THE CONSONANT CLUSTER -rdh-

BY

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This note aims to establish the nature of the consonant cluster -rdh- the character of which has not been commented on to my knowledge in modern scholarship. Before dealing with the matter at hand it will be convenient to recapitulate the relevant requirements pertaining to rhyming consonant clusters.

1) When a consonant cluster occurs in one word, a corresponding consonant cluster must occur in its rhyming counterpart. If not the rhyme is deemed to exemplify the fault known as briseadh ('imperfection').

2) The number of consonants in the corresponding clusters need not be the same.

3) Only certain classes of consonants may be combined in clusters to provide perfect rhyme. The specific cluster that will concern us here (-rdh-) is made up of consonants from the aedrom class. Such a cluster may be paired with another cluster of the same type (aedrom + aedrom) or with a cluster of the aedrom + teann type, e.g. Laighneach : ainbhreach ; bhiodhbhaidh : dhionadhaidh.

The cluster -rdh- receives specific treatment in both IGT and BST. It occurs in a section of the former that deals with sandhi phenomena:

Garbhùighidh .r. re hucht .dh. mar so: ciour & dubh, ciordhubh, no féirdhubh no a leithid eile. "r becomes 'rough' before lenited d as follows: ciordhubh or féirdhubh or the like'.

The late grammatical tract attributed to Tadhg Óg (son of Tadhg Dall) Ó hUiginn, in the course of a discussion of sandhi in compound words,
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is more explicit in its explanation of the nature of the cluster -rdh-. The following points are noted there:

1. If -r and dh- occur at the juncture of a compound word the r is 'rough' (garbh). As such a compound formed from sméar and dabh is pronounced as sméarubh.
2. This pronunciation is to be preferred even when -rdh- is not the result of a compound.
3. The pronunciation is equivalent to two rs.
4. A compound juncture of -rdh- may be written as either -rr- or -rdh- although the latter is normal for the sake of clarity.

This makes it clear that in the cluster -rdh- the lenited d may undergo assimilation to the preceding r. The pronunciation of the cluster in its assimilated form is that of the emphatic or long form of r (rr) which is variously termed ruis teann ('strong r'), r dhúibhla ('double r') and ruis garabh ('rough r') in grammatical sources. 7

Based on the testimony of the later grammarian, then, the verb garbhaighidh used in the discussion of the consonant cluster -rdh- in IGT and BST (cited above) may be rendered as implying 'gains the quality of a consonant of the teann class' or 'becomes emphatic/long'. It may be noted that the metrical examples cited in the discussion in IGT and BST (A (1) and (2) below) fail to establish the point made in the prose preamble that the cluster can represent both -rr- and -rdh- since the examples cited require the unassimilated form -rdh- only (ciordhubh : miobhun; gheadhath making consonance (uaithne) with -nr-, -ghfli-, -nhb-).

Metrical examples taken from the work of the poets clearly show, however, that the cluster -rdh- can be realised as either (A) -rdh- or (B) -rr-, although (A) is by far the commoner.

6 GGBM 3341-9: Gidhheadh d"t raibh r ar deireadh an chèidhocail & d — éir d'ath babh an sibh chaithfheas [sic] buirth — a ronsach in fhocal dèigheadh, ag garbh [sic] chaithfhéas buirth anoisibh buirth r an d, & cantar é mar 'sméarrubh' ar son 'sméir' & 'dabh', & as mar sin as maiseamhla a commaibh aimhneach a cionnfhocal in gach ait, éir as cinnfhocal d"t r bhithe aca, & nl lochd gan an d do sròthbhailt san cionnfhocal in uair sin acht r imhna. Gidhheadh as gnatbhach in d do sòrthbhailt ar d go tiuchn a chiall in fhocal. On the authorship of the tract see Walsh (1947) 74-9.

7 GGBM 3338-41; cf. ibid. 3135-44. For the various terms see (i) IGT II §8, Breanach (1941) 37 q. 4o (teann); (ii) GGBM loc. cit. (dúbhalta); (iii) A dais dána is sionchadh dána, above p. 39 (q. 6c), NLIG 3 f. 77r (q. 7b) (garbh), see also n. 6. For the possibility that the pronunciation of rr after long vowels or diphthongs was equivalent to that of a lenited r see O'Rahilly (1942) 122 and Greene (1952) 214.
A.

