). If such structures are to be possible at all, then, some other licensing mechanism for the internal argument must be called in to play. The mechanisms appealed to are those typical of the licensing of direct objects in nonfinite clauses—object agreement, accusative case licensing, genitive case licensing, and Object Shift (McCloskey (1980), McCloskey (1984), McCloskey (1986), Chung and McCloskey (1987), McCloskey and Sells (1988), Guilfoyle (1990), Noonan (1992), Duffield (1995), Carnie and Harley (1998), Bondaruk (2004), McCloskey (2005)).

The licensing of (51) and (52), then, depends on the availability of an unaccusative v which bears the features responsible for the licensing of direct objects in nonfinite clauses. Put another way, the possibility of (51) and (52) depends on the presence, in a given variety of the language, of a set of exceptional items among the closed class vocabulary of the language—members of the class v which introduce no second (external) argument but which, in violation of Burzio's Generalization, still have the morphosyntactic wherewithall to license an internal argument.

In this way, we can meet the second of our two challenges—that of understanding the possibility of variation and the diachronic fragility of structures such as (51) and (52). Their survival depends on speakers' having continued access to sufficient positive evidence for the postulation of marked and exceptional lexical items.[14]

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[14]Note that the logic above applies also to the more routine idiosyncratic uses documented in (37), (38), and (39)–(43). That is, they too depend on the availability of an instance of v with exceptional case-licensing properties—note the accusative case of the internal argument of (51a), for example. This must be a different member of the class than figures in (51) and (43), however, since the morphosyntax of objecthood is quite different in finite and in nonfinite clauses. The relative stability of (37), (38) and (39)–(43), then, must reflect their relative frequency of occurrence—there is sufficient

10   Conclusion

Much work remains to be done on all of these matters. In particular, the quantificational, referential, and anaphoric properties of the autonomous argument need to be probed in a deeper and more serious way than has been possible here. In addition, the implications of these phenomena for the theory of Control and for the nature of the silent element called PRO remain to be properly thought through. [15] But I hope to have shown here at least that the proper typological context for those investigations is the context of arbitrary subject constructions generally. I also hope to have shown that a morphosyntactic analysis of the autonomous construction which grows very naturally (if not inevitably) out of current theoretical commitments achieves a reasonable level of descriptive success.

In the context of this volume in particular, it is worth noting that, in the examples of (51) and of (52), we have direct evidence for the existence of a class of intransitive verbs which are non-agentive and which take only direct object arguments. We have, that is, direct evidence for one of the central contributions made by David Perlmutter to syntactic theory—the Unaccusative Hypothesis, which predicts the existence of exactly such a class of verbs.

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positive evidence available to learners to overcome whatever default pressure lies behind Burzio's Generalization. The variability within the class (39)–(43) presumably reflects that same pressure. See also footnote 15.

[15] If it is true that nonfinite Tense can also license an occurence of the feature *Arb* (in line with the discussion of Control and arbitrary PRO which grows out of (29) above), then we expect the special meanings of (37)–(43) to be licensed in the domain of nonfinite Tense as well (i.e. in nonfinite clauses). In fact they are:

(i)   a.   Féadann   tú   carbad nó dhó de na rudaí sean-aimseardha a chastáil   duit
           can [**PRES**] you cart   or two of the things old-fashioned   turn [−**FIN**] on-you
           'You can come across one or two of the old-fashioned kinds of carts.'   AM 72
      b.   Bhí   lúcháir ar an fhear bhocht a leithéid   a chastáil   air
           be [**PAST**] joy   on the man poor   such-a-one turn [−**FIN**] on-him
           'The poor man was delighted to meet such a one.'   SSOTC 172
      c.   trí   seachtainí comhthroma i ndiaidh mo dhearbhráthair a chailleadh
           three weeks   even   after   my brother   lose [−**FIN**]
           'three weeks exactly after my brother had died'   EMIT 26

These patterns depend on the same instance of v as (51) and (52) (unaccusative v bearing the morphosyntactic features which license objects in nonfinite clauses), and so we expect them to show the same diachronic fragility as (51) and (52). This is, I believe, exactly the case.

Appendix—Sources of Attested Examples

Many of the examples used in this paper have been taken from published sources of one kind or another. When this is the case, it is indicated by way of a tag which consists of an abbreviation of the title of the publication followed by a page number. The title-abbreviations are explained here.

AII	*Allagar II*, Tomás Ó Criomhthain, ed. Pádraig Ua Maoileon
AM	*An Mhiorbhailt*, translated Niall Mac Suibhne
AT	*A Thig Ná Tit Orm*, Maidhc Dainín Ó Sé
CCC	*Cnuasach Céad Conlach*, Seán Bán Mac Meanman
CDC	*Castar na Daoine ar a Chéile, Scríbhinní Mháire 1*, Séamus Ó Grianna, ed. Nollaig Mac Congail
CFC	*Céad Fáilte go Cléire*, ed. Marion Gunn
DCA	*Dith-Chéille Almayer*, translated Seosamh Mac Grianna
DII	*Desiderius a Dó*, Pádraig Ó Cíobháin
EMIT	*Eader Muir is Tír*, translated Niall Ó Domhnaill
FBF	*Fiche Blian ag Fás*, Muiris Ó Súilleabháin
GSA	*An Giorria San Aer*, Ger Ó Cíobháin
I	*Ise*, translated Niall Ó Domhnaill
IA	*Iomramh Aonair*, Liam Mac Con Iomaire
IAE	*In Aimsir Emmet*, translated Colm Ó Gaora
LDS	*Lá Dár Saol*, Seán Ó Criomhthain
LG	*Le Gealaigh*, Pádraig Ó Cíobháin
MD	*An Mairnéalach Dubh*, translated Seosamh Mac Grianna
NCN	*Nár Chlos Ár Namhaid*, Ger Ó Cíobháin
OT	*Ó Thuaidh*, Pádraig Ua Maoleon
PMB	*Pádhraic Mháire Bhán*, Seán Ó Ruadháin
PNG	*Pobal na Gaeltachta*, ed. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, Liam Lillis Ó Laoire, Seán Ua Súilleabháin
SAT	*Seanchas an Táilliúra*, Aindrias Ó Muimhneacháin
SS	*Scéalta Sealgaire*, translated Maighréad Nic Mhaicín
SSOTC	*Sí-Scéalta ó Thír Chonaill*, ed. Seán Ó Heochaidh, Máire Ní Néill and Séamas Ó Catháin.
U	*Unaga*, translated Eoghan Ó Neachtain
UMI	*Uaill-Mhian Iúdaigh*, translated Tadhg Ó Rabhartaigh

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