

Knotty issues in the pronunciation of Muskerry Irish

Traditional Muskerry Irish is a relatively well-described dialect of Irish, one that enjoyed a certain degree of prestige in the decades before the introduction of the *Caighdeán Oifigiúil* (CO), a form of Irish that was later equipped with a concocted *lárchanúint* pronunciation that was never accepted by native speakers as a formal pronunciation of Irish. The result is that learners are often encouraged to develop a relationship with a particular Gaeltacht and model their speech on a discrete form of *an teanga bheó*. This article therefore deals with difficult areas of pronunciation in a way that may be useful to those aiming to imitate a particular dialectal form of *an teanga bheó*. It strikes me as particularly difficult for learners of Muskerry Irish to accept the CO as a claimed prestige form of Irish. Consequently, I will refer to it here as *Gaelainn Chaighdeánaithe* (GCh)—not a “standard”, but rather an artificially *standardised* form.

The weakness of the Muskerry Gaeltacht is such, however, that the Irish of learners (influenced by English), the Irish of other Gaeltachtaí and GCh all weigh on the form of Irish that is spoken in Muskerry today. The point that few speakers retain the old dialects was made (in general reference to Munster Irish as a whole) by Dr Seán Ua Súilleabháin:

Múintear an Ghaeilge anois do mhuintir na Gaeltachta ar scoil, agus tá seo á dhéanamh ó bunaíodh Saorstát Éireann sa bhliain 1922, ionas gur beag cainteoiri Gaeltachta nach bhfuil tionchar na scoile a bheag nó a mhór ar a c(h)uid Gaeilge. (*Stair na Gaeilge*, p538)

One could ask “what is Muskerry Irish?” All languages evince development over time, and one answer is that Muskerry Irish is whatever Irish is spoken in Muskerry. However, an alternative view is that we may use the distinction that Dr Feargal Ó Béarra drew between Traditional Late Modern Irish and non-Traditional Late Modern Irish (“Late Modern Irish and the Dynamics of Language Change and Language Death”, pp260-269) to argue that Muskerry Irish is better regarded as the dialect of Traditional Late Modern Irish championed by Peadar Ua Laoghaire in his works that his acolytes sought to establish as a standard dialect of Irish in the years before the bringing in of a concocted “Standard”.

This leads to the suggestion that the Irish spoken in Muskerry today does not fully overlap with the traditional dialect (*Gaelainn Mhúscraí* proper). In 1940, Dónall Bán Ó Céileachair (1871-1950) gave his view that even then there was a difference in the Irish spoken by younger generations owing to a period when English had been popularised among the young people of the district:

Ní dóigh liom go raibh Gaoluinn i n-aon áit chómh fuinneamhail chómh láidir chómh líomhtha is do bhí san áit sin dathad bliadhan ó shin; ach tá na daoine go raibh sí sin acu ar slígh na fírinne, gur maith an mhaise dhóibh é, agus níl fanta ach me féin agus roinnt eile den chómhnaosaí go bhfuil an Ghaoluinn acu mar bhí sí dathadh bliadhan ó shin.

Do thug na daoine dob óige ná sinn-ne suas í ’labhairt ar feadh tamaill, agus annsan thosnúgheadar arís nuair thosnuigh Connradh na Gaolúinne, agus tá easnamh beag ortha de dheasgaibh an stop a dheineadar. (*Sgéal mo Bheatha*, p190)

Dónall Bán was a near coeval of Amhlaoibh Ó Loingsigh (1872-1947). That the Irish of both men was considered exceptional in terms of fidelity to the traditional dialect is shown by the fact that the Irish pronunciation of both men was the subject of considerable academic study. In the case of Dónall Bán, his Irish was studied by Alf Sommerfelt in 1927; Brian Ó Cuív’s edition of Mícheál Ó Briain’s *Cnósach Focal ó Bhaile Bhúirne* (hereinafter CFBB), published in 1947, gives many details of Dónall Bán’s pronunciation of individual words; and a detailed discussion of Dónall Bán’s pronunciation of Irish was made by his son, Donchadh Ó Céileachair, in an unpublished M.A. thesis

(‘Nótaí do *Scéal mo bheatha*’) in 1950. Amhlaoibh Ó Loingsigh’s Irish formed the basis of Brian Ó Cuív’s *The Irish of West Muskerry* (hereinafter IWM) in 1944. Once again, CFBB gives many details of Ó Loingsigh’s pronunciation of individual words. The fact that a Muskerry native, Donncha Ó Cróinín (1919-90), edited *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh Í Luinse* and *Seanachas Amhlaoibh* in semiphonetic spelling also gives detailed information on the pronunciation of Muskerry Irish of the generation of native speakers born in the 1870s.

In many (but not all) cases, the evidence available as to the Irish of Ó Céileachair (which for the purposes of this article refers to Dónall Bán and not his son, Donchadh) and Ó Loingsigh dovetails with what can be gleaned from Peadar Ua Laoghaire’s works, his comments on pronunciation and the *Leitiríú Shimplí* (hereinafter LS) versions of his works prepared by his acolytes, including Osborn Bergin and others. An interesting difference relates to the pronunciation of autonomous forms of the verb. Ua Laoghaire told Gearóid Ó Nualláin:

I have never heard, e.g., *buailfear*. What I have heard is *buailfar*, with the *l* slender and the *f* as broad as it is in *ólfar*. But I have always heard *buailtear*. I dare say some people have heard *buailtar*. If they have, then they ought to write *buailtar*, and then we should know that they have heard it. (*Beatha Dhuine a Thoil*, pp137-138)

Yet IWM (p109) states that Ó Loingsigh had a broad *-tar* even where appended to a slender verbal stem in the present autonomous. Clearly there are differences between the Irish idiolects of speakers of any dialect; some of the differences in Ua Laoghaire’s Irish may reflect the time he spent away from Muskerry. This point was made in 1943 in the quarterly journal *An Músgraigheach*:

Bheadh breall ar éinne a shamlóchadh gur caighdeán fíor-bheacht ar fead é le cainnt na sean-daoine i Músgraighe. Ní healadha dhúinn a dhearmhad ná raibh an tAthair Peadair ach ’na gharsún óg nuair fhág sé an baile agus gur chaith sé an chuid is mó dá shaoghal i dtaobh amuigh dá dhúthaigh. Ar a chuimhne is mó a bhraitheadh sé nuair a bhíodh an Ghaeluinn aige á sgríobh, agus bhíodh Gaeluinn na leabhar a bhí léighte aige agus Gaeluinn na ndúthaí do shiúbhluigh sé ag teacht i gcoinnibh na cuimhne. Ionngna shaoghail is eadh a fheabhas do chimeád sé greim ar a Ghaeluinn féin i n-aimhdheoin na mbarraí sin. Rud eile: sgríobhaidhe neamh-chríochnamhail ab eadh é riamh. Ba chuma leis ach bheith ag sgríobh roimis, gan puinn suime chur sa litriú, agus is annamh i n-aon chor do cheartuigheadh sé an méid a bhíodh sgríobhtha aige. (“Séadna”, p7)

Sources including IWM, CFBB, *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh*, *Seanachas Amhlaoibh* and the edition of Ó Céileachair’s *Scéal mo Bheatha* edited by Coiste Litríochta Mhúsraí in 2008 may be referred to for more information on the Irish of the best-studied speakers of the traditional Irish of Muskerry. My purpose here is rather to look at what changes may have occurred in the pronunciation of the older generation of speakers of Muskerry Irish with reference to the pronunciation system outlined by Brian Ó Cuív in IWM in 1944. Most of the points below have been discussed with Eóiní Maidhcí Ó Súilleabháin, a speaker of Muskerry Irish of a relatively traditional type born in 1949.

