

‘Griogal Cridhe’

Aspects of Transmission in the Lament for Griogair Ruadh Mac Griogair of Glen Strae

V. S. BLANKENHORN

ABSTRACT

With the advent of Tobar an Dualchais (www.tobarandualchais.co.uk), the online trove of materials recorded from oral tradition during the last century and held by the National Trust for Scotland, the BBC, and the sound archive of the School of Scottish Studies, it has become easier to integrate study of published and manuscript versions of traditional materials – most of which date from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – with more recent orally-transmitted versions of the same materials. Such study has the potential to help us understand the workings of oral transmission over time, to evaluate the printed and manuscript sources of an earlier day, and to understand the complex inter-relationship between written and orally-transmitted traditional materials in the Gàidhealtachd itself.

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The song commonly known as *Griogal Cridhe* offers an excellent opportunity for such study. Thanks to an important article by Glasgow historian Martin MacGregor, we know when, by whom, and in what circumstances the song was composed.¹ It survived solely in oral tradition – perhaps (but not necessarily) supported by manuscript sources now lost – for some 243 years, from its probable composition in 1570 until its appearance in Patrick Turner’s *Comhchrinneacha do dh’Orain Taghta, Ghaidhealach* in 1813. Subsequently, the song has been regularly anthologised, and the relationship between the published versions and ongoing oral transmission will be a focus of our discussion here. Judging from the evidence of sound recordings, variants of the song and accounts of its composition remained current throughout the Gàidhealtachd into the middle years of the last century, and even today the song remains a popular choice among platform-singers, Gaelic choral societies, and recording-artists in the ‘traditional’ genre.

1.0 Historical Background

Long the subject of scholarly speculation, the circumstances that inspired the lament for *Griogair Ruadh* – red-haired Gregor MacGregor of Glen Strae – have now been thoroughly investigated. Martin MacGregor’s study shows that the events mentioned in the poem can be substantiated from contemporary records, and supports the view that the most likely author of the verses was Marion Campbell (*Mór nighean Dhonnchaidh*), daughter of Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon (*Donnchadh Ruadh na Féile*), who was widowed by those events. The value of MacGregor’s investigation lies not only in its documentation and determination of the facts of the case, but also in its confirmation of the tenacity and accuracy of the oral tradition, which appears to have preserved the essence of the poem with remarkable fidelity despite the passage of nearly two-and-a-half centuries between its composition and its earliest appearance in written records.

While our topic here is not history *per se*, a brief summary of MacGregor’s case may be useful. The relationship between Griogair Ruadh and his wife was, from beginning to end, shaped and conditioned by the turbulent relationship between their two kindreds: the MacGregors of Glen Strae and the Campbells of Glenlyon, a branch of the Campbells of Glenorchy. While it has been long

¹ Martin MacGregor, “‘Surely one of the greatest poems ever made in Britain’: The Lament for Griogair Ruadh MacGregor of Glen Strae and its Historical Background”. E. J. Cowan and D. Gifford (eds), *The Polar Twins*. Edinburgh 1999: 114–153.

assumed that the Campbells had always been at loggerheads with their MacGregor neighbours, in fact the MacGregors had, for much of the 130 years prior to the execution of Griogair Ruadh, lived in accommodation with the Campbells, and held their ancestral lands in Glen Strae ‘as vassals of the Campbell chiefs’ (MacGregor 1999: 118). The Glenorchy Campbells’ appropriation of lands to the east, which by 1513 had given the Campbells control of a large portion of Breadalbane, was facilitated by the support of the MacGregors.

After 1513, however, the power of the Campbells of Glenorchy fell into something of a decline, and the Earl of Argyll assigned the services of the MacGregors to Iain Campbell of Cawdor, whose own expansionist efforts they likewise supported. During this period the MacGregors continued to flourish as clients of the Campbells, although no longer bound to serve the Campbells of Glenorchy.

In 1550 Colin Campbell – *Cailean Liath* (‘Grey Colin’) as he is referred to in the poem – became chieftain of the Glenorchy Campbells. Under his leadership and that of his son *Donnchadh Dubh a’ Churraic* (‘Black Duncan of the Cowl’), the Campbells of Glenorchy emerged from their period of stagnation and went on the offensive once again, using all manner of means – most of them perfectly legal if not particularly humane – to ensure the subjugation of rival kindreds. As events were to prove, they took particularly seriously the threat posed by their lively and prosperous neighbours and erstwhile military supporters, the MacGregors.

In order to regain control of this troublesome kindred, Cailean Liath sought by various means to push the chief of the MacGregors into a corner. He pressed some of the MacGregor kin-groups to accept bonds of manrent, thereby ensuring their loyalty to him; he evicted an important member of the clan from a MacGregor stronghold at Balloch (*Bealach*), the subsequent site of Cailean Liath’s own fortress and of Griogair Ruadh’s beheading; and he persuaded the Earl of Argyll to reassign the services of the MacGregors to himself. Most crucially, he ‘purchased the superiority of Glen Strae, and the ward and marriage of Griogair Ruadh’ from Argyll, thereby ensuring his legal right to the MacGregor homelands and giving him the tools he would need, as he supposed, to turn the young chieftain of the MacGregors into a toothless client who could pose no threat to him (MacGregor: 120).

In late 1562, when the young Griogair Ruadh had newly come of age and assumed leadership of his kindred, Campbell of Glenorchy placed before him an awful choice: the MacGregors would be permitted to retain possession of their ancestral lands in Glen Strae, but only on condition that Griogair accede to ‘certain unspecified legal restrictions’ and that he surrender to Cailean Liath two clansmen who had recently killed one of Campbell’s servants. This dilemma, as Martin MacGregor makes clear, could not have been more painful, for ‘if he wished to retain Glen Strae, the *dùthaich* of his clan, it would be at the price of accepting conditions which would reduce him to a degree of vassalage unknown to any of his predecessors, and manifestly compromise his authority as chief’ (MacGregor: 120). Cailean Liath’s proposal came with a deadline: 1 January 1563.

Griogair Ruadh sent his answer on the night of 7 December 1562, when he and a band of his clansmen attacked two groups of Campbells and their followers as they returned to Glenlyon from a fair in Perth. In the first attack they set fire to an inn, killing eight men; and later the same night they fired a barn and captured the men sleeping there, one of whom was later killed. (This latter group was led by Pàdraig, brother of Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon, who a few years later became Griogair Ruadh’s father-in-law.) So began a period of intense conflict between the Campbells and MacGregors, which lasted – with one brief hiatus – until 1570, when Griogair Ruadh was executed.

It was probably during the brief normalisation of relations between the two clans, which lasted from late in 1565 until the summer of 1567, that Griogair Ruadh married the daughter of Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon, an uncle and close ally of Cailean Liath, and a man to whom some of the victims of the 1562 MacGregor raids had been connected.² Even if there were no other evidence for

² This cease-fire had nothing to do with a genuine rapprochement, but rather resulted from a complex political situation that brought a temporary halt to the feud; see *ibid.*, 121.

it – and there is – the emotionally charged quality of the poetry strongly argues that this was a love match.³ Martin MacGregor suggests, in fact, that it was the initial refusal of Marion’s father to countenance the marriage which may have prompted Griogair Ruadh to respond to Cailean Liath’s ‘offer’ by launching raids not against Glenorchy but against the Campbells of Glenlyon (MacGregor 1999: 125).

Conflict between the two kindreds resumed in late July, 1567, following the fall of Mary Queen of Scots and the outbreak of civil war in Scotland. Two years later, on 1 August 1569, Griogair Ruadh was taken unawares by a group of Campbells that included his father-in-law, Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon. He was held for the next eight months in Cailean Liath’s stronghold at Balloch, while the Campbells petitioned the Scottish crown for legal sanction to execute him. This they finally obtained, and Griogair Ruadh was beheaded – apparently by Cailean Liath himself – at Balloch, at the east end of Loch Tay, on 7 April 1570.⁴

Before he died, Griogair Ruadh’s wife had borne him one son, Alasdair Ruadh. On the day of his execution, she was pregnant with a second, Iain Dubh. Given the length of time involved, she must have conceived this child on a date very close to that of Griogair’s capture, and given birth very near the time of his execution. Her suffering during those eight months can only be imagined.

Not least of Martin MacGregor’s achievements in the article summarized here is his persuasive identification of Raibeart Menzies of Comrie, second husband of Griogair Ruadh’s young widow, as the mysterious ‘*baran crìon na dalach*’ mentioned in the poem. Comrie lies on the south bank of the Lyon near its junction with the River Tay, occupying the sort of alluvial land to which one might refer as *na dalach*, ‘of the river-meadow’ – land which the Menzies family had possessed for at least a century prior to these events. Contemporary documents reveal that both Raibeart Menzies and his father were styled ‘baron’, and it is likely that the family enjoyed the sort of comfort and prosperity mentioned in the poem. The Menzies family were loyal supporters of the Campbells, and so offered a safe repository for Campbell of Glenlyon’s troublesome daughter and her children. MacGregor suggests that this marriage may have taken place shortly after the execution of Griogair Ruadh, and therefore that the poem reflects not only her grief at the loss of her first husband, but also her unhappiness in the home of her second (MacGregor 1999: 132–5).

2.0 The Text

In the following paragraphs we shall survey the published and unpublished versions of the text, along with associated textual materials such as background notes, in order to determine what conclusions we can legitimately draw regarding the relationships among them.

2.1 Published versions

As noted above, the poem first appears in writing in the collection of Gaelic songs published by Padruig Mac an Tuairneir in 1813, where it is preceded by the following headnote (Turner: 286):

Cumha le nighean do Dhonnacha dubh, Moirfhear Bhraigh-dealbunn, an uair a thug a h-athair, agus a brathair an ceann deth a fear, Griogair Mac Griogair, agus a ciad leanabh air a glùn.

A lament by a daughter of Black Duncan, Lord of Breadalbane, when her father and her brother beheaded her husband, Griogair Mac Gregor, while her first child was on her knee.