(1) Searrach cídhrubh borb i Bhriain. 
   bolg na dháithigh ar mionbhan meáin.\(^5\) (IGT I §45)

(2) Bronnuidh a ghroidh go gérdaith. 
   do scoil olthainín nó árnuith; 
   dán geal do ro dó rioghfhiath. 
   fear dá lloin burguithe dhiubh nó ndúasbhóith. 
   (BST 213.25-6; IGT II 354)

(3) Ar fhios mheic mheic Domhnaill ón 
   do bhaidh doghraing gleic re glúntuin feilim 
   chathairth 'n-a dá cár ó fhéidhim lámh rachalma an riogh. 
   (DDána no. 91 q. 49)

(4) Ionnaobharar ar fhud Banbha 
   clann Fhearbhais ón athardtha; 
   uathadh tir ó mhoir go moir [sic leg.] 
   gan bhíligh dhíobh acht nó ndúthaigh. 
   (AthD no. 8 q. 9)

B.

(1) Gleannna mian ós noiféith cuire, 
   sroisha gorma ós na gleannaithe; 
   fiodh cnóthuidhe ar cail na sgoth, 
   clúin órdhuidhe\(^6\) dá fholach. 
   (TD no. 13 q. 3).

(2) Buaidh iomhada corn breac is básín 
   'gon bhhróin laochdha loinneadh, 
   buaidh iomhada ar dhíobhalla bhall, 
   dobhacha, canna coinnealadh.\(^10\) 
   (TD no. 16 q. 58)

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\(^5\) Note the same rhyme in DDána no. 79 q. 11c; síthe greanta ar mionbhan meáin, le dearsaí fríomh cídhrubh dí ghréidh.

\(^6\) For órdhuidhe the MSS consulted by Knott have 'ór(udh)uidhe' which may be retained in accordance with GGBM (see n. 6). Note, however, that a manuscript used by Knott (NLG 140) has 'ór(udh)uidhe' (cf. also NLS Adv. 72.3.2, 18 'óruadhuidhe').

\(^10\) 'ádhe' represents adh- (see IGT I §56; Knott (1957) 7-8; Ni Dhomhnaill (1975) 21 §39). Ó Máille (1946, 100 n. 3) held that this rhyme exemplified the absence of detention of dh following it.

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(3) Beg a brígh a mbraí órdh, 
   nd a bhfear ard sholónda\(^11\) 
   nó a bhféil ór far ghabhtha ghoinn, 
   nó a sagarf sréil go saolabh. 
   (IBP no. 9 q. 8)

(4) Lucht comhair cnú n-óraidhe 
   Cú Chonnacht 's a fhuidhfhile, 
   maoinie wair gach endúine, 
   na luaidh aoidhe d'óraidhe.\(^12\) 
   (DMU no. 11 q. 10)

(5) An fhian re hucht rífhobhruidhe 
   tiad a droid le móirdheinme; 
   len t'fhre agus h'éinighre 
   a bhein ar fhéir n-óirtfheilme\(^13\) 
   (ibid. q. 24)

(6) Dealbhadh coireac chnoc nuadhithe, 
   brocht seirce súth bhfearaimne, 
   meas órdhuidhe le a acrom coill, 
   is coll cnóthuidhe i ccorbhuigh.\(^14\) 
   (O'Hara no. 25 q. 3)

**ABBREVIATIONS**

AthD. Lambert McKenna, Aithdógaíteim dána. 2 vols (ITS 37, 40). Dublin 1939-40.

BST Lambert McKenna, Bardic syntactical tracts. Dublin 1944.

DDána Lúinhbhheartach Mac Cionnaith, Dhiogluim Dána. Baile Átha Cliath 1938.


IGT Osborn Bergin, Irish grammatical tracts I-V, Supplement Éiriu 8-10, 14, 17 (1916-55).

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\(^11\) For sholónda read bolónda where -nd- represents -nr- (see IGT I §64; Knott (1957) 7-8; Ni Dhomhnaill (1975) 21 §39). The latest editor of this poem considered the rhyme in ab-faulty (Ni Dhomhnaill (1975) 123 n. 150).

\(^12\) On the spelling óraidhe see n. 9; on the spelling endúine see n. 11.

\(^13\) Read n-óirtfheilme in line a for consonance. Móirdheinme is apparently for móir-dheinme and so translated by the editor.

\(^14\) In McKenna’s edition ‘re’ appears in place of ‘le’. The MS, however, has ‘le’ and in a note the editor says ‘Leg. le a’. Also, dealbhadh is spelt ‘dealadh’ in the MS.
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REFERENCES

Greene, David, 1952: 'Middle quantity in Irish' Ériu 16, 212-8.
Ó Cuív, Brian, 1966: 'The phonetic basis of Classical Modern Irish rhyme' Ériu 20, 94-103.
O'Rahilly, T. F. 1942: 'Iarann, iadóg, etc.' Ériu 13, 119-27.

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