Autonomous verb forms

A particularly glaring difficulty when asking contemporary speakers of Muskerry Irish to read aloud parts of *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh*, around half of which I recorded in stages on October 9th-11th 2016 (the recordings will eventually be linked to on my website, corkirish.wordpress.com), is Ó Loingsigh’s penchant for *-th-* in the autonomous form of the verb of the type *tugaithí* for *tugtí*. Let us set out the autonomous form in various tenses. It is not necessarily the case that each conjugated form of each particular verb has been attested in all the speakers mentioned, but for convenience’ sake the evidence of the forms found in their Irish will be illustrated with the verbs shown. For

example, *tuigfar* is not directly attested in Ó Loingsigh's Irish, but *caillfar* is and to avoid the need to find examples where all forms of a specific verb are found in the Irish of all four men, the following examples will illustrate the known patterns. The discussion here does not relate to lenition of the autonomous form, but rather to pronunciation of the verbal ending. Consequently all the forms below are shown unlenited.

	Ua Laoghaire	Ó Loingsigh	Ó Céileachair	Ó Súilleabháin
tugtar	tugtar /tugtər/	tugathar /tugəhər/	tugtar /tugtər/	tugtar /tugtər/
tuigtear	tuigtear /tigt'ər/	tuigeathar /tig'əhər/	tuigtear /tigt'tər/	tuigtear /tigt'tər/
tabharfar	túrfar /tu:rfər/	túrfar /tu:rfər/	túrfar /tu:rfər/	túrfar /tu:rfər/
tuigfear	tuigfar /tig'fər/	tuigfar /tig'fər/	tuigfar /tig'fər/	tuigfar /tig'fər/
tugadh	tugag /tugəg/	tugamh /tugəv/	tugag /tugəg/	tugag /tugəg/
buailleadh	buaileag /buəl'əg/	buaileag /buəl'əg/	buaileag /buəl'əg/	buaileag /buəl'əg/
tabharfaí	tabharfí /tu:rf'i:/	tabharfí /tu:rf'i:/	tabharfaí /tu:rfi:/	tabharfí /tu:rf'i:/
tuigfí	tuigfí /tig'fi:/	tuigfí /tig'fi:/	tuigfaí /tig'fi:/	tuigfí /tig'fi:/
tugtaí	tugtí /tugt'i:/	tugaithí /tugəhi:/	tugtí /tugt'i:/	tugtí /tugt'i:/
tuigtí	tuigtí /tigt'i:/	tuigithí /tig'ih'i:/	tuigtí /tigt'i:/	tuigtí /tigt'i:/

Leaving aside Ua Laoghaire's statement that he had a slender *-tear* in the present autonomous of verbs with slender stems, which diverges from most other evidence on dialectal pronunciation, the present autonomous ends in /tər/. Ó Loingsigh was especially fond of this pronunciation. Attested examples from Ó Loingsigh include *tugathar*, *tuigeathar*, *cailleathar*, *fágathar*, *leogathar* (= *ligtear* in GCh), *tosnaíthar*, *triomaíthar*, *beannaíthar*, *feargaíthar*, *samhlaíthar*. Counterexamples include *fachtar* (= *faightear* in GCh), *dintar*, *deirthar* (with rare examples of *deirtear*) and *beirtar*. We can draw the conclusion that an *n* delenites Ó Loingsigh's underlying ending *-thar*, while no epenthetic vowel is occasioned by the use of *-thar* after an *r*. I've found no evidence that Ó Céileachair used any of the forms in *-thar*. Ua Laoghaire's Irish requires more careful analysis, as Ua Laoghaire did not always write as he spoke, and used a variety of spellings over the course of his career as a Gaelic Revival writer. Forms in /əhər/ are generally not indicated in the LS versions of his works. However, an exception is seen where the verbal stem is in *-t*, to which is appended the ending *-thar* preceded by an epenthetic vowel:

- *Is léo is fearr a tuilltear luacht saothair agus is ionta is fearr a nochtthar sobhailce. (Aithris ar Chríost, p23)*
- *Nú, i bhfigiúir, tráchtthar anso ar ghréin an chirt, .i., ar Íosa Críost, ár dTighearna, a bhí eirighthe sar a dtánadar. (Na Cheithre Soisgéil, p134)*
- *Glacann an manach imnídheach gach nídh a h-órduighthear dó, agus cuireann sé suas leis. (Aithris ar Chríost, p57)*

The LS version of *Aithris ar Chríost* (p56 of the 1930 edition) transcribes *nochtthar* as *nochdaha*. We don't have an LS transcription of *tráchtthar*, but the spelling used by Ua Laoghaire indicates the pronunciation is /tr̥ɑːxt̥əh̥ər/. *Baistthear* (*Gníomhartha na n-Aspol*, p353); *éistthear* (*Aithris ar Chríost*, p97; unfortunately I don't have relevant the page numbers or publication dates, but the LS edition of *Aithris ar Chríost* serialised in 1930-31 in the *Irish Weekly Independent* and *Sunday Independent* transcribes this as *éshdihar*); and *doirtthear* (*Sgéalaidheachta as an mBíobla Naomtha*, Vol 5, p507) have the /əh̥ər/ pronunciation too. Ua Laoghaire also regularly has /i:h̥ər/ in the second conjugation, as in *órduighthear* above. We might presume that the forms used by Ua Laoghaire in speech were a good deal closer to those found in Ó Loingsigh's Irish than is apparent from Ua Laoghaire's spellings.

A good treatment of these forms is found in *An Músgraigheach*:

Tá dhá fhuirm don bhriathar saor san aimsir láitheach *-t(e)ar*, agus *-th(e)ar*. Tugadh an riail seo 'na dtaobh i n-Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge fadó: "The *-tar* of the autonomous form, present tense, is aspirated after *b, bh, c, f, g, m, mh, p, r*, and after verbs in *igh*, but not after *ch, d, dh, gh, l, n, s, t, th*." Níl an riail seo cruinn chómh fada's a théan cainnt Mhúsgraí. Chloisfeá *lúbtar, raobtar, fictear, leagtar, tugar, lomtar, ceaptar, deirtar*, etc., chómh maith le *lúb(a)har, raob(a)har, fic(i)har, leag(a)har, tug(a)har, lom(a)har, ceap(a)har, deirhar*, etc., agus ar an dtaobh eile dhe chloisfeá *caoch(a)har, fuin(i)har, fás(a)har*, etc., chómh maith le *caochtar, fuintear, fástar*, etc. Mar an gcéana deirtar *stad(a)har, goid(i)har, loit(i)har*.

Nuair fhanan an *t* bíon sé leathan, fiú amháin nuair a bhíon consain chaol roimis, e.g. *múintar, dintar, fictar*. Mar sin leis don aimsir fháisteanach, *f* leathan a bhíon ann i gcómhnaí, e.g. *múinfar, buinfar, cloisfar*.