³ An earlier poem attributed to Mór Chaimbeul, *Rìgh gur mór mo chuid mhulaid*, expresses the intensity of her longing for Griogair and her rage at being forbidden to marry him; see *ibid.*, 116–8 (discussion) and 140–1 (text and translation).

⁴ MacGregor 1999: 124 and n. 31. Balloch was located at the site of what is now Taymouth Castle.

Turner’s identification of the author as a daughter of Donnchadh Dubh, son of Campbell of Glenorchy, is impossible, as Donnchadh was only 20 years old at the time of Griogair’s execution. Further confusion arises when he identifies *nighean an Ruthainich* – Katherine Ruthven, wife of Cailean Liath and mother of Donnchadh Dubh – as the *poet’s* mother, presumably under the impression that Katherine was Donnchadh’s wife rather than Cailean’s. Martin MacGregor argues that Turner’s genealogical confusion led him to transpose the second couplets of stanzas 6 and 7 in order ‘to bring the reference to *nighean an Ruadhanaich* into the same verse as the reference to *m’athair*, “my father”, thereby creating a stronger impression that these two were man and wife’ (MacGregor: 129–30). In fairness, the error may have appeared in the text as Turner collected it – his source is unknown – and may be understandable given the frequency with which the same given names tend to occur in highland genealogies and the length of time which had elapsed since the events occurred.

In what follows, stanza-numbers are preceded by a letter indicating the source of the text – in this case, ‘T’ for ‘Turner’ – in order to facilitate subsequent comparison with other versions we shall be examining.

T1	<i>Moch maduinn air la lunasd’, Bha mi sugradh marr-ri m’ ghradh; Ach mu ’n d’ thainig meadhon latha, Bha mo chridhe air a chradh.</i>	Early on the first of August I was sporting with my love, But before midday had come, my heart was left in ruins.
T2	Ochain, ochain, ochain uiridh, ’S goirt mo chridhe laoigh, Ochain, ochain, ochain uiridh, Cha chluinn t-athair ar caoidh. ⁵	<i>Ochain, ochain, ochain uiridh, sore is my heart, my dear child; Ochain, ochain, ochain uiridh, your father won’t hear our cries.⁵</i>
T3	<i>Mallachd aig maithibh ’s aig cairdean, Rinn mo chradh air an doigh; Thainig gun fhios air mo ghradh-sa, ’Sa thug fo smachd e le foill.</i>	A curse on nobles and relations who have destroyed me thus; Who came upon my love unawares, and took him prisoner by treachery.
T4	<i>Na ’m biodh da fhear-dheug deth chinneadh ’S mo Ghriogair air an ceann Cha bhiodh mo shuil a sileadh dheur, No mo leanabh fein gun daimh.</i>	Had there been twelve of his kinsmen, with my Gregor at their head, My eye would not be weeping tears, nor my child left friendless.
T5	<i>Chuir iad a cheann air ploc daraich, ’S dhoirt iad fhuil mu lar Na ’m biodh agam-sa ’n sin cupan, Dh’ olainn d’i mo shadh.</i>	They put his head on an oaken block and spilled his blood on the ground, If I had had a cup there, I’d have drunk my fill of it.
T6	<i>’S truagh nach robh m’ athair an galar, Agus Cailein ann am plaigh; Ged bhiodh nighean an Ruthainich Suathadh bas a’s lamh.</i>	It’s a pity my father was not taken in illness, and Colin with the plague, Even though Ruthven’s daughter would be left wringing her hands.

⁵ Remarkably, both T2 and T17 are refrain stanzas – one reflecting the lament function of the song, and the other the lullaby function. We cannot say whether Turner heard both from a single informant; his text may represent a conflation of variants he heard from several people. Later variants recorded from tradition contain only one or the other – not both.

- T7 *Chuirinn Cailein liath fo ghlasaibh*
'S Donnacha dubh an laimh
'S gach Caimbeulach th'ann am Bealach
Gu giulan na 'n glas lamh.
- I would lock Grey Colin up, and put Black
Duncan in prison,
And cause every Campbell in Balloch to
endure hand-cuffs.
- T8 *Rainig mise réidhleinn Bhealaich*
'S cha d' fhuair mi ann tamh;
Cha d' fhag mi ròinn do m'fhalt gun
tarruing,
No craiceann air mo laimh.
- I reached the plain of Balloch, but I gained
no repose there;
I left no hair on my head untorn, nor skin
upon my hands.
- T9 *'S truagh nach robh mi 'n riochd na*
h-uiseig,
Spionnaidh Ghriogair ann mo laimh
'S i chlach a b'airde anns a chaisteal
Chlach a b' fhaisg do 'n bhlar.
- A pity I couldn't rise like the lark, with
Gregor's strength in my arm:
The highest stone in the castle would be the
closest to the ground.
- T10 *'S truagh nach robh Fionnlairg na lasair,*
A's Bealach mor na smal,
'S Griogair ban na 'm basa' geala,
Bhi eidear mo dha laimh.
- A pity Finlarig wasn't in flames, and great
Balloch in embers,
And fair Gregor of the white palms close in
my two arms.
- T11 *'S ged tha mi gun ubhlan agam,*
'S ubhlan uil' aig cach;
'S ann tha m' ubhal cùraidh grinn,
A's cul a chinn ri lar.
- Though now I have no apples, and others
have them all:
My own apple, fragrant, handsome – and the
back of his head on the ground.
- T12 *Ged tha mnaitibh chaich aig baile,*
Na 'n luidhe 's na 'n cadal seimh
'S ann bhios mis' aig bruaich mo leapa,
A' bualadh mo dha laimh.
- Though other men's wives are at home,
sleeping sweetly,
Here am I at the edge of my bed, beating my
hands in grief.
- T13 *'S mor a b' annsa bhi aig Griogair,*
Air feadh coille 's fraoich
Na bhi aig Baran crion na dalach,
Ann tigh cloich a's aoil.
- I'd much prefer to be with Gregor among
woods and heather
Than with the mean little Baron of the river-
meadow, in a house of stone and lime.
- T14 *'S mor a b' annsa bhi aig Griogair,*
Cuir a chruidh do 'n ghleann
Na bhi aig Baran crion na dalach,
'G ol air fion 's air leann.
- I'd much prefer to be with Gregor, driving
his cattle to the glen,
Than with the dry old Baron of the river-
meadow, drinking wine and ale.
- T15 *'S mor a b' annsa bhi aig Griogair*
Fo bhrata ruibeach ròinn
Na bhi aig Baran crion na Dalach,
Giulan sioda 's sròil.
- I'd much prefer to be with Gregor with only
a rough, hairy mantle for covering,
Than with the small-minded Baron of the
river-meadow, suffering in silk and
satin.
- T16 *Ged bhiodh cur a's cathadh ann,*
A's latha nan seachd sion;
Gheibheadh Griogair domh-sa cnagan
'Sa 'n caidlimid fo dhòn.
- Although there would be storm and snow-
drift, a day of seven gales,
Gregor would find me a little nook where
we would sleep in shelter.

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T17 Ba hu, ba hu, àsrain bhig,
Chan eil thu fhathast ach tlath;
’S eagal leam nach tig an latha
Gu ’n diol thu t-athair gu brath.⁵

*Ba hu, ba hu, little orphan, you are only
young yet;
But I fear the day will never come that
you will avenge your father.*

Much as we might be tempted to treat this text as some sort of ‘original’, it is worth reminding ourselves that Turner himself had it from a traditional source – perhaps more than one.⁶ Alasdair Duncan, in an excellent discussion of metre and related matters, suggests a number of possible changes wrought by tradition-bearers over the long period since the poem’s composition (Duncan: 71–80). Turner’s unexamined text has, however, been treated as an authoritative source by generations of editors and anthologists. The following list includes publications in which the text given is ultimately derived from Turner’s version:

Date	Item Title	Anthology Author/Title	Stanzas	Also includes
1848	‘The Maid of Lochawe’	Finlay Dun, <i>Orain na ’h-Albain</i> , 46–7 and note.	T1–4, 8–9, 17	Translation; musical setting; background note
1874	‘Seann Sgeulachdan mu Bhraid-Albann II: Donnchadh Dubh’	<i>An Gaidheal III</i> : 48–9.	T1–17	Background note
1881	‘Gregor MacGregor’s Lament’	<i>The Highlander</i> , July 1881: 32–3.	T3–4, 8–9, 17	Translation; musical setting; background note
1884	‘Cumha Ghriogair MhicGriogair’	Charles Stewart, <i>The Killin Collection of Gaelic Songs</i> , 60–2.	T1–17	Translation; musical setting; background note
1890	‘Cumha Ghriogair Mhic-Griogair’	A. MacLean Sinclair, <i>The Gaelic Bards from 1411 to 1715</i> , 18–21.	T1–17	Background note
1890	‘MacGregor’s Lullaby’	Thomas Pattison, <i>Gaelic Bards and Original Poems</i> , 116–19.	T1–17	Translation only (no Gaelic text); background note
1893	‘Cumha Ghriogair MhicGriogair’	<i>The Celtic Monthly</i> , 1: 39.	T1–3, 9, 12	Translation; musical setting; background note
1895	‘Maighdean Loch Otha’	Keith Norman MacDonald, <i>The Gesto Collection of Highland Music</i> , Appendix, 46.	T1–4, 8–9, 17	Musical setting and background note
1908	‘Cumha Ghriogair MhicGriogair’	Calum Mac Phàrlain, <i>Binneas nam Bard</i> , 48–50.	T1, 3–12, 14–17	Musical setting
[1918] 1932	‘Cumha Ghriogair MhicGhriogair Ghlinn Sreith’	W. J. Watson, <i>Bardachd Ghàidhlig</i> , 244–6 and notes.	T1–9, 11–17	Background note

⁶ A native of the Cowal peninsula, Turner was an itinerant collector and seller of Gaelic poems and songs; see D. Maclean 1915: 361.

