

Mutation after *heb* ‘without’

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The occurrence of soft mutation after *heb* is correctly summarized by Nance (1938: 82):

“mutation affects only *d*, in *danjer*, *deweth*, *dowt*, and *g* in *gorfen*, *gow*, and these optionally, apparently as survivals”

Brown (2001: §148) writes:

“Mutation is confined to the softening of the initial consonant of **diwedh**, **dout**, **gorfenn**, **gow**;

This statement is ambiguous, because it fails to mention that the softening is not always found in the texts.

All cases of *heb* followed by the five words mentioned by Nance were examined. There are only two cases of *heb* being followed by *gorfenn* ‘end’: *trank hep gorfen* (PC.0042b) and *trank hep worfen* (PC.1562). The word *trank* is not found elsewhere, but the phrase is believed to mean ‘world without end’, ‘for ever and ever’. So one case shows mutation and the other does not.

Orthographic profiles are presented for the other four words (these do not include cases copied by Lhuyd and Pryce).

<i>danjer</i>	PC	RD	OM	PA	BM	BK	TH	SA	CW	Lh	VLC	Total
<d->	2	3	5			2			1			13 (93%)
<th-> = [ð-]			1									1 (7%)

<i>dout</i>	PC	RD	OM	PA	BM	BK	TH	SA	CW	Lh	VLC	Total
<d->	1	3			2	7	2		6			21 (95%)
<th-> = [ð-]			1									1 (5%)

<i>diwedh</i>	PC	RD	OM	PA	BM	BK	TH	SA	CW	Lh	VLC	Total
<d->	1					1	23	4		3	6	38 (93%)
<th-> = [ð-]		3										3 (7%)

The three words above (*danjer* ‘danger’, *dout* ‘doubt, fear’ and *diwedh* ‘end’) have similar profiles. Forms with <th-> occur in only one text (OM for *danjer* and *dout*, and RD for *diwedh*), and overall they are rare: they may be regarded as exceptions.

<i>gow</i>	PC	RD	OM	PA	BM	BK	TH	SA	CW	Lh	VLC	Total
<g->	7	3	2			1			5			18 (50%)
<w->	1	1	4	3	8							18 (50%)
Other									1			

The word *gow* ‘lie’ has quite a different profile: cases in the Ordinalia alternate between *gow* and *wow*. The case labelled ‘Other’ is *heb ow* (CW.2196), which may be regarded as *heb wow* with loss of the semi-vowel. Overall, the *heb gow* and the *heb wow* types are equally common.

It is therefore recommended that in the revived language, the forms *heb danger*, *heb dout* and *heb diwedh* be used. In religious services, the phrase *trank heb worfenn* is in common use, but for everyday speech, *heb gorfenn* is recommended. Clearly *heb gow* and *heb wow* are equally acceptable.

BROWN, W. (2001) *A grammar of modern Cornish*, 3rd edn., *Kesva an Taves Kernewek*, Callington.

NANCE, R.M. (1938) *A new Cornish-English dictionary*. 209 pp. Federation of Old Cornwall Societies.