Nuair a bhíon an *t* séimhithe cuirtear guta isteach uaireanta idir an *h* agus préamh an bhréithir, e.g. *lúbahar, tugahar*, etc. Ní cuirtear guta isteach idir *r* agus *h*, e.g. *deirhar*. ("Fuaiméana agus Fuirmeacha na bhFocal", p14).

This suggests that *fuinithar* is possible for *fuintear/fuintar*, contrasting with Ó Loingsigh's *dintar* (I haven't found any attestation of *dinithar*). However, Ó Súilleabháin told me these forms are rarely if ever heard in Muskerry Irish today, the broad *-tar* ending being much more commonly used.

As we are discussing the *-th-* pronunciation of autonomous forms, we may look at the past-habitual (and also past-subjunctive) forms. Ó Céileachair had *-tí*, always slender, where Ó Loingsigh normally had *-thí*, preceded (other than where the stem ended in *r*) by an epenthetic vowel. Forms specifically attested in Ó Loingsigh's Irish include the following (which I will show unlenited and unclipped to show the fundamental forms): *deirthí, tugaithí, tógaití, caillithí, leogaithí, féadaithí, fágaití, leagaití, fiafraithí* and *socraithí*; the ending is always shown unlenited in *bhítí* and in *n-*stems such as *líontí* and *dintí*. Where *leagthí* was found in Ua Laoghaire's *Aesop a Tháinig go hÉirinn* (p26), the LS version compiled by Osborn Bergin transcribed this as *leagtí* (*Ésop a Háinig go hÉring*, p43). However, spellings in Ua Laoghaire's works such as *abarthí, deirthí, daorthí, iarrthí* and *labharthí* show that he used a lenited *-tí* after an *r*. Spellings such as *airighthí, áirimhthí, cuardaithí, tusnuighthí*, and *imrighthí* show Ua Laoghaire used *-thí* in the second conjugation. Spellings such as *baistthí* (*Gníomhartha na n-Aspol*, p310), *tráchtthí* (*Niamh*, p40) and *ceistithí* (*Sgéalaidheachta as an mBíobla Naomhtha*, Vol 4, p390) indicate that a verbal stem in *-t* was likely to require /əhi:/ (or /ihi:/ in a slender environment). Also worthy of note are *gheibhthí, faghthí* and *téithí*, once again with *-thí* appended in a vocalic environment. *Bhítí* is also always so found in Ua Laoghaire's works.

An Músgraiheach comments as follows on these forms.

Mar sin don aimsir ghnáth-chaite agus don mhodh fo-shuíteach leis, tá dhá fhuirm ann *-t(a)í* agus *-th(a)í*, e.g. *tugtaí, tugahí, deirtí, deirhí*, etc. I gcás na fuirme *-t(a)í* bíon sí caol i gcómhnaí ag cainnteoirí áirithe, fiú amháin i ndiaidh consaine caoile e.g. *castaí > castí*. Ag cainnteoirí eile bíon sí caol le caol agus leathan le leathan, e.g. *castaí, buintí*. (“Fuaimeana agus Fuirmeacha na bhFocal”, p15).

Once again, the *h*-pronunciation has disappeared from the modern dialect. Ó Súilleabháin told me that these forms are not in use. For the sake of completeness, it is worth commenting on other autonomous forms: the future remains with a broad *-far*; the conditional remains with a slender *-fí* (although *An Músgraiheach* states on p15 of the article cited above that *casfaí* and *casfí* were both found and Donchadh Ó Ceileachair stated that his father appended a broad *-faí* even to slender stems, as with *chuirfaí*). Ó Loingsigh often has /əv/ in the past-tense autonomous where a guttural sound (/g/ and /x/ in the examples I’ve identified) precedes: thus *tugamh, tógamh, leogamh, tuigeamh, fágamh, riugamh* (/r’ugəv/ for *rugadh*), *crochamh*; occasional forms just as *cuireamh* (*cuireag* is found more frequently) are also attested. As far as my research goes, there is no direct evidence that Ua Laoghaire used /v/ in the past-tense autonomous. Ó Súilleabháin told me the *v*-forms are not in use in present-day Muskerry Irish.

***-Th(e)á* in the second-person singular past habitual**

A similar issue is found with the second-person singular of the past habitual (and also the past subjunctive, where not replaced by the conditional). Forms found in Ó Loingsigh (given here unlenited and uneclipsed, although often used eclipsed with *dá* and *mara*) include *tiospeánathá, féadathá, tugathá, leogathá, tagathá* and *dineathá*. Counterexamples with no epenthetic vowel include *dintá, fantá* and *deirthá*. Ó Céileachair also has forms (abstracting from initial consonant mutation) such as *téithá, cuirthá* and *beithá* (e.g. *dá mbeithá, Sgéal mo Bheatha*, p88). It is unlikely that the *-athá* forms are in use in the modern dialect. Unfortunately, however, I asked Ó Súilleabháin in the subjunctive context only (and not the past habitual indicative) about his attitude towards *dá bhféadathá*, where the issue was complicated by his preference for *dá bhféadfá*, with the conditional replacing the subjunctive. We may note in passing pronunciation of the second-person conditional: in the same article in *An Músgraiheach* (“Fuaimeana agus Fuirmeacha na bhFocal”, p15) the author states “sa dara phearsain uathaidh don mhodh choingheallach *-f(e)á* bíon an *f* leathan i gcómhnaí, fiú amháin i ndiaidh consainte caoile, e.g. *dhéanfá, shínfá*”, and this accords with the pronunciation found in Muskerry today.

Past habitual (including subjunctive) forms with *-th-* found in Ua Laoghaire’s works include *téidhthá, geallthá, airighthá, tagthá, curthá, bhí(o)thá, tugthá, faghthá, glacthá, lionthá, siúbhalthá, fáisgthá, tuigthá, tógthá, abarthá, iar(r)thá, leogthá, marbhuiighthá, buailthá, fágthá, d’adhlaclhá, deirthá* and *féadthá*. We note that even *lionthá*, with an *n*-stem, is sometimes found with *-thá*. Counterexamples are few, including *fantá, líontá, deintá*, and *cómhlíontá*. Where in *Aesop a Tháinig go hÉirinn* (p18) we read *dá ngeallthá*, the LS version has *dá ngeaulhá* (*Ésop a Háinig go hÉiring*, p29), with no epenthetic vowel shown. Similarly, *dá nglacthá* in *Séadna* (p9) is transcribed as *dá nglacá* (*Shiàna*, p7). Yet *dá bhfáisgthá* in *Mo Sgéal Féin* (p96) is transcribed in LS as *dá váishgihá* (*Mo Shgiàl Fén*, p39). In the following passage of *Táin Bó Cuailnge, dtuitheá* is probably to be pronounced /d’it’iha:/:

Tháinig sgannra orm mar bhí a fhios agam dá ndeinteá an comhrac go dtuitfeá ann. Dubhart lé ná raibh aon bhreith agam ar fhanamhaint beó id’ dhiaidh. Go raibh mo ghrádh dhuit ró mhór, ró láidir, ró ghreamuighthe im’ chroidhe, agus go mbrisfeadh an croidhe istigh im’ chliabh dá dtuitheá! (*Táin Bó Cuailnge*, p203)

-Th- in verbal adjectives

A related problem concerns formation of participles (verbal adjectives). The verbal adjective spelt *tagtha* in GCh is pronounced /tagihi/ in the dialect (i.e. *tagaithe*). I checked the pronunciation of numerous participle forms with Ó Súilleabháin, and as expected there was no /ihi/ expansion of *tógtha*, *tugtha*, *fágtha*, *réabtha*, *lúbtha*, *beirthe* (from *beirim*, not *beirim*), *taispeánta* or *dearúda*, which are pronounced /to:kə/, /tukə/, /fa:kə/, /re:pə/, /lu:pə/, /berhə/, /t'is'p'a:ntə/ and /d'a'ru:tə/ respectively. We note in passing delentation of the ending *-tha* by *n-* and *d-* stems in most cases. By contrast, *piocaithe*, *stracaithe*, *ciapaithe*, *nochtaithe* and *alpaithe* have the *h*-expansion.