1913	‘Air Madainn Lùnasdainn’	Angus Morrison, <i>Orain nam Beann</i> , 20–1.	T1–2, 4, 13–16	Musical setting
1913	‘Bardachd nam Ban’	Calum Mac Phàrlain, <i>Guth na Bliadhna</i> X/3: 347–50.	T1–17	Background note

Relationships among these published sources can most easily be traced through comparison of the song-titles, background notes, and musical settings included. Although these relationships represent a tangled and somewhat incestuous web whose unpicking is not central to our purpose here, the genealogical gist can be summarized as follows:

- The titles alone would indicate that K. N. MacDonald’s ‘Maighdean Loch Otha’ in the *Gesto Collection* (1895) is nothing more than a reprinting of Finlay Dun’s ‘The Maid of Loch Awe’ in his *Orain na ‘h-Albain* (1848). The Campbells were an important presence in Argyll, and Kilchurn Castle commands the length of Loch Awe; but the poet in this case belonged to the Campbells of Glenlyon and was not, as Dun had it, ‘the daughter of Sir Duncan Campbell of Lochawe.’ Gesto’s background note also includes a shortened version of the Victorian melodrama described by Dun.⁷
- The background note given in Charles Stewart’s *Killin Collection* – whose Glenlyon provenance makes it by far the most credible of the accounts given in these anthologies – is echoed in MacLean Sinclair’s *Gaelic Bards* (1890) and in the *Celtic Monthly* (1893).
- The air included in the *Celtic Monthly* is reminiscent of the one included in Dun, with some modifications; the *Celtic Monthly* version of the air is also given (with very slight alteration) by Calum Mac Phàrlain in *Binneas nam Bard* (1908). We shall have more to say about the musical settings in these anthologies in due course.
- The background note given by Mac Phàrlain in *Guth na Bliadhna* (1913) hearkens back to the tale as it appeared in both Pattison’s *Gaelic Bards and Original Poems* (1890) and *The Highlander* (1881): all three base their historical notes on a faulty account given in Cosmo Innes’ 1861 book, *Sketches of Early Scotch History and Social Progress* (355–8), in which Innes quotes the curate of Fortingall, but unfortunately misses the 1570 entry regarding Griogair Ruadh and cites instead an entry for June 1552 in which an entirely different Griogair Mac Griogair was beheaded, along with his brother Malcolm and his father Duncan.
- The version of the poem published in *An Gàidheal* (1874) and the version given by Watson in *Bardachd Ghàidhlig* (1918, 1932) derive directly from Turner. Both of these, along with Mac Phàrlain’s article in *Guth na Bliadhna* (1913), also quote Turner’s pitiful phrase

⁷ Dun’s fanciful note reads as follows (1848: notes p. 3):

The authoress of this Gaelic song was the daughter of Sir Duncan Campbell of Lochawe. She was “cag’d in” Balloch (Taymouth) “castle’s dungeon dark” by her father, for having married a chief of the Clan Macgregor, with whom the Campbells were at feud.

Macgregor often visited his young bride secretly at the castle, by rowing across Loch Tay in a small boat. These visits were, however, not unknown to Sir Duncan, who determined to be revenged on the bold intruder. Accordingly, an ambush was one day laid for the unsuspecting Macgregor, in a wood near the spot where his boat was moored; and, as he was returning to it, he was suddenly attacked by several men and wounded. He, however, fought his way through them, and was just stepping into the boat, when he was struck down by some one and stunned. His pursuers coming up shortly after, finished their cruel work. The verses were composed by the lady after learning the sad fate of her husband.

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describing the author’s having composed the lament ‘*agus a ciad leanabh air a glùn*’ (‘and her first child on her knee’).

Returning to the poem itself, we must note three other published versions that appeared within the same hundred-year time-frame as those just listed. These derive not from Turner but from more recent oral tradition:

Date	Item Title	Anthology Author/Title	Also includes
1895	‘Griogal Cridhe. Lament of the wife of an outlawed MacGregor’ ⁸	Keith Norman MacDonald, <i>The Gesto Collection of Highland Music</i> , Appendix, 25.	Musical setting
1911	‘Griogal Cridhe’ ⁸	Frances Tolmie, <i>Journal of the Folk-Song Society</i> , No. 16: 196–7.	Musical setting; background note
1911	‘Taladh’	A. and A. MacDonald, <i>The MacDonald Collection of Gaelic Poetry</i> , 325; note liii–liv.	Background note

The versions in *Gesto* (G) and *JFSS* both originate with Frances Tolmie, who says in the latter volume that she recalled the stanzas and air ‘from earliest days’ in Skye – likely sometime before 1850, given her birth in 1840. We should note, however, that one of the stanzas in *Gesto* (stanza G5 below) does not appear in *JFSS*. The very few stanzas of *Griogal Cridhe* which appear in Miss Tolmie’s surviving notebooks shed no light on this omission,⁹ and the simplest explanation may be that she sent Keith Norman MacDonald the words as she recalled them from childhood at the time, but inadvertently omitted G5 from the stanzas that she subsequently sent to Dr George Henderson, from which the collection eventually published in *JFSS* was compiled (Bassin 1977: 151).

Here is the version which Frances Tolmie contributed to *Gesto*. Corresponding (sometimes only roughly corresponding) stanzas in Turner (T) and the MacDonald Collection (M) are indicated for purposes of comparison.

G1 (T16, M2)	<p><i>’S ioma h-oidhche fhliuch ’us thioram</i> <i>Side na seachd sian</i> <i>Gheibheadh Griogal dhomhsa creagan</i> <i>Ris an gabhainn dìon.</i></p>	<p>Many’s the night, wet and dry, seven gales blowing, Gregor would get me a rocky nook where I could get shelter.</p>
G2 (T2)	<p><i>Obhan, obhan, obhan i ri,</i> <i>Obhan i ri ò</i> <i>Obhan, obhan, obhan i ri,</i> <i>’S mór mo mhulad, ’s mór!</i></p>	<p><i>Obhan, obhan, obhan i ri,</i> <i>Obhan i ri ò</i> <i>Obhan, obhan, obhan i ri,</i> Great is my sorrow, great!</p>

⁸ Martin MacGregor (PC) suggests that *Gesto* may represent the first occasion of this song being given the title ‘Griogal Cridhe’, perhaps owing to the appearance of this phrase in two of the verses supplied to K. N. MacDonald by Frances Tolmie. The title has been widely used in subsequent publications (many of which are based on Tolmie), and is also the title attributed to many of the versions held in the School of Scottish Studies Archive. It is unclear whether the singers themselves used this title, or whether it was subsequently applied to the songs by fieldworkers familiar with Tolmie’s version. John MacInnes has told me that he believes the pronunciation ‘Griogal’ for ‘Griogair’ derives from Miss Tolmie’s informants in Skye; it is certainly not a variant found in Perthshire.

⁹ National Library of Scotland, Tolmie Collection 14904: 27

G3 ¹⁰	<i>Dhìrich mi dha 'n t-seòmar mhullach 'S theirinn mi 'n tigh làir, 'S cha d'fhuair mise Griogal cridhe, Na shuidhe mu 'n chlàr.</i>	I ascended to the uppermost room and descended to the lowest, But I did not find dear Gregor seated at the table.
G4 (T5, M5)	<i>Eudail mhor a shluagh an domhain! Dhoirt iad d' fhuil o 'n dé; 'S chuir iad do cheann air stob daraich Tacan beag bho d' chré.</i>	Darling of all the world's people, they spilt your blood yesterday; They put your head on an oaken block and took it from your body.
G5 (T9)	<i>'S truagh nach mis a bha nam dhorsair An dorus an tigh bhàin, A chlach a b' airde bhitheadh san oisean Si b' fhaisge dh' an làir.</i>	A pity I wasn't the door-keeper at the door of the white house: The highest stone at the corner of the house would be closest to the ground.
G6 (T14/15, M8)	<i>B' annsa a bhi le Griogal cridhe, Tearnadh chruidh le gleann Na le Barainn mór na Dallaich Sioda geal mu 'm cheann.</i>	I would rather be with dear Gregor, driving cattle down the glen, Than with the big Baron of Dall, with white silk round my head.
G7 (T11, M4)	<i>Ged nach eil ùbhlan idir agam 'S ùbhlan uil' aig càch 'S ann tha m' ubhlan 's cùbh 'r ri caineal 'S cùl an cinn ri làir.</i>	Although I have no apples, and others have them all, My own cinnamon-scented [?] apples are lying on the ground.
G8 (T12, M3)	<i>Nuair a bhitheas mnathan òg a bhaile An nochd 'n an cadal sàimh, 'S ann bhitheas mis' air bruaich do lice Bualadh mo dhà laimh.</i>	When the young women of the village are sleeping soundly tonight, I shall be at the edge of your grave- slab, beating my hands in grief.

Finally, the *taladh* ('lullaby') included in *The MacDonald Collection of Gaelic Poetry* also contains eight stanzas. The editors tell us that it was 'taken down in Uist':¹¹

M1 (T17)	Bà, bà, bà, mo leanabh, Bà, mo leanabh, bà; Bà, ho i o, mo leanabh, Cha 'n 'eil thu ach bà.	<i>Bà, bà, bà, my baby, Bà, my child, bà; Bà, ho i o, my baby, You are only bà.</i>
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¹⁰ While G3 has no obvious counterpart in either Turner or MacDonald, Martin MacGregor (PC) points out that it does include the 'high/low contrast' found in T9; it also may bear some relation to the migratory stanza M6/T8; see below n. 12.

¹¹ A. and A. MacDonald (1911), liii. In his copy of *The MacDonald Collection*, now lodged in the National Library of Scotland, the late Rev. William Matheson has pencilled a note at the bottom of page 325: '(from Isabella MacRury, Benbecula)'. We cannot presently confirm Matheson's identification of the informant, beyond saying that he undoubtedly had the information on what he considered good authority.