As realisation of *-tha* as /ə/ is accompanied by devoicing of a voiced consonantal stem, a neat conclusion we can draw is that stems in voiced consonants are handled in the same way as *tógtha*; those with stems in unvoiced consonants need to be expanded, viz. *pioctha*>*piocaithe*. However, *tagaithe* itself then becomes an outlier, as *tag-* is a voiced consonantal stem. I wonder if this is connected with the fact that the *tag-* stem itself is an innovation from what was once *tig-*; if the new stem developed after the form of verbal adjectives had been largely determined, it may have been handled differently when it entered the verb system.

Ó Súilleabháin agreed that *seirgthe*, “shrivelled” (corresponding to *seargtha* in GCh), was pronounced /fer'ik'i/, aligning well with the treatment of voiced consonantal stems. Similarly, *tarraingte* is /tarik'i/. (*Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh* shows the same speaker may pronounce the *r* in this verb variously broad or slender—compare the transcriptions on pp3, 5—so this may also be /tar'ik'i/.) This reflects a process whereby an *-ng-* as a verbal stem became denasalised in Muskerry Irish, with the full process being *tarraingthe*>*tarraigthe*>*tarraicthe*>*tarraice*. Verbs in *-ng* are distinctive in that they don't lose their /g'/ where followed by a third-person pronoun (and the /g'/ may be devoiced to /k'/), unlike the situation that applies where verbs in *-gh* lose the /g'/ before a third-person pronoun. So *chuaigh sé* is pronounced /xuə fe:/, whereas *tharraig sé* is /harig' fe:/ or even /harik' fe:/, because the /g'/ derives from an original *-ng*. All such verbs therefore ought to have participles in /ik'i/, as with /tarik'i/, which I would spell *tarraicthe*.

However, it seems likely that “reading pronunciations” have developed in contemporary Muskerry Irish, owing to the weakness of the dialect. Consequently, Ó Súilleabháin told me he would pronounce the verbal adjective spelt *fuilingthe* in GCh as /fil'ijt'i/. Dr Seán Ua Súilleabháin of University College Cork advises me that alongside the transition from *-ng-* to *-g-* in such verbs the *-ng-* forms were retained in verse and song, making it likely that such forms as are rarely encountered in day-to-day life are becoming *-ng-* stems once again, reinforced by the lively survival of the district's musical culture. Be that as it may, this word (which could be spelt *fuilicthe*) was pronounced /fil'ik'i/ in the traditional dialect (see *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh*, p176). During my visit to Muskerry, I forgot to enquire as to the pronunciation of *tuirlingthe*, but I suspect it is now /tu:rl'ijt'i/, whereas the traditional pronunciation was *túirlicthe*, i.e. /tu:rl'ik'i/. We may note in passing that the pronunciation of a clear /ŋ'/ in words once colloquially pronounced with /g'/ seems to be a wider phenomenon; Ó Súilleabháin has /far'fjŋ'/ for *fairsing* where Ó Loingsigh had /far'fəg/ (IWM, p120).

Oscailte and similarly-formed verbal adjectives (*ceangailte*, *oilte*, *tuillte*, *deighilte*, *buailte*, *caillte*, etc) are found with a slender *-lt-* ending, although *oscailta* is found in *Séadna* in the phrase *taidhreamh na súl n-ogailta* (p78 therein). These participles were traditionally pronounced with lenition of the *t*, as /il'hi/ for *oilte* (IWM, p15). However, Ó Súilleabháin has a /t/ in *oscailte*, *buailte* and *tuillte*, and I haven't met anyone in Muskerry who maintains the *lth* pronunciation. It seems likely reading pronunciations (/ilt'i/, etc) are now predominant in the district. A broad *-lta* continues to be used immediately after long vowels in verbal adjectives of the type *fált(h)a*, *siúrált(h)a* and

sábhált(h)a. At any rate, Ó Súilleabháin uses *siúrálta*, where GCh (and therefore younger speakers in Muskerry) may have *siúráilte*. Once again, the pronunciation with /lt/ is regularly encountered where the pronunciation was once with /lh/.

The disappearance of the /l'hi/ and /lhə/ pronunciation of verbal adjectives reflects handling of a wider class of words with *lt* in the spelling. These include *fáilte*, *Gaeltacht*, *sprideálta* (*spioradálta* in GCh) and *leibhéalta*. Of such words, Ó Súilleabháin told me that he has a *t* in *fáilte* and *Gaeltacht*, although there are people who pronounce such words with *lth*.

Medial /h/ after other consonants

It is important to draw a distinction between devoiced consonants and consonants that are succeeded by an /h/. IWM shows that /n/, /l/ and /r/ may be devoiced. The transcription there is then /hn/, /hl/ and /hr/, and there are also slender equivalents of each of these. The use of such transcriptions may reflect the fact that [ŋ] is harder to type. The IWM transcriptions are also phonemic rather than being strictly phonetic. By contrast, /nh/, /lh/ and /rh/ in Brian Ó Cuív's transcription represents an /n/, /l/ and /r/ respectively followed by an /h/. I propose to clarify the distinction by inserting a full stop unless a stress-mark intervenes to separate the consonants: /n.h/, /l.h/ and /r.h/. In the framework set out by Brian Ó Cuív in IWM, there is a distinction between *alt* and *altú*, in that the former has a devoiced l (/hl/) and the latter /l.h/: /ahl/, /al'hu:/ (see p108 therein).

In line with the discussion above relating to the pronunciation of participles, it seems that both sorts of *lt* (/hl/ and /l.h/) have become /lt/. The pronunciation of *banaltra* as /banərlə/, given in IWM (p67), has been replaced by a more straightforward /banəltrə/, which Ó Súilleabháin gave as his pronunciation. On the occasions where I have used the pronunciation /banərlə/ in Muskerry, I have found it to be of limited intelligibility to present-day native speakers, having to be repeated a number of times before being understood. A partial exception may be the word *muinchille*, which Ó Súilleabháin maintains as /min'irhl'i/, as given in IWM (p49) where the /hl'/ in the pronunciation continues to be reinforced by the *ch* in the spelling. Sommerfelt shows that Ó Céileachair had /min'hirl'i/ ("Munster Vowels and Consonants", p214; I have slightly altered the transcription, which was given there as /mu'n'hirl'i/).

The consonantal combination /l.h/ performs an important grammatical function in the future and conditional tenses, in words such as *díolfad*, /d'i:l.həd/, and *bhuailfeadh*, /vuəl'həx/. I find that if you ask speakers to pronounce such words independently, a particularly clear /h/ is given. However, in running speech and in reading long texts the /h/ is much harder to distinguish. When asked to pronounce the word *léimfidh*, in isolation at any rate, Ó Súilleabháin has a clear medial /m'.h/. *Stuama* is /stuəmə/, in contradistinction to Ó Loingsigh's /stuəm.hə/ (IWM, p112), a pronunciation that reflected the traditional spelling of this word as *stuamdha*. Similarly, /n.h/ has a clear /h/ in isolation in *tráthnóna*. Words like *fanfair* being read out from a long text tend to become /fahnir'/, or at least there is variation along the lines of /fan.hir'~fahnir'/, as the /h/ tends, but not on each occasion, merely to devoice the accompanying consonant. *Teangthacha*, which requires the medial *-th-* spelling in Muskerry Irish in order to show the diphthong whether the /h/ is clearly audible or not, is another word whether /t'auŋ.həxə/ and /t'auhŋəxə/ may both be found. *Taithneamh* may be realised /taŋ'.həv/ or /tahŋ'əv/.

However, we should bear in mind that IWM is largely based on Ó Loingsigh's Irish, and that where he had /n.h/ others may have had /hn/ (i.e. [ŋ]) all along. In 1927, Alf Sommerfelt indicated that Ó Céileachair pronounced *cáithnín* as /kah'n'i:n'/ ("Munster Vowels and Consonants", p197; given in the original as /kahn'i:n'/) where Ó Loingsigh had /kan"hi:n'/ (IWM, p46). The tendency for /n.h/ and similar combinations to become devoiced consonants with no audible *h* may therefore simply

be the continuation of long trends in the dialect. Sommerfelt also stated that Ó Céileachair had /tra:h'no:nə/ and not / tra:n'ho:nə/ for *tráthnóna*.

The /r.h/ combination seems particularly liable to lose the /h/, either leaving behind /hr/ or just /r/ *tout court*. Ó Súilleabháin retains the /r.h/ in *orthu*, /or.hə/, and *uirthi*, /ir'.hi/, and *saothrú*, /se:r'hu:/. He insisted that *fiafraí* is /f'iar'hi:/, although I found that younger speakers of Muskerry Irish frequently say /f'iar'ri:/, with no hint of an /h/. A medial /h/ is hard to hear in the word *máithreacha*, /ma:r'.həxə/, although Ó Súilleabháin insisted he does have an /h/ in there; it is possibly realised as a slight devoicing of the slender *r* (/ma:(h)r'əxə/). Ó Súilleabháin has a clear devoiced /rhn'/ in the word *tóirthneach*, pronounced in isolation as /to:rhn'əx/; Ua Laoghaire was insistent that he had never heard this word pronounced without a medial *h* (*Notes on Irish Words and Usages*, p107).

The quality of an initial *t* and *d*

Palatalisation of the slender *t* is slight in Muskerry Irish. The difference is often hard to make out, and writers of Muskerry Irish often spelt the same word in a variety of ways. The word spelt *tubaiste* in GCh, is found as both *tubaist* and *tiubaist* in Ua Laoghaire's works. Similarly, *tionóisc* is found as both *tionóisg* and *tonóisg* in Ua Laoghaire's works. Words that Ó Súilleabháin has with a broad *t* in contradistinction to the spelling used in GCh include *tiomna* and *tiomáint*. The Muskerry form of these words is well-established with a broad *t*. Ó Súilleabháin has the broad *t* of the accepted spelling in *tubaist*, as did Ó Loingsigh, and a broad *t* in *tuistiún* ("fourpence"), as did Ó Loingsigh too, although Ua Laoghaire wrote *tistiún* (*Irish Numerals and How to Use Them*, p18).

Ua Laoghaire wrote *tuitim*, but this is probably a case where he used the classical spelling. GCh has *titim*, a pronunciation also found in Ó Loingsigh and Ó Súilleabháin's Irish. Similarly, *tionóisc* has a slender *t* in both men's Irish, notwithstanding the variation exhibited by this word in Ua Laoghaire's spelling. Varying from the accepted spelling, both Ó Loingsigh and Ó Súilleabháin had/have a slender *t* in *taispeáint* and *troscán* (/tr'is'ka:n/, a pronunciation also indicated by Ua Laoghaire's spelling, *triosgán*; Ua Laoghaire used the spelling *taisbeáint*, probably in line with classical norms rather than illustrating his own pronunciation). Where Ua Laoghaire wrote *tulach* ("blacksmith's hearth"), both Ó Loingsigh and Ó Súilleabháin have *teallach*, /t'ə'lax/, in line with the spelling used in GCh. A word I neglected to ask about was *tadhlaicaim*, shown with a slender *t* in CFBB (p245), but this may not form part of the core spoken language. *Tráth is go/gur*, "seeing as", is printed as *trá 's gur* in *Séadna* (p13), but much more frequently found as *treás go* (e.g. *Aithris ar Chríost*, p109).

A similar issue relates to an initial *d*. Ó Súilleabháin maintains the well-established dialectal pronunciation of *deatach* with a broad *d* and *druidim* with a slender *d*. However, he told me the *d* of *dream* was slender, in contradistinction to the information given by Brian Ó Cuív in IWM (pp50, 124). Donncha Ó Cróinín also shows a slender *d* in this word in *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoihbh* (e.g. p48).

R-sounds

The presentation in IWM (pp49-50) shows that the broad *r* at the beginning of a word was a post-alveolar fricative in Ó Loingsigh's Irish, with [r] (the flapped *r*) occurring elsewhere. I'm unsure of Brian Ó Cuív's terminology here; he may have meant a post-alveolar approximant. Sommerfelt described Ó Céileachair's initial broad *r* as "strictly speaking not a genuine *r*-sound, but a sort of voiced spirant. The tip of the tongue is brought towards the arch-rim and the breath escapes over the tip" ("Munster Vowels and Consonants", p214). The audio file offered by Foras na Gaeilge for the pronunciation of *rí* in Munster Irish¹ is no doubt by a speaker of Kerry Irish, relatively close

1 <http://www.teaglann.ie/en/fuaim/rí>

geographically to Muskerry, but is indistinguishable from the approximant [ɹ] used in most parts of England. By contrast, an audio file of Dara Ó Cinnéide's pronunciation of the same word² shows strong friction. I suspect that Dara Ó Cinnéide's pronunciation is exceptionally praiseworthy and unlikely to represent the general pronunciation of the youngest generation of speakers. If I am correctly appraising their pronunciation, it seems to me that an initial broad *r* is now [ɹ]—the English *r*—for most speakers of Muskerry Irish.