M2 (T16, G1)	<i>Is iomadh oidhche fliuch is tioram, Sìde nan seachd sian, A chuir Griogal ormsa fasgadh, A chumadh orm dìon.</i>	Many a night, wet and dry, in seven gales of weather Gregor found shelter that kept a roof over my head.
M3 (T12, G8)	<i>'S buidhe mhnathan òga 'bhaile, Fhuair an cadal seimh; Mise so air bruaich do leapa 'Bualadh mo dha làmh.</i>	Lucky young women of the village who slept sweetly, While I was here at the edge of your bed, beating my hands in grief.
M4 (T11, G7)	<i>Ged tha mi gun ùbhlan agam, 'S m' ùbhlan uil' aig càch, 'S ann tha m' ulaidh, cùbhraidh, caineal, 'S cùl a chinn ri làr.</i>	Although I have no apples – my apples gone to others, My treasure, fragrant and cinnamon- scented, lies with his head on the ground.
M5 (T5, G4)	<i>Fheudail a dh' fhearaihb an domhain, Dhòirt iad t' fhuil an de; Chuir iad do cheann air stob daraich, Tacan beag uam fein.</i>	Darling of the world's men, they spilt your blood yesterday: They put your head on an oaken block a small distance from myself.
M6 (T8)	<i>Dhìrich mi 'bheinn mhòr gun anail, Mu 'n do ghlas an là, Chuir mi gruag mo chinn ri talamh 'S craicinn mo dha làmh.¹²</i>	I climbed the big mountain breathlessly before the sun arose; The hair of my head I left on the ground, along with the skin of my two hands.
M7 (T6– T7, T10)	<i>'S truagh nach robh m' athair 's an teasaich, 'S Iarl Adhull an laimh; Griogal cridhe nam bas gealla Eadar mo dha laimh.</i>	A pity my father wasn't ill with fever, and the Earl of Atholl captured; Darling Gregor of the white palms close in my two arms.
M8 (T14/15, G6)	<i>B' annsa 'bhi aig Griogal cridhe, 'G iomain chruidh 's a ghleann, Na aig Baran crionda, gallach, 'S sìoda dubh mu m' cheann.</i>	I would rather be with dear Gregor driving cattle in the glen Than with the withered, cursed Baron wearing black silk round my head.

Judging from the published evidence of Miss Tolmie's version (Skye) and that collected by the MacDonalds (Uist), it is clear that over 70 percent of the stanzas – or important elements of them – published by Turner in 1813 were still preserved in oral memory at the end of the nineteenth century, more than three hundred years after their composition. As we shall now see, however, this is not the end of the story.

2.2 Unpublished versions

The following summary includes all known unpublished versions of the text collected since the middle of the nineteenth century.¹³ With the exception of one BBC recording, the audio recordings listed below are available through the Sound Archives of the School of Scottish Studies. For

¹² M6 is a *rann fuadain*, a migratory stanza, found in numerous Gaelic songs; T8 and G3 are probably related to it. The poet probably tapped into this tradition when composing her verses.

¹³ Exceptionally we have included the version published by Anne Lorne Gillies in her 2005 collection *Songs of Gaelic Scotland*, which she learned from the Rev. William Matheson. The reasons for this inclusion are discussed below.

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recordings available on the *Tobar an Dualchais* website (TD), track ID numbers given here can be entered into the website's search engine to gain access to the recording itself. For School of Scottish Studies recordings not yet available on *Tobar an Dualchais*, original Sound Archive (SA) identification numbers are given.

Place	Date	Contributor (Recorder)	Reference	Corresponding Stanzas
GROUP 1				
Scalpay Harris	1954 1959	Angus MacLeod (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1954/071/B6 SA 1959/114/08	M1, G4(M5), G5, G7
Skye	1954 1958	Kirsty Munro (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1954/069/B2 SA 1958/043/B8	G2, G4, M7, G1, G8, G6(M8), G7(M4)
Lewis	1956 1957	Jessie MacKenzie (School of Scottish Studies)	TD ID No. 54954 TD ID No. 94452	New stanza, M1, G1(M2), G7, G5, new stanza ¹⁴
Scalpay Harris	1963 1971 1971	Flora Cunningham (School of Scottish Studies)	TD ID No. 76047 TD ID No. 77277 SA 1971/100.01–2	M1, G6, G4(M5), new stanza, G5, G7, G8, G1 ¹⁵
GROUP 2				
Iochdar, S. Uist	1869	Seonaid Churraidh (Alexander Carmichael)	Edinburgh University Library, CW MS 244 fos. 490–1, item 170	M1, M6, M3, M2(G1)
Eriskay	1896	Mrs Ronald O Healy ¹⁶ (Fr Allan MacDonald)	Glasgow U. Library, MS Gen.1090/28: 96–7	M1, M4, M3
Eriskay	1896	Ewen M'Lennan (Fr Allan MacDonald)	Glasgow U. Library, MS Gen.1090/28: 104	M2(G1), M8
Eriskay	1905	Unnamed Singer ¹⁷ (Amy Murray)	National Library of Scotland, Acc. 9711, Box 3	M1, M8
Eriskay	1951	Flora MacInnes (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1951/04/01	M1, M4
S. Uist	1956	Agnes Currie (School of Scottish Studies)	TD ID No. 84577	M1, M6, M4

¹⁴ Stanzas sung in MacKenzie's 1957 recording.

¹⁵ Cunningham knew and sang all of these verses, although no more than seven of them appear in any one recording.

¹⁶ Martin MacGregor (PC) suggests that this might be an error for O Henl(e)y, a surname still found in the southern part of South Uist.

¹⁷ Possibly Penny Campbell, housekeeper to Fr Allan MacDonald, from whom Murray collected a large number of songs; see McGuire 1999:84.

‘GRIOGAL CRIDHE’

Barra	1959	Mary MacNeill and Peigi MacNeill (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1959/066	M1, G8(M3), M4
Barra	1959 1965 1966	Mary Morrison (Màiri Eòghainn Mhóir) ¹⁸ (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1959/68/02 SA 1965/152/05 TD ID No. 98765	M1, M6, M4, M8, M3
Barra	1965	Calum Johnston (School of Scottish Studies)	TD ID No. 24923	M1, M6, M4(T11)
Barra	1965	Catherine MacNeil (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1965/105/17	M1, M6, M4
Barra	1965	Jane MacDonald (School of Scottish Studies)	TD ID No. 95860	M1, M4, M2(G1), M6, M3
Barra	1965	‘Barra Waulking Women’ (School of Scottish Studies)	TD ID No. 24925	M1, M6
Grimsay	1966	Peter Morrison (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1966/093/02	M1, M4
S. Uist	1966	Mary Munro (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1966/097/05	M1, M6, M4, M2(G1), M8, M1
S. Uist	1967	Mrs Hugh MacEachen (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1967/008/A5	M1, M6, M4, M8, M2
Scalpay Harris	1970	Mary MacLeod (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1970/005/02	M1, M2
Berneray Harris	1970	Margaret MacLeod (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1970/082/B6	M1, M6
GROUP 3				
N. Uist/ Edinburgh	1959 1960s 1975	Rev. William Matheson (School of Scottish Studies) (Anne Lorne Gillies) (School of Scottish Studies)	TD ID No. 85852 (SA 1959/055) 2005:140–2 SA 1975/221/B5	M1, G6, G1, T8, T5, M4 M1, G4, G3, G1, G6, T11, G8 M1, G6, M5, T11, M3
Acharn, Tayside, Perthshire	1964	Christopher MacDonald (School of Scottish Studies)	SA 1964/23/B2 Tocher 2/11 (1973), 81 (text) and 100 (air)	T13–15, T17
Harris	n.d.	Peggy Morrison (BBC Scotland Gaelic Archive) ¹⁹	“Sia Òrain” programme 6, broadcast 29/03/2012	T1–4, T6, T13

¹⁸ With regard to the 1966 recording, the singer’s name is listed on the website as ‘Unknown (female)’. Comparison with her other performances of this song nonetheless indicates that the singer in this recording is Mary Morrison.

Vatersay	1956 1967	Nan MacKinnon (School of Scottish Studies)	TD ID No. 27170 TD ID No. 56989	T2, G1, G3, M3
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Our analysis suggests that these recordings be divided into three groups. Group 1 contains recordings that appear to belong to the strand of tradition exemplified by Frances Tolmie's Skye version, while the recordings in Group 2 appear closer to that encountered by the MacDonalds in the Uists.²⁰ Group 3 contains recordings that for one reason or another cannot be assigned to either of the other groups; we shall discuss these presently.

Because the versions in the *MacDonald Collection* and in *Gesto* are in many ways similar, and because only thirteen of our twenty-four singers remembered more than three stanzas of the song, there are some cases in which we cannot be hard-and-fast about assigning a singer to Group 1 or 2 on the basis of textual evidence alone. There are nonetheless a number of small differences between *Gesto* and MacDonald that are worth noting, and that I believe allow us to express some confidence in the differentiation outlined above. The most significant of these are:

1. **Unique stanzas.** As noted above, *Gesto* contains three stanzas (G2, G3, and G5) which do not appear in MacDonald; and MacDonald in turn contains three stanzas (M2, M3, and M8) which do not appear in *Gesto*. It seems logical to assume that the appearance of one or more of these unique stanzas in a given performance may help us identify the strand of tradition to which that performance belongs.
2. **'Ar bhruaich do...'** Both *Gesto* (G8) and MacDonald (M5) contain a stanza in which the poet complains of sleeplessness. The interesting difference is in line three, where *Gesto* has the poet mourning at her husband's grave (*air bruaich do lice* 'at the edge of your gravestone'), whereas MacDonald has her in her bedroom (*ar bhruaich do leapa* 'at the edge of your bed'). We shall have more to say about this difference shortly. For the moment, however, this distinction may help us decide to which group a recording should be assigned.
3. **'sioda geal' / 'sioda dubh'.** The colour of silk head-dress worn by the poet is given as 'white' in *Gesto* (G6) and as 'black' in MacDonald (M6); our recordings show evidence of both traditions, and the singer's choice may help us decide to which group a recording may belong.

Variants included in Group 2 clearly support the notion that a distinct version of *Griogal Cridhe* predominated in the Uists, Eriskay and Barra, while those in Group 1 suggest that the versions collected in Skye, Harris and Lewis have features in common with Frances Tolmie's Skye version as given in *Gesto*. Tolmie learned *Griogal Cridhe* as a child growing up near Dunvegan, home of the MacLeods, whose clan alliances in Harris and Lewis were manifold and of long standing. Granted the fact that by Tolmie's time the MacLeods of Skye/Harris and the MacLeods of Lewis were politically independent of each other, it nonetheless stands to reason that such relationships could account for the similarity between the version sung in the northernmost Outer Hebrides and the one Tolmie learned in childhood.