A slightly crackly audio file³ of Ó Loingsigh's Irish held in the Doegen Records project maintained by the Royal Irish Academy appears to show minimal friction for *raghad*, which is apparently an approximant ([ɹ]), but greater friction in *go raibh*, where the *r* of *go raibh* is essentially intervocalic and thus flapped ([r]). I don't have any information as to how long [ɹ] has been used in Munster Irish. However, this variety of *r* was not always used in English either:

At some stage in the development of StE it is probable that there was a change in the nature of *r* from a point-trilled consonant to the PresE post-alveolar fricative, which in acoustic effect is closely allied to the vowel [ə]; but in intervocalic position it commonly remained either a trilled consonant or the PresE 'flap' [r]. When the change occurred it is impossible to determine, but the influence of *r* from the late fourteenth century onwards, and particularly its ModE influence on *ř*, *ř*, and [ʌ] < ME *ř*, suggest that it must have been closely similar to the PresE sound. (*English Pronunciation 1500-1700*, Vol II, pp945-946)

I quote this, because it seems the development of English has been along similar lines. Interestingly, the audio file of *rí* for Ulster Irish given by Foras na Gaeilge (see the link above) shows that [r] is retained, even initially, in the northern dialects. Whatever the history of this, it seems that younger speakers of Irish, including those in the Muskerry Gaeltacht, are generalising the English *r*, both initially and elsewhere, and in broad and slender environments. Ó Súilleabháin maintains the correct distinctions between [ɹ] and [r] (allophones of broad *r* in initial and non-initial environments respectively) and [ɹʲ], which is the slender *r*. I here borrow the notation used by Diarmuid Ó Sé in *Gaeilge Chorca Dhuibhne* (p19) to show a palatalised apical post-alveolar fricative (I think the term "fricative" is appropriate for the slender *r*, although it is not a tap or flap and so best seen as a slender equivalent of the broad approximant *r*). In IWM, Ó Cuív also identifies a flapped slender *r*, [rʲ], used only after only palatalised consonants.

The particular focus of my interest in *r*-sounds while in Muskerry was in identifying any instances of lenition of *r*. IWM (p122), probably based on Ó Loingsigh's Irish, shows that lenition of *r* (i.e. the use of a slender rather than a broad *r* in circumstances that would in the case of lenitable consonants call for lenition) was found in a few phrases. In particular, *do rug* was pronounced /dɔ rʲug/ by Ó Loingsigh; the possessive adjective lenited in *a rúin*; *á rá* was realised as /ɑ: rʲa:/; and *roim ré* as /rimʲ rʲe:/. However, this principle was not taken too far: *a rí* and *a rógaire* in the vocative had the broad *r*, as did *ana-ríghin*.

Ua Laoghaire's acolytes indicated many more cases of lenition of *r* in the LS versions of his works. In particular, *do rug* was transcribed as *do riug* and *do rugadh* as *do rugag*, employing the principle that the past-tense autonomous should not be lenited. It seems likely that Osborn Bergin will have sought to portray Ua Laoghaire's pronunciation in this regard. Yet Donncha Ó Cróinín shows that Ó Loingsigh had *do riugamh* and *do riugag* in the autonomous. Ó Súilleabháin told me he lenites both *do riug* and *do riugadh* too. There is no sign of lenition in *a rúin* in Ó Súilleabháin's Irish (and thus no contrast between the pronunciation of this phrase with the masculine and feminine possessive adjectives) and *á rá* is now pronounced /ɑ: ra :/. Lenition of the various conjugated forms of *rug* is the only example I can identify of lenition of an *r* in the modern dialect. Sommerfelt stated that Ó

2 <http://www.fuaimanna.ie/en/Recordings.aspx?PhonemeID=47&Page=10>

3 https://www.doegen.ie/LA_1033d1

Céileachair's failure to lenite the *r* in *mo rún* was a key point of distinction between Ó Céileachair's Irish and that of Dónall Ó Mainnín, a Ballyferriter native ("Munster Vowels and Consonants", p237).

If the LS editions of Ua Laoghaire's works are to be believed, he had a slender *r* in *fé rún* and in *'na rogha scoil* (/nə r'ou skol'/; see the transcription *'na reou sgoil* in *Mo Shgiàl Féin*, p27), and the unusual vocative phrase *a roth an turainn* (to address the wheel of a spinning wheel) in Ua Laoghaire's *Sliabh na mBan bhFionn* (p32) was transcribed in LS as *a reoh a turuing* (*Shliav na Man Viún*, p26). Of course, there is very little likelihood that the phrase *a roth an turainn* has ever been used outside of Ua Laoghaire's *Sliabh na mBan bhFionn*. Where the same work has *leath-rann* (p13), the LS version has *leah-reaun* (p14).

Ua Laoghaire often appears to mark lenition of forms of the verb *rithim*, generally writing *ag ruith* but *do rith sé*. The following sentence appears to employ an unusual distinction in lenition between the conditional and the past habitual:

Nuair a thagainn go cúinne na h-iothlann agus nuair a chinn na géana ar an Seana Mhacha, do rithinn thar n-ais chómh géar agus do ruithfeadh duine ó león buidhe nó ó león breac. (*Mo Sgéal Féin*, p17)

Rithinn and *ruithfeadh* are transcribed as *rihing* and *rihach* in *Mo Shgiàl Féin* (p7), that is, showing the *r* slender in both words. If the intention of Ua Laoghaire's own spelling was to suggest that the conditional of this verb was not lenited in pronunciation, but the past habitual was, then the distinction appears entirely artificial. Counterexamples of the spellings *do ruith sé* (e.g. *Aesop a Tháinig go h-Éirinn*, p31) can be identified in Ua Laoghaire's works, and the spelling of the phrase *idir ruith agus léim* (*Niamh*, p14) shows that the verbal noun *rith* was unlenited, even after *idir*. In any case, no part of the verb *rithim* is lenited (slenderised) in any circumstances in the modern dialect.

Finally, let us look at Ua Laoghaire's treatment of *ramhar*:

- *Bhíodh suas le trí mhíle bó ann de bhuaibh ramhara.* (*Niamh*, p118)
- *Do tugadh muc reamhar dóibh agus bó reamhar, agus na hanlainní a ghabhadh leis an muic-fheóil agus leis an mairt-fheóil.* (*Lughaidh Mac Con*, p27).
- *Ó Chúige Laighean trí chéad bó reamhar agus trí chéad muc agus trí chéad ualach iarainn.* (*Niamh*, p117)

De bhuaibh ramhara correctly shows no lenition (slenderisation) of the *r*. *Muc reamhar* and *bó reamhar* both indicate that the adjective is slenderised following a feminine noun in the nominative singular (/muk r'aur/). *Trí chéad bó reamhar* is more remarkable, as *bó* is genitive plural here and should not lenite the following adjective, but it seems Ua Laoghaire's usage is influenced by the nominative singular form and thus here too we have /bo: r'aur/. We also read *snáthaid reamhar* in *Séadna* (p45), but the LS edition, *Shiàna*, has *snáthid rour* (p21). *Snáthaid reamhar* in *Eisirt* (p78) was transcribed in the LS edition serialised in *Glór na Ly* as *snáthid reaur* ("Eshirt", p3).

Slender *gh*

Brian Ó Cuív transcribes broad *gh* as /ɣ/ and slender *gh* as /j/. If he had used /ɣ/ and /ɣ'/, two allophones of slender *gh* could have been identified. The /j/ seems appropriate for vocalic environments, as /jiə/ for *Dhia*. However, a problem emerges with the transcription of *ghrian* as /jr'iən'/ as it is stated in IWM (p42) that /j/ is either "a voiced palatal or palato-velar fricative". Palatal and palato-velar sounds are quite distinct in pronunciation. The slender *gh* of *ghrian* is not a

“y-sound”. Neither is the *dh* of *dhriotháir*. Sommerfelt discussed this type of slender *gh* together with the broad *gh* sound, indicating they are both “voiced guttural spirants” (“Munster Vowels and Consonants”, p211).