¹⁹ BBC Scotland Gaelic Archive 138, Volume 94, track 11. The singer's identity, not given in the broadcast, was determined by comparison with other recordings from the same singer held in the Scottish Studies Archives, and subsequently confirmed by the BBC.

²⁰ There is obviously some overlap; and one should note that Peter Morrison (Grimsay), Mary MacLeod (Scalpay) and Margaret MacLeod (Berneray) are, despite belonging geographically and culturally (as least as regards religion) in Group 1, are included in Group 2 because they failed to sing any of the *Gesto*/Tolmie stanzas favoured by Group 1 informants. None of these three, however, sang more than two stanzas, and it is impossible to say if they had heard others that they omitted to sing on the occasion of recording.

As we shall presently discuss, the musical evidence also supports the distinction between Group 1 and Group 2 as outlined here.

2.3 Anomalous versions

As indicated, Group 3 contains four versions (*i.e.* versions from four singers) that cannot be confidently assigned to either of the first two groups. In each of these cases, it seems possible or even likely that the singers had recourse – either personally, or at a near remove – to a printed version of the text.

The Rev. William Matheson, late Reader in Celtic at the University of Edinburgh, recorded over 400 items for the School of Scottish Studies, some of which display evidence of his having collated textual and musical elements from his own North Uist background with material he encountered in published and manuscript sources during a lifetime’s study of Gaelic song. Intensely interested in understanding and replicating the performance practices of past generations, Matheson was open and straightforward about his use of material from multiple sources in his performance of Gaelic songs. It is thus not surprising that his recordings of *Griogal Cridhe* contain stanzaic elements unique to each of our main printed sources, including Turner as well as *Gesto* and MacDonald.²¹

Although Peggy Morrison of Ardhasaig, Harris, was recorded on several occasions by researchers from the School of Scottish Studies, it was for the BBC that she recorded *Griogal Cridhe*, several stanzas of which were recently incorporated into a half-hour programme on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal.²² Thanks to colleagues at the BBC, I subsequently heard this recording in full: it includes all but two of Turner’s stanzas, and presents them in the same order as given in Turner. From the halting character of the performance, it seems clear that she was singing from a printed text; indeed, most of Turner’s stanzas do not appear in living tradition in the twentieth century. Why she should have preferred singing Turner’s text to the one doubtless known to her – as the evidence of the air confirms – from Harris tradition we are unfortunately no longer in a position to enquire, as Peggy Morrison died in 1988. John MacInnes tells me that he often encountered, in the course of his fieldwork, informants who revered the printed word, and who would declare their own version of a song ‘wrong’ if it did not accord with a printed version subsequently shown to them.

Not only was Christopher MacDonald of Acharn, Perthshire, among the last generation of native Gaelic speakers from that county, but he also lived only a few miles from the east end of Loch Tay, where the events lamented in the poem occurred. It is therefore a pity that his version of *Griogal Cridhe* clearly derives from the text published in Turner. John MacInnes, who recorded Christopher MacDonald in his home, tells me that the family owned a copy of Stewart’s *Killin Collection*, which includes all of Turner’s stanzas. Whether Christopher MacDonald learned his four stanzas directly from a printed source or from someone else who had done so it is not possible to say; it is remarkable, however, that MacDonald’s stanzas are virtually word-for-word as they appear in print, that they occur in the same order, and that (with the exception of the hybrid stanza G6/M8, which combines elements of T14 and T15) these stanzas occur in no other variant recorded in the twentieth century.

Finally, Nan MacKinnon (*Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh*) of Vatersay was undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary informants who ever recorded for the School of Scottish Studies, contributing hundreds of songs, stories and examples of traditional lore to the Sound Archives. One might hazard a guess that, given her intense interest in the material, she might have consulted printed works; indeed, both *MacDonald* and *Gesto* were well-subscribed volumes that found their way into many homes in the Gàidhealtachd, as did other publications that printed all or parts of Turner’s text.

²¹ For an analysis of his reconstructive method in connection with songs in so-called ‘strophic’ metres, see Blankenhorn (2013).

²² The programme on ‘Griogal Cridhe’ was the sixth and final programme in a series entitled ‘Sia Òrain’ broadcast on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal between 23 February and 29 March 2012.

If we could assume that some of these sources were to be found in Nan MacKinnon's home, we might understand how – unlike those of other singers from Barra, Eriskay, and the Uists – Nan's performance strayed beyond the southern stanzas that we would expect her to know, and contained elements drawn from all three of the traditional strands we have so far identified.

Unfortunately, however, we can assume no such thing. John MacInnes tells me that, as far as he knew, Nan MacKinnon was not literate in Gaelic. The most we can say is that, while Nan credited her mother as the source of most of her songs, she surely picked up some of them from other singers. She may have learned *Griogal Cridhe* from someone who was literate in Gaelic, and who had had access to Turner and to the more recently-collected texts in *Gesto* and MacDonald. This case, as well as that of Christopher MacDonald, illustrates the complexity of the relationship between oral and literary versions of a given text, and the danger of drawing conclusions based on evidence that can never be complete.

2.4 'New' stanzas and interesting variants

Three of the stanzas collected from recent oral tradition are hitherto unattested from any other source. Do these stanzas represent authentic traditional memories of the original text as Mór Chaimbeul composed it – keeping in mind that 243 years elapsed between the events of 1570 and the first appearance of the text in Turner? Or have they become associated with the song at a later time? It is impossible to know for certain, but it is surely worth considering the possibilities.

The first of these unique stanzas, from Jessie Mackenzie's 1957 performance, is as follows:

<i>Dh'iarr iad mise chun na bainis</i>	They asked me to the wedding
<i>Bainis nach robh ann</i>	A wedding that never took place;
<i>Bha do cheann ac' air an dealg</i>	They had your head on the pin
<i>Air a' phost ud thall.</i>	On that post over yonder.

This stanza, with its reference to the image of the victim's severed head, is likely to be a remote variant of the text as given in Turner (T5), although the ghastly idea that the head was then displayed on a spike is not attested elsewhere. The reference in the first couplet to a wedding-that-never-was may represent an attempt, by a tradition-bearer unfamiliar with the actual events, to dramatise the circumstances of Griogair's beheading.²³

In both of her performances, MacKenzie also sings this:

<i>Nam faiceadh tu Griogal Cridhe</i>	If you saw beloved Griogair
<i>'S e 'na shuidhe air tom</i>	Seated on a hillock
<i>Gaol nam ban òg, gràdh nan</i>	The love of the young women, darling
<i>nigheann</i>	of the girls
<i>'S currac beag m'a cheann.</i>	With a small hood over his head.

Here we have a reflection of what could have been Mór Chaimbeul's genuine experience. The stanza depicts Griogair seated on a raised hillock (*tom*), a typical place of execution, wearing a hood (*currac*) presumably placed there in preparation for the event.²⁴ If this chilling image truly originates with Mór Chaimbeul herself, it would support the idea that the poet was indeed an eyewitness to her husband's judicial murder – a notion most credibly floated by Charles Stewart, whose background note to the *Killin Collection* is based upon Glenlyon tradition.

²³ Interestingly, Martin MacGregor (PC) tells me that he will be arguing in a forthcoming article that the poet 'had refused an attempt to marry her off to another before the feud began'.

²⁴ John MacInnes tells me that such executions were generally carried out with the victim being placed on a small knoll or bit of rising ground referred to as a *tom* (*tom na croicheadh, tom an dicheannaidh*). MacGregor cites J. Christie, *The Lairds and Lands of Loch Tayside* (Aberfeldy 1892: 21) as a source helpful in identifying the 'probable precise location' of the execution (1999: 145, n. 31).

Another such stanza is the following, recorded by Flora Cunningham in 1971:

<i>Chuir iad ruigheadh air do chasan</i> ²⁵	They stilled your legs
<i>Is glas air do chaimnt,</i>	And silenced your speech;
<i>’S nuair a lùb iad thu ’s an anart</i>	And when they wrapped you in the shroud
<i>’S e mo chreach-sa bh’ann.</i>	That was my undoing.

Here we get a sense of Mór’s despair at Griogair’s capture and execution, vivid and specific details which convey a physical sense of her heartrending loss. Indeed, it is the vividness and specificity of these two stanzas – not to mention their consistency with what we now know of the actual circumstances – that I believe argue for their having been part of Mór’s original poem, as opposed to later accretions to it.

Glenlyon tradition notwithstanding, a recent article by Kate Louise Mathis expresses the view that Mór Chaimbeul was unlikely to have personally witnessed her husband’s execution. While Mathis eventually concludes that the matter ‘cannot be decided conclusively with the available evidence’ (60, n. 24), she discusses the reference to blood-drinking, and specifically mentions the appearance of the cup in T5, describing it as a ‘foreign object’ which ‘implies distance from instead of proximity to the event described’ (59). Surely, however, we may imagine Mór having been present, but physically restrained from rushing to her husband’s body and drinking the blood directly from his wounds in the approved traditional manner. Whether she was physically present or not, however, is immaterial; the important thing is that by mentioning the drinking of blood, Mór invokes a theme and image long associated with the rhetoric of women’s lamentation, thus reminding listeners that her poetry draws from a deep well of tradition going back centuries.²⁶

In addition to these unique stanzas, recent recordings contain other variant readings that may be significant in light of what we now know to be the truth of these events. Earlier we mentioned the stanza in which the poet expresses envy of other young women who sleep soundly at night. Turner (T12) gives it as follows:

<i>Ged tha mnaithibh chaich aig baile,</i>	Although the wives of all the others are at
<i>Na ’n luidhe ’s na ’n cadal seimh</i>	home,
<i>’S ann bhios mis’ aig bruaich mo</i>	Sleeping soundly in their beds,
<i>leapa,</i>	I am here at the edge of my bed,
<i>A’ bualadh mo dha laimh.</i>	Beating my two hands.

The image here is of a young woman so beset by grief that she can get no rest, but sits up on the edge of her bed, rocking back and forth, her hands beating together as tears flow down her cheeks, her face a rictus of despair. Of the nine singers who recorded this stanza, three – Nan MacKinnon, Jane MacDonald, and William Matheson in his 1975 recording – give this stanza in the form Turner expressed it: *aig bruaich mo leapadh* ‘at the edge of my bed’. Three others accord with the

²⁵ Cunningham’s pronunciation in three of her recordings is *ruigheadh* or *ruitheadh*, the meaning of which is obscure; in SA1971.100.01–2, where she sings the song twice, it sounds more like *luigheadh*. While the confusion of /l/ and /r/ is commonplace, it seems likely that she was uncertain about this word. Could the original form have been *luighe*, for which Armstrong’s *Gaelic Dictionary* (Mid-Perthshire) gives ‘death’ as one meaning? This feature, and the naming of the poet’s second husband as ‘Pàdruig Baron’ – whom William Matheson identified to John MacInnes as ‘Patrick Menzies, petty baron of Dull’ – suggest that Cunningham’s version of the song may have a closer connection to its Perthshire origin than some of the other variants collected in the Western Isles appear to do.

²⁶ Consider the behaviour of Eibhlín Dhubh Ní Chonaill, widow of Art Ó Laoghaire, who licked her husband’s blood from her hands after discovering his fallen body (Ó Tuama 1961: 35, ll.82–4); also the story of Deirdre, who ‘began drinking Naoise’s blood copiously’ following his murder (Mac Giolla Léith 1993: ll. 766–7).

MacDonald text (M5) in having in the third line *do leapadh* ‘your bed’; and four others reflect *Gesto* (G8) in rendering the line as *air bruaich do lice* ‘at the edge of your grave-slab’.²⁷ Clearly *air bruaich do leabhadh* makes no sense: whose bed are we supposed to imagine here? As for the ‘grave-slab’, we must ask ourselves how likely it would have been for the Campbells of Glenorchy and Glenlyon, having dispatched their troublesome in-law, to accord him so costly a burial-plot as this image suggests, or how likely it would have been for Mór Chaimbeul – a re-married woman with two children – to have visited her first husband’s grave in the middle of the night whilst other women were asleep in their beds. The ‘grave-slab’ image seems to me to carry a whiff of Victorian melodrama about it, whereas the image of the woman in sleepless agony in her bedroom has the piercing ring of truth.²⁸ Were it not for the fact that Tolmie’s version, having been frequently reprinted, is now popularly regarded as canonical, it would perhaps be unnecessary to point out that Turner’s informant is likelier to have had the better text.²⁹

Finally, one further stanza merits our attention in this respect. It appears in both of Jessie MacKenzie’s recordings:

<i>Bha mi ’n oidhche ud na mo sheasamh</i>	That night I stood
<i>’N dorus an tùr bhàin</i>	In the door of the white tower
<i>A’ chlach a b’ àirde bh’ air a bhalla</i>	The highest stone in the wall
<i>’S i b’ fhaisg air an làr.</i>	Was the one closest to the ground.

Meanwhile, both Flora Cunningham and her brother Angus MacLeod sing this:

<i>Nach truagh nach bu mhise ’n dorsair</i>	It’s a pity I wasn’t the door-keeper
<i>An dorus taigh-bhàis,</i>	At the door of the death-house
<i>’S a’ chlach a b’ àirde bha ’s an ursainn</i>	The highest stone in the door-frame
<i>’S i b’ fhaisg dha làr.</i>	Would be the one closest to the ground.

This stanza clearly corresponds to G5 (which gives *dorus an taigh bhàin* in the second line) and to a lesser extent to T9 (whose second couplet reads *’S i chlach a b’ airde anns a chaisteal / Chlach a b’ fhaisg do ’n bhlar*). So our question should be: do either the Cunningham/MacLeod or the MacKenzie versions contain anything we might consider original to the poem? MacKenzie’s reference to a ‘white tower’ (*tùr bhàin*) is unique, as is *Gesto*’s to a ‘white house’ (*tigh bhàin*). The Cunningham/MacLeod version’s *taigh-bhàis* (‘death-house’ – or perhaps even ‘death’s abode’) is appropriately creepy, and may represent some later tradition-bearer’s inventive attempt to explain why the poet might wish to tear down the walls. But even so, what ‘death-house’ would this be? Should we take the phrase literally or metaphorically? *Taigh-bhàis* is no less mysterious than the other two.

A clue may be found in castles named in the text. Balloch – *Caisteal a’ Bhealaich* (T7–8, T10) – whose foundations lie under Taymouth Castle today, was the home of Mór’s cousin, *Cailean Liath*, Colin Campbell of Glenorchy. *Fionnlairig* (T10) contained a chapel and burial-ground that

²⁷ Including a second performance by William Matheson; the text credited to him by Anne Lorne Gillies contains the line *’s ann bhios mis’ aig bruaich do lice*; see Gillies 2005: 141.

²⁸ The image of grief drawn here – sleeplessness, the beating of one’s hands in distress, dishevelment of hair and other motifs – is a common one in Gaelic poetry; see Mathis 2008: 61n., also Partridge 1980–1: 29–31. It is also one which must have its origins in the physical experience of intense grief, as anyone who has had such an experience can attest.

²⁹ Tolmie’s text and air appear in *Coisir a’ Mhòid* (An Comunn Gàidhealach 1932–37: 4/51–4); *Orain a’ Mhòid* (An Comunn Gàidhealach 1935: XII/13); J. N. McConochie, *Gaelic Calling “Ghaidhlig a’ Gairm”* (1960: 30–1); Francis Collinson, *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland* (1966: 87); *Ceol nam Beann: The Ceilidh Song-Book* (An Comunn Gàidhealach 1972: 29); Bruce Campbell, *Orain nan Gàidheal* (1989: 2: 37), and no doubt elsewhere. The Mòd collections have been particularly influential.

was also associated with the Glenorchy Campbells.³⁰ Remarkably, however, the poem makes no reference to the residence of Mór’s father, Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon. Given the prominent role her father played in Griogair’s arrest and execution, and her expressed wish that he become seriously ill (T6), one might expect a reference to his dwelling place.

Charles Stewart, reporting Glenlyon tradition, may provide a relevant clue here. His background note to the song begins (Stewart: 60) :

In the latter half of the sixteenth century lived Duncan Campbell, of Glenlyon, who was so celebrated for his hospitality that he was known as ‘Donnacha Ruadh na Feileach.’ His residence was ‘Caisteal a Curin-bhàin,’ about two miles above the pass.

Chaisteal a’ Chùirn-bhàin (Carnbane Castle) did indeed belong to the Campbells of Glenlyon at the time in question: W. J. Watson notes that ‘its first stone was laid in 1564’ by Donnchadh Ruadh na Féile, Mór Chaimbeul’s father (Watson 1939: 287). While Mór herself may not have lived there, she would have known that the castle was important to her father – perhaps because of its newness, because he had built it himself from scratch, because he would have been pleased with it.³¹ Accordingly, if we may invoke the principle of *lectio difficilior potior*, we may entertain the idea that Jessie MacKenzie’s *tùr bhàin* retains an echo of what could have been *Chùirn Bhàin* in the original poem. If so, we may have solved the mystery posed by the variant *taigh bhàin / tùr bhàin / taigh-bhàis* readings. The restored stanza would then read something like this:

<i>Nach truagh nach bu mhise ’n dorsair</i>	It’s a pity I wasn’t the door-keeper
<i>An Caisteal a’ Chùirn Bhàin:</i>	At Carnbane Castle:
<i>’S a’ chlach a b’ àirde bha ’s an ursainn</i>	The highest stone in the door-frame
<i>’S i b’ fhaisge dha làr.</i>	Would be the one closest to the ground.

If we accept such a reading, there is of course the problem of how we should regard T9. This I happily leave to others, with the reminder that nearly two and one-half centuries passed between the poem’s composition and its first appearance in print. The vagaries of oral transmission are well-known, and there is little reason, apart from its date, why Turner’s version should enjoy greater authority than other orally-transmitted versions of the poem. Two and one-half centuries is a long time, and the poem could have been subjected to any number of alterations, misconstructions, accretions and omissions between its composition and the date when Turner noted it down.

3.0 The Music

In our examination of the musical settings associated with *Griogal Cridhe* we shall mainly be interested in three questions:

- Can we manage to separate, in the published versions of the 19th century, the genuine traditional elements from the Victorian ‘improvements’?

³⁰ Cf. *Chronicle of Fortingall* entries for 12 August 1523 and 26 July 1524, which note the burials of ‘Sir Colin Campbell Knight Laird of Glenuruquhay’ and ‘Margaret Stewart Lady of Glenuruquhay’ ‘in the chapel of Finlari.’ Martin MacGregor informs me (PC) that this chapel was added in 1516 to a larger fortification at Finlari, purchased by Donnchadh, second chief of the Campbells of Glenorchy, around 1500. He argues that Finlari was the Glenorchy Campbells’ main fortress from then until the building of Balloch, and believes that Griogair Ruadh could well have been imprisoned there for a time in 1569–70. If so, there is ample reason for Mór Chaimbeul to have singled it out as a place she would like to have seen destroyed.

³¹ Martin MacGregor tells me (PC) that the Glenlyon Campbells’ ‘first and main fortress’ at Meggernie is far more impressive than Carnbane, and stands in a more prominent location. In his 1999 article he points out that he has been ‘unable to establish with certainty the order in which these fortresses were built’ (1999: 127 and nn. 54–55).

- Does the distribution of musical variants collected from oral tradition support our conclusion, outlined above, regarding two strands of tradition in the Hebrides, *i.e.* one strand which predominated in the Uists and Barra, and another which includes versions collected in Skye, Harris, and Lewis?
- Will scrutiny of both published and unpublished versions of the air allow us to draw any conclusions regarding the character of the ‘original’ air?