As the correct pronunciation of phrases like *mo dhriotháir* is likely to be one of the hardest sounds for learners to imitate, where any attempt at native pronunciation is even being made at all, for thoroughness’ sake it is worth underlining the back (and thus guttural) palatal nature of this sound: Ó Cuív states that “friction is most marked before close vowels and before consonants, in which case it is greater than in S. English *j* as in ‘yet’”. Sommerfelt adds that the slender guttural *gh* “is pronounced more to the front, corresponding to the articulation of *g* before these consonants” showing that the more strongly fricative slender *gh* is articulated at the back of the throat, only slightly further forward than the place of articulation of a plosive *g*. Comments made about slender *gh* apply with equal force to slender *ch*, where in certain environments the more highly fricative back-palatal nature of /x/ becomes more apparent.

Slenderisation of particles and other words before broad vowels spelt with *i-* and *e-*

Nouns and verbal nouns spelt *io-*, *ea-*, *eó-*, etc, are pronounced with a broad vowel (generally /u/ or /u:/, /a/ and /o:/ in the cases of the combinations mentioned). Brian Ó Cuív showed that such words were often reinterpreted in the dialect as if so spelt, and hence with no slenderisation of preceding particles. Examples, presumably taken from Ó Loingsigh’s Irish, include *hí haon ionadh é* and *an t-eólas*, pronounced /n’i: he:n u:n e:/ and /ən to:ləs/ respectively as if the relevant nouns were spelt *úna* and *ólas* (see IWM, pp58 and 125). *An t-eas* (“waterfall” or “stoat”) has a broad *t*, /ən tas/; *an eórna* has a broad *n* in the definite article, /ən o:nə/; *an iomaire* (“ridge”) has a broad *n*, /ən umir’i/. CFBB (p270) has further examples: *an eaglais*, /ən agəlɪʃ/, and *ag iompar*, /əg u:mpər/, although in this work Brian Ó Cuív states *an ionadh* is /in’ u:nə/. (*Seanachas Amhlaoibh*, p392, indicates that Ó Loingsigh accepted both *an ionadh* and *an t-ionadh*).

In CFBB, Ó Cuív gives counterexamples including *an t-each*, /in’ t’ax/, *an eochair*, /in’ oxir’/, and *an iomarca*, /in’ umərkə/ (although he states some speakers had /ən umərkə/). We may also mention here that Donchadh Ó Céileachair stated that his father had a slender *d* in *d’iompaigh*, /d’u:mpig’/ (“Nótaí ó Chúil Aodha: Focail ná fuil sa bhfoclóir, nú go bhfuil brí neamh-choitchianta ag gabháil leo”, p130), in contrast to Donncha Ó Cróinín’s transcriptions of Ó Loingsigh’s Irish, which include *ag úmpáil* (*Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh*, p8), *d’úmpáis* (p80 therein) and *d’úmpaig* (p266).

The opposite situation obtains where a vowel written broad sounds slender, producing slenderisation before the word. Thus *ag aeireacht* (“herding”, spelt *aoireacht* in GCh, a spelling that cannot be accepted, as it would imply /i:/ in the first syllable in the dialect under consideration; the traditionally correct spelling was *aodhaireacht* or *aoghaireacht*) has a slender *g*, /ig’ e:r’əxt/, while *ag oibriú* is either /ig’ eb’ir’u:/ or, more rarely, /əg ob’ir’u:/, the latter under the influence of the noun *obair*. *In aon chor* is transcribed as *inéachor* in LS editions of Ua Laoghaire’s works (e.g. *Mo Shgiál Fén*, p5), showing /in’ e:xər/. The Freeman collection of local songs, transcribed in LS or something close to it, has *’s dream an úir mar caileag iad, chuir cogó ar in änwac* (*’s dream an uabhair mar cailleadh iad, a chuir cogadh ar an aonmhac*), showing slenderisation of *n* before *aonmhac*, /in’ e:n vak/ (“Habit Shirt”, p96). Some speakers had a slender *n* in *san úir* (“in the grave”; /sin’ u:r’/, CFBB, p265).

Ó Súilleabháin told me that he broadened the preceding particles in *an t-ionadh*, *an t-eólas*, *an eórna*, *an eachtra*, *in eagar*, *an t-eagla*, *an eaglais*, *an eagna*, *an eala*, *an earra* (spelt *an ara* in Ua Laoghaire’s works; see *Aesop a Tháinig go h-Éirinn*, p34), *an t-earrach*, *an eascaine*, *an easna*, *an easnamh*, *an easonóir*, *an easpa*, *an iomaire*, *an tEaspag*, *an easúmhlaocht*, *an t-éirí amach*, *an eochair*, *an t-iomann*, *an iomrascáil*, *an ionga*, *an ionnfhuaire*, *an iontaoibh*, *an t-iúr* (“yew-

tree”, /ən tu:r/), in *aonacht* (/ən e:nəxt/; both in *aonacht* and in *éineacht* are found in transcriptions of Ó Loingsigh’s Irish), *an oiread*, *san úir* and *ag oibriú*, but slenderised in *an t-eas*, *an iomad*, *an oiliúint* (as if from *eiliúint*), *an iomarca*, *ag iomaigh*, *ag iomlasc*, *ag iompáil*, *ag iompar*, *ag aeireacht*, *an t-each* and *an eascú*.

Slenderisation in *an t-each* may reflect the fact this word is rarer than *capall* and so less prominent in the spoken language. *An t-eas* may also have become a rarer word in the modern era and thus aligned with *an t-each* in this regard. Of the answers I received, which evinced a mixture of forms, the most surprising related to slenderisation of the *g* in *ag iompáil* and *ag iompar*, as these words are very common and likely to retain a strong dialectal pronunciation. However, it is not likely that one speaker would always say /əg u:mpər/ and never /ig’ u:mpər/ or *vice versa*, both being acceptable. Reading pronunciations are likely to become ever stronger in Muskerry, producing greater variation in realisation. Directly asking a native speaker under conditions where the point under observation is clear may also have skewed the answers received to some extent. A further point to bear in mind is that the weakly palatalised nature of slender *t* and slender *d* often makes the broad/slender quality of the consonant hard to distinguish: *ag iompar* exhibits a stronger acoustic contrast between broad/slender realisation of the *g* than is the case with the *d* of *d’iompaigh*.

Weakened contrast of diphthongs

One of the most striking features of present-day Muskerry Irish is the apparent loss of the diphthong /ia/. There was traditionally a contrast between /ia/ and /iə/. For example, the verbs *triallaim*, /tr’iəlim/, and *trialaim*, /tr’ialim/, were distinguishable by the diphthongs (see IWM, pp25, 26, and CFBB, p259). *Iad* was traditionally /iəd/, whereas *éadach* was /iadəx/. Ó Súilleabháin believes he pronounces *triallaim* and *trialaim* distinctly, but I couldn’t hear any difference: both appeared to have /iə/. Admittedly, these verbs are generally contextually distinct, with little risk of confusion between them.