3.1 Published settings

We have already mentioned a number of the anthologies that included a musical setting alongside the poem, beginning with Finlay Dun’s 1848 collection. A total of nine musical settings appeared in print in the first century following Turner’s publication of the poem.

3.1.1. Dun and followers.

The tendency of Victorian anthologists to indulge in melodrama is, it must be said, no less marked in their musical settings than in the fanciful background notes which they often supplied. They wanted to sell copies of their works to a middle-class audience, schooled in mainstream western art-music; and in order to do so they felt that they needed to titivate their raw material to make it more commercially viable. The Rev. William Matheson calls them ‘systematizers and improvers’ (1955:75):³²

They were inclined to think, because the people who sang folk-songs were innocent of musical theory, that therefore their singing of their own music was imperfect: it was quite legitimate for a person of taste and refinement to see to it that imperfections were removed, and that the music was made to conform to the style which was fashionable in the drawing rooms of the day. What they failed to realise was that the folk-singer, by a combination of tradition and intuition, can achieve effects which elude the mere theorist or rationaliser, and which are of great value for that very reason.

Prior to the publication of Tolmie’s air, the most influential of these musical renditions was that of Finlay Dun (1848), whose setting was reprinted, with minor modifications, in *The Highlander* (1881), *The Killin Collection* (1884), under the title ‘Maighdean Loch Otha’ in *The Gesto Collection* (1895), and – with an additional melodic flourish – in Morrison’s *Orain nam Beann* (1913):³³

³² While it is easy to deplore the practices of these 19th-century ‘improvers’, it is worth noting that twentieth- and twenty-first-century performers continue to ‘arrange’ *Griogal Cridhe* and hundreds of other Gaelic songs, regularising the rhythm, obscuring the integrity of the text, removing tonal ambiguity, and adding instrumental accompaniments and all sorts of electronic effects, for exactly the same social and commercial reasons. For those who prefer their Gaelic songs (and perhaps their single-malt whiskies) ‘neat’, the ongoing assumption that this unique art-form requires such adulteration to be rendered acceptable is a source of some dismay.

³³ Matheson (1955: 73–4) notes that Dun, an Edinburgh musician, ‘provided most of the accompaniments’ to this volume, whose ‘provenance is somewhat obscure’. The introduction says that the source of the melodies was a manuscript collection ‘made by a native of the Highlands’; Matheson points out that, although Grove’s *Dictionary of Music* identifies this person as Miss G. A. Bell of Edinburgh, ‘it is more than doubtful whether she could be described as a native of the Highlands.’ He goes on to suggest that the collector might have been Lachlan McLaine of Scalasdale, Mull; or possibly Miss Breadalbin Maclean, daughter of Alexander Maclean of Coll. It is unfortunately impossible to know for certain where the songs gathered by Finlay Dun were first noted down.

‘GRIOGAL CRIDHE’

Re - joic - ing with my love I strayed up - on a sum - mer's morn, but
 long e're eve - ning threw its shade My heart in twain was torn.
 A - las to me, a - las to me Nor noon nor night are dear; Och -
 one o - rie, my babe for thee, thy fa - ther can - not hear.

Dun’s air illustrates the ‘improving’ tendency – perhaps best described as a sort of emotional inflation – in its second strain, where the melody soars to a high point before descending by a full octave in preparation for the final bar. The use of the *fermata*, directing the singer to linger pathetically on certain notes, provides another insight into the composer’s artistic intent. The character of the traditional air – if we are correct in assuming that Dun based his melody upon a traditional air and did not compose the entire melody out of his own imagination – has been thoroughly swamped by these grandiose effects, and by the fact that it has been rhythmically re-designed to suit the English text.

3.1.2. Celtic Monthly and followers.

The two-part air provided in *The Celtic Monthly* (Fig. 2) is of a similar character. Like Dun’s air, it contains a soaring second strain inappropriate to the Gaelic traditional context; indeed, whoever composed (or adapted) this air was probably familiar with Dun’s version.

The difference between Dun and the *Celtic Monthly* version may stem from the fact that, while both are settings not of the Gaelic poetry but of the English verse translations, Dun’s translator (‘Delta’) has remained true to the metrical structure of the Gaelic poetry, in which there are fourteen syllables in each couplet. Whoever composed the English verses for the *Celtic Monthly*, however, has created a metre in which each couplet contains fifteen syllables rather than fourteen. Compare the following:

Gaelic text	English text: Dun (‘Delta’)	English text: <i>Celtic Monthly</i>
Moch maduìn air la lunasd’ Bha mi sùgradh mar ri ’m ghràdh; Ach m’un d’ thainig meadhon latha, Bha mo chridhe air a chràdh.	Rejoicing with my love I stray’d Upon a summer’s morn, But long ere evening threw its shade My heart in twain was torn.	Early on a Lammass morning, With my husband I was gay, But my heart got sorely wounded, Ere the middle of the day.

The result is that the melody given in the *Celtic Monthly* requires the artificial stressing of a normally-unstressed syllable when the song is sung in Gaelic:

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Och - an Och - an, Och - an ui - ri, Though I cry my child with thee,
 Och - an, Och - an, Och - an ui - ri, Now he hears not thee nor me!
 Ear - ly on a Lam - mas morn - ing, With my hus - band I was gay,
 But my heart got sore - ly wound - ed, Ere the mid - dle of the day.

The *Celtic Monthly* setting appears to have inspired the even more florid arrangement supplied in MacPhàrlain's *Binneas nam Bard* (1908). Remarkably, it may also be the ultimate model for the air sung by Christopher MacDonald of Tayside whose version of the song, as we mentioned earlier, appears to derive from a published source. The next illustration is a transcription of Christopher MacDonald's performance, as it appeared in *Tocher* 11. Significantly, MacDonald's air resembles the *Celtic Monthly*'s only in the first strain, where the artificial stress on *agus* creates the impression that the entire phrase is a beat too long; the second strain, by contrast, accords with the verse-structure, and as a result seems entirely appropriate in metrical terms:



'S'mor a b'ann - sa bhith aig Grio - gair, Air feadh coille a - gus fraoich,
 Na bhith aig ba - ran crion na Da-lach An taigh clach is aol.

3.1.3. Tolmie and followers.

Frances Tolmie's air, first published in *Gesto* (1895) and subsequently in her own collection in *JFSS* (1911), has become the most popular over the past century, undoubtedly through its having been republished in the 1930s in *Coisir a' Mhòid* and *Orain a' Mhòid* as well as in other anthologies as noted above. Fortunately, it avoids the grandiosity of the airs considered above, presumably because Tolmie had enough regard for the traditional melody to leave it alone. Here is how it appears in *JFSS*:

'GRIOGAL CRIDHE'

'S iom - adh oidh - che fhliuch is thior - am, Si - de nan seachd sian,
Gheibh - eadh Gri - gair dhomh - sa creag - an Ris an ghabh - ainn dion.
Obh - an obh - an! obh - an i - ri! Obh - an - i - ri O!
Obh - an Obh - an! Obh - an - i - ri! 'S mor mo mhu - lad 's mor.

3.2. Unpublished settings

We earlier noted some 34 versions of *Griogal Cridhe*, collected from the oral performance of 25 informants between 1869 and 1975. While the earliest of these, taken down in South Uist and Eriskay by Alexander Carmichael and Fr Allan MacDonald, do not include the airs, we still have a good deal of material to consider. In addition, we now have easy access to two additional versions of the air collected during the 19th century: *The Elizabeth Ross Manuscript*, which contains an air for *Griogal Cridhe* recorded by Elizabeth Ross (Lady D'Oyly) of Raasay no later than 1812 – a setting that is contemporary with the Turner collection, and by far the earliest version of the air that we possess; and *Moch air maduinn latha Lunaisd* ('Early on Lammas day morning'), included in a manuscript compiled by Angus Fraser around 1870.

3.2.1 Elizabeth Ross.

Because Ross's manuscript was not intended for publication, it is mercifully free of the commercially-motivated improvements that make other nineteenth-century collections seem dated. Ross includes two versions of the melody (the editors suggest that one would have been used for the stanza and the other for the refrain), plus an additional two iterations following the double-bar; these latter two are probably intended to suggest how the air might be varied and elaborated in an instrumental performance.

Notwithstanding its Raasay provenance, Ross's air bears a closer resemblance to Dun's than it does to Tolmie's Skye melody. Not only is the final cadence (bar 4) identical to Dun's, but the medial cadence (bar 2 above) falls, like Dun's, on the second degree of the scale (*re*) rather than the third (*mi*), as in Tolmie's version.³⁴ It may be, therefore, that in Ross's air we come somewhat nearer to the way people were singing this melody at the time Dun first heard it – before he inflated the second phrase out of all recognition:

³⁴ Even so, it is worth noting also that Ross's third bar – in which the melody dips down to low *d* – is reminiscent of the Tolmie's third bar, except that in the latter the tune dips to *e*-flat.



3.2.2 Angus Fraser.

In his manuscript *Collection of the Vocal Airs of the Highlands of Scotland* (c. 1870) Fraser gives an air entitled *Moch air maduinn latha Lunaisd* ('Early on Lammass day morning').³⁵ Fraser includes two versions of the melody, and we must entertain the possibility that he heard both sung, perhaps one used for the stanza and the other for the refrain. It is perhaps more likely, however, that the second strain, following the double-bar, was composed by Fraser himself and intended to suggest to the instrumental performer how the melody might be varied in performance:



Published versions of the melody fall into two main categories: (1) settings directly descended from, or at least related to, Dun's 1848 melody; and (2) republications of Tolmie's Skye air. Fraser's air appears related to both of these strands: like Tolmie/Gesto, Fraser's medial cadence (*i.e.* the end of the first phrase) ends with the notes (in sol-fa) *la – so – mi* (the notes *a – g – e* in bars 3–4 above), while its final cadence – like those of Dun and all the other Victorian settings – ends with *do – mi – re – do – do* (bars 7–8 above). It seems likely that, despite their differences, all three of these versions were ultimately based upon airs gathered from oral sources. It is a pity that more such airs were not noted down at a time when the song was a living tradition in all parts of the Gàidhealtachd – especially in those mainland areas that might have provided a link to the Perthshire air with which Mór Chaimbeul might have been familiar.