Most words with *-éa-* have traditionally been pronounced with /ia/, including *béal*, *Béarla*, *céad* and such like. I listened with Ó Súilleabháin to Ó Loingsigh’s recitation of the numbers⁴ in the Doegen records project and to Ó Céileachair’s recitation of the numbers⁵, and he was surprised how open the /ia/ diphthong once was. *Céad* in the traditional dialect was not a near-rhyme with the English word “beard” at all; the English words “key” and “yard” pronounced quickly together with short vowels would send a learner along the right lines as to the traditional pronunciation of this word. It seems all these words are becoming /iə/ today.

Even in 1944, Brian Ó Cuív stated that the diphthongs /au/ and /ou/ were becoming aligned, with both *ball* and *poll* pronounced with /au/, namely /baul/ and /paul/ (IWM, p30). Ó Súilleabháin agreed that *ball* and *poll* rhyme fully. He also has /au/ in words such as *leabhar*, *leabhair*, *gabhadh*, and *gabhall*, all of which traditionally had /ou/. On my various trips to Cúil Aodha I have never met anyone who pronounced *leabhar* as /l’our/; the only pronunciation I have encountered is /l’au²r/, rhyming quite closely with the English word “glower”. However, Ó Súilleabháin seems to have /ou/ in some of these words, including *cabhair*, *domhan*, *togha*, *Ultach*, *rogha* and *rabhthas*. Some younger speakers in Muskerry have /au/ in all of these words.

Other points of pronunciation

Brian Ó Cuív shows the *d* of *cad é sin* to be broad (IWM, p109), whereas Donncha Ó Cróinín transcribes Ó Loingsigh’s Irish consistently with *caidé*. Ó Súilleabháin told me the *d* is broad. IWM also states that in rare instances an *sh* followed by slender vowel is realised, not as /x/ but as /h/,

4 https://www.doegen.ie/LA_1034d3

5 https://www.doegen.ie/LA_1035d2

with the example given of *sheomra*, /hɔ:mrə/. Ó Súilleabháin told me the pronunciation is /x'o:mrə/. (I believe it may have been /x'o:mərə/, but I neglected to note the presence or absence of an epenthetic vowel; Ua Laoghaire's works are transcribed in LS variously with or without an epenthetic vowel in this word).

Ó Cuív stated in IWM (§335) that *b*, *d* and *g* are voiced after *s*. This applies to words of the type sometimes written *taisbéaint*, *sdad* and *sgéal*. Although it is true that *sg-* in particular was long viewed as the correct spelling—and I have been told by older speakers of Muskerry Irish that the new spelling is incorrect as the pronunciation is with *g*—it seems this reflects a confusion. *P*, *t* and *k* are not aspirated (accompanied by a puff of breath) in these situations, as indeed they are not in English either in the equivalent circumstances; but they remain unvoiced, and so the correct transcriptions are with /p/, /t/ and /k/.

Ó Súilleabháin continues to pronounce *dea-bhlasta* with the expected diphthong, /d'əi-vlastə/, and, as expected, has /d'a-ru:n/ for *dea-rún*. A large number of such words have traditionally had a diphthong, including *deabhóideach* and *dea-mheasta* (CFBB, pp84, 270) and words such as *dea-nós*, *dea-mhanach*, and *dea-bheatha*. The pronunciation of *dea-nós* as /d'əi-no:s/ was given by Ua Laoghaire in *Notes on Irish Words and Usages* (p36), where he also stated that *dea-mhac* has the diphthong too. The diphthongal pronunciation of *dea-bheatha* and *dea-mhanach* was given in the LS editions of Ua Laoghaire's works, but it seems difficult to devise a rule that would reliably determine when a word with a broad consonant was nevertheless preceded by /d'əi-/. Many of the attested examples seem to have a /v/, either from *bh* or *mh*, for a reason I haven't identified. A /v/ in other contexts is often vocalised, producing a diphthong, but in these cases the /v/ is retained.

Current Muskerry Irish seems to pronounce the *-dh* of *diaidh* clearly in all circumstances. Phrases such as *i ndiaidh a chéile*, which were traditionally /n'ia x'e:l'i/, seem to have become /i n'iaɣ' ə x'e:l'i/, possibly by way of a reading pronunciation. *In aghaidh an lae*, traditionally /nəin le:/, seems to have become /ə niaɣ' ən le:/. Traditional elision of *i* in many phrases (*ina* > *'na*) was also eschewed by many readers of texts from *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh* during my visit to Muskerry in October 2016, as if clarifying the prepositional relationship was key to understanding a difficult text transcribed in traditional Muskerry Irish.

Delenition is an interesting aspect of pronunciation. Ó Súilleabháin told me he has *im phóca*, *im bholg* and *óm mháthair*, in line with the spelling. However, Ua Laoghaire stated in *Notes on Irish Words and Usages* that *agam' mhac* is pronounced as if written *agam bac* (p1 therein). In *Táin Bó Cuailnge* he writes *agam' báthair* and *dom' báthair* (pp65, 203), showing that he did delenite across the homorganic labial boundary, with *mh* delenited to *b* as if from *bh*. Brian Ó Cuív transcribed Tadhg Ó Ríordáin's pronunciation of the lyrics to a song as *óm (b)muinntir* (CFBB, p97). The advent of schooling in Irish, and thus literacy in Irish, in the late nineteenth century meant that later speakers were more likely to delenite, if at all, to the correct original consonant. *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh* (p125) has *im phóca*, but *féna géin* (p7) for *féna déin* (in other words, the *dhéin* of *fé dhéin* is delenited by the feminine possessive pronoun to *g* as if from *ghéin*). Present-day Muskerry Irish does not have forms like *féna géin* and *féna ngéin*, to the extent that many speakers found such phrases confusing to read aloud in my recent recording of stories from *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh*.

Ó Súilleabháin retains the movement of the stress exhibited by Ó Loingsigh's Irish where *-ach* is found in the second syllable. Thus *fathach*, *dathacha*, *dliitheach* and *frathacha* are all stressed on the second syllable. Finally, it is worth adding that nasalisation is not a noted feature of the modern dialect. Ua Laoghaire stated that words like *lámha* and *áth* had strong nasalisation and were quite distinct from *lá* and *ád* (see IWM, pp54-55). Ó Cuív states that Ó Loingsigh's Irish was not characterised by strong nasalisation (although, for some reason, Donncha Ó Cróinín marks many words with a circumflex accent to indicate nasalisation in *Scéalaíocht Amhlaoibh*); Ó Céileachair's

Irish was reported to exhibit greater nasalisation. Ó Súilleabháin told me he has no distinction in potential minimal pairs such as *lámha* vs. *lá*, *nímhe* (genitive of “poison”) vs. *ní*, *amhras* vs. *abhras*. However, some individual words and phrases appear to have a moderate degree of nasalisation, including *cleamhnas*, *sleamhain*, *namhaid*, *bainne* and *an oíche*.

Muskerry Irish is a dialect the last fully authentic speakers of which were born in the 1870s and died before 1950. A good deal of the old pronunciations are still found in Muskerry, but with a strong tendency to pronounce words more in line with their spelling in a way that wouldn't have been the case with illiterate monoglot speakers of the dialect in the nineteenth century. Although most of the points above are interesting from an academic point of view, few of them should be overly troubling to present-day learners of Muskerry Irish. It is in no sense vital that learners say /əg u:mpər/ and not /ig' u:mpər/ as a wider range of pronunciations would now be accepted both from native speakers and learners.

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