³⁵ Angus Fraser was an illegitimate son of Captain Simon Fraser of Knockie (1773–84), a violinist, whose own *Airs and Melodies peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland* was published in 1816. The family lived at Errogie on Loch Ness-side, and Angus Fraser may have gathered his own collection in the same vicinity. Fraser's manuscript was published for the first time in 1996.

3.2.3 Twentieth-Century Airs.

Having considered the printed and manuscript evidence for the melody of *Griogal Cridhe*, we may be able to draw some conclusions about the variants of the air collected from oral tradition in the last century. Given our findings with regard to the text, it comes as no surprise that the melodic variants appear to reflect the same division into two distinct strands, a northern strand associated with Skye, Harris and Lewis, and a southern strand associated with the Uists and Barra (see §2.2 above):

GROUP 1: Northern Hebrides	
Skye	Kirsty Munro (1954, 1958)
Berneray Harris	Margaret MacLeod (1970) ³⁶
Scalpay Harris	Mary MacLeod (1970) ³⁶
Scalpay Harris	Angus MacLeod (1954, 1959)
Scalpay Harris	Flora Cunningham (1963, 1971)
Harris	Peggy Morrison (recording date unknown)
Lewis	Jessie MacKenzie (1956, 1957)
N. Uist/ Edinburgh	Rev William Matheson (1959, 1960s, 1975) ³⁷
GROUP 2: Southern Hebrides	
Eriskay	Unnamed Singer (1905) ³⁸
Barra	Mary MacNeill and Peigi MacNeill (1959)
Barra	Mary Morrison (1959, 1965, 1966)
Barra	Calum Johnston (1965)
Barra	Catherine MacNeil (1965)
Barra	Jane MacDonald (1965)
Barra	‘Barra Waulking Women’ (1965)
Vatersay	Nan MacKinnon (1956, 1967)
Eriskay	Flora MacInnes (1951)
South Uist	Agnes Currie (1956)
South Uist	Mary Munro (1966)
South Uist	Mrs Hugh MacEachen (1967)
Grimsay	Peter Morrison (1966)

³⁶ Although both Mary MacLeod (Scalpay) and Margaret MacLeod (Berneray) were included in the southern grouping for textual reasons (see §2.2), their choice of melody firmly places them, alongside other Harris informants, in the Northern Hebrides group.

³⁷ William Matheson’s air is included here because of its clear relationship to others in this group. Whether this is an air that he heard in boyhood in North Uist or one that his later studies led him to choose cannot, unfortunately, be confirmed; see §2.3 above.

³⁸ See above, n. 17.

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Elizabeth Ross (1812)

Finlay Dun (1848)

Angus Fraser (1870)

Frances Tolmie (1911)

Kirsty Munro, Skye (1954)

Angus MacLeod, Scalpay, Harris (1954)

Jessie MacKenzie, Lewis (1956)

Peggy Morrison, Harris (n.d.)

The image displays eight staves of musical notation, each representing a different recording of a song. Each staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature (C). The notation consists of a sequence of notes and rests, with some notes beamed together. The recordings are arranged vertically, with the earliest recording at the top and the most recent at the bottom. The notation is transposed into the same key and time signature for comparison.

The northern group contains performances by eight singers, some of whom recorded the song multiple times, and whose recordings reflect a certain amount of variability. All of these, however, reflect a number of features in common not only with one another, but also with the manuscript and published versions we have been discussing. The above comparison, which includes a representative sample from the modern recordings, illustrates these similarities. Note that for ease of comparison we have transposed all examples into the same key, and have represented the airs as simply as possible, eliminating rhythmic features and ornamental notes which would, in any case, vary from stanza to stanza in accordance with the demands of the text.

‘GRIOGAL CRIDHE’

The image displays four staves of musical notation for the song 'Griogal Cridhe'. Each staff is labeled with a performer and a date: Flora MacInnes, Eriskay (1951); Nan MacKinnon, Vatersay (1956); Mary Morrison, Barra (1959, 1965); and Peter Morrison, Grimsay (1966). The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature (C). The melody is written on a single line for each staff. The first three staves end with a fermata over the final note, while the fourth staff ends with a double bar line. A '(b/b)' marking is present above the final note of the third staff.

The twelve singers in the Southern group clearly represent a different melodic tradition. The above illustration compares four representative performances, which stand apart most significantly from those in the Northern group in having a medial cadence on the dominant, or fifth degree, of the scale (bar 4), and in having a predominantly dorian modal character, as opposed to the mixolydian modality of the airs in the Northern group.³⁹ When – and where – the southern tradition began to manifest itself it is of course impossible to say; it does, however, seem likely that it was an air from this tradition that the Reverends Angus and Archibald MacDonald heard when they recorded this particular *taladh* for their collection of Gaelic poetry.

4.0 Conclusions.

While we have been at pains here to point out the differences between the various versions of *Griogal Cridhe* – text and music, published and unpublished, northern Hebridean variants and southern ones – the clearest impression overall must remain one not of difference, but of similarity. None of the versions we have encountered here truly stands at odds with the others. Even Finlay Dun’s romantic inflation of the melody does not wholly obscure its traditional origins; even the severe truncation of the text over the course of four centuries – only a few of our twentieth-century informants recorded more than four stanzas – does not disguise the fact that *Cumha Ghriogair Ruaidh* continued to hold an important place in the Gaelic repertoire some four centuries after its composition.

Why should this be the case? To suggest an answer, it may be helpful to imagine how the song first entered the living tradition. Mór Chaimbeul herself was clearly a strong character: her determination to marry Griogair Ruadh demonstrates that fact, as does her earlier poem, *Rìgh gur mór mo chuid mhulaid*, in which her love for him – and her feelings about the opposition of her father and other Campbell relations – are manifest. She clearly knew herself to possess a voice, and

³⁹ The so-called ‘church modes’ differ from the conventional major and minor tonalities that our ears are commonly attuned to. The *mixolydian* mode most resembles a typical major scale, except that the leading-note – the seventh degree of the scale – is flattened; the *dorian* mode most resembles a melodic minor scale, except for a raised sixth and (again) a flattened leading-note. Complicating matters in the latter case is that several of these supposedly ‘dorian’ melodies from the Uists and Barra exhibit what William Matheson called the ‘variable third’ – in this case, the note *a* which in some cases is expressed as *a-flat* and in others as *a-natural*; see Matheson (1955: 77–8) and the performances by Nan MacKinnon and Mary Morrison in the examples given here.

to be a poet. Equal parts love and rage, her lament for Griogair and her violent denunciation of his murderers demanded an audience.

But women in sixteenth-century Gaelic Scotland were not generally granted the right to be heard.⁴⁰ Their lives were circumscribed and dictated by the roles granted to them in society: dutiful daughter, loyal wife, nurturing mother. Following Griogair's execution, the Campbells understandably wanted to keep Mór under control, and the best way of doing so was by marrying her off as quickly as possible and keeping her close at hand. Assuming that Martin MacGregor is correct in identifying her second husband as Raibeart Menzies of Comrie, we can visualise Mór's life with him as respectable, comfortable – and suffocating. Her one release would be her private grief, alone and sleepless in her bedroom at night. But we can also imagine her lulling her two small sons, Alastair Ruadh and Iain Dubh, with the lament she had composed for their father.⁴¹ Indeed, the act of composition itself, possibly begun at the time of Griogair's capture, may have continued even after her marriage to Raibeart Menzies.

So how did a song composed and sung in such oppressive circumstances become known? The simplest answer must lie in the comfortable household in which Mór latterly found herself, a household peopled with her husband's female servants. Whether she would have taken any of these directly into her confidence or not, the power of Mór's story and of the lament she composed must have compelled members of this unregarded audience to carry the song home with them, sing it to their own children, and set the tradition in motion. Recent recordings of the song, captured far from Loch Tayside and all too often fragmentary, show that even in its barest manifestations it continued to function as a lullaby – a function that probably preserved it long after the details of its composition (and many of its stanzas) had fallen into oblivion.

Singers choose songs which appeal to them at some deep emotional level. Singing is the purest distillation of emotional meaning in aural form: the expression of emotion is what song is *for*. Lamentation, panegyric, love, faith, sheer *joie-de-vivre* – in Gaelic society, all of these emotions were realised in song, giving emotional release to both singer and listener. In a society which regarded the manifestation of strong feeling as socially risky, such an outlet was essential. We must be grateful for the extraordinary chain that has linked our own emotional reality to that of a spirited young widow, tragically bereaved, whose life otherwise would surely have been overwhelmed by the weight of her husband's epitaph, recorded by the Curate of Fortingall: 'The vij da of Apryill Gregor McGregor of Glenstra heddit at Belloch anno sexte an ten yeris.'

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⁴⁰ John MacInnes has tried to persuade me that women have long been strong and articulate members of Gaelic society, and should not be regarded as having been mere chattels, repressed and without a voice. I do not doubt the sincerity of his belief. Nevertheless, the fact that women – including a number of notable women poets – have left their indelible mark on Gaelic society should not be allowed to obscure the fact that they, unlike men, would have had to fight for the right to be heard. As Alasdair Duncan points out (1979: 70), 'there have been...cases of adverse circumstances producing poetry, the most celebrated perhaps being Màiri Mhór nan Oran with her line, "'S e na dh' fhuilaing me de thàmailt a thug mo bhàrdachd beò' ["It's all the disparagement I've endured that has brought my poetry to life"].'

⁴¹ The number of lullabies that also function as laments suggests that the lullaby genre provided women a rare opportunity of expressing strong feelings in a manner that was not too disruptive to the male-dominated society in which they lived; see Hillers 2006.

‘GRIOGAL CRIDHE’

Cridhe’ collected by Amy Murray in Eriskay; and particularly to Dr Martin MacGregor of Glasgow University, whose painstaking comments upon my draft article have substantially enriched my own understanding of this song, its author, and the circumstances of its composition